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TEACHING ETHICS

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Foreword

This CGR issue on Teaching Ethics is the latest in a series of theme issues that focus on the theoretical and pedagogical aspects of classroom teaching. Previous issues considered Teaching Peace Studies (Vol. 32, no. 2 [Spring 2014]), History (Vol. 30, no. 3 [Fall 2012]), and Bible (Vol. 28, no. 2 [Spring 2010]). We are grateful for the work of Trevor Bechtel, who served as the guest editor of this issue. The articles by scholars and practitioners in this present volume will be of interest to anyone instructing at the college, seminary, or university level, whether in Mennonite institutions or elsewhere.

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The Practicalities of Good: Lessons from Teaching Ethics in Peace and Conflict Studies

Reina Neufeldt

Introduction

The field of Peace and Conflict Studies is forthright in its value base: at its core, it values peace as a good.¹ On the whole, there is a preference for what Johan Galtung memorably termed “positive peace”—a peace in which everyone is able to achieve their full potential, and in which there is no systemic, covert or overt oppression, or violence.² The explicit value base of positive peace as an absolute moral good makes Peace and Conflict Studies programs a good fit in college and university programs at Anabaptist institutions, because it resonates theologically. Likewise, the prevalent assumption is that we have a duty to pursue this good of positive peace.

Yet, as we know, doing good is a fraught process. There are trade-offs and compromises when values are juxtaposed. There are times when good intentions produce miserable effects, such as when a desire to engage in dialogue between conflicting parties unintentionally reproduces systemic inequalities and contributes to further entrenchment of the conflict.³ There are difficult ethical questions around restorative justice and the pressures that can be put on victims of crimes to reconcile with offenders. As well, there are questions about society-wide truth and reconciliation commissions that promise amnesty in order to get a more fulsome narrative of ‘truth’ on record; yet while amnesty processes have frequently helped secure a transfer of power, there continue to be systemic injustices that contribute to long-term social and political problems in countries such as South Africa. These dilemmas suggest that we need to deliberate further in, and on, our pursuit of positive peace.

¹ See, for example, David P. Barash and Charles P. Webel, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009).

² Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167- 91.

³ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change: Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel* (Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 1999).

Wrestling with the dilemmas that arose in field practice—working as a peacebuilding technical advisor in a large relief and development organization—spurred me to develop a course on the ethics of peacebuilding. It was a topic I wanted to explore more deeply. Intriguingly, there were no similar courses for me to examine as I worked on my first syllabus. While Peace and Conflict Studies courses include moral content based upon value claims, such as positive peace or principled nonviolence, I could not find one that gave systematic attention to ethics. More frequently, faculty members would draw on one or two readings to discuss the subject.⁴ The notable exceptions were topic-specific courses, like Just War (or Just Peacemaking), typically developed by philosophers or theologians and included as part of multi-disciplinary Peace and Conflict Studies offerings.

I name this experience of a lacuna for two reasons. The first reason is to report that I have learned much about teaching ethics in Peace and Conflict Studies through experimentation and periodic failure as well as success, although success tends not to generate as clear a set of lessons in reflective practice. It is these experiences, and reflecting on them in the tradition of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, that have generated much of the argument that follows.⁵ The second reason is to identify what appears to be a curious paradox: namely, that thinking about good and the nature of good is an integral part of Peace and Conflict Studies programs, yet the degree to which this is done systematically appears limited and often excludes areas of applied conflict resolution and transformation practice. Perhaps this suggests that religiously-motivated or Kantian duty-based ethics orientations operate widely in the field, and an assumption that as long as we are motivated by good intentions and universally good principles we are being moral. Or perhaps it suggests a fear that thinking about the harms done in and by conflict resolution and peacebuilding plays into critiques of the field. Whatever the reason, it is a paradox worth examining in the future.

In what follows, I explore a pedagogically focused question: What challenges and opportunities arise in teaching ethics in Peace and Conflict

⁴ E.g., James Laue and Gerald Cormick, “The Ethics of Intervention in Community Disputes,” in *Ethics of Social Intervention*, ed. Gordon Bermant, Herbert C. Kelman, and Donald P. Warwick (Washington, DC: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1978).

⁵ See Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974).

Studies? I examine three areas: open thinking, deep thinking, and engaging the self. In this exploration, I also touch upon the questions of institutions and ways in which the larger social and political context affect the subject matter being taught, and, to a lesser extent, how critical methodologies intersect in the classroom.

Context

The course I created is called “Ethics of Peacebuilding.” It is an elective offered to undergraduate students through the University of Waterloo’s Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) program, housed at Conrad Grebel University College. Conrad Grebel sits at the intersection of secular and Mennonite education in Canada. Students in my classes may include some Mennonites but by and large reflect the larger student population of the University. I had begun teaching this ethics course earlier, in 2010, to graduate International Peace and Conflict Resolution students in the School of International Service at American University in Washington, DC. Upon moving back to Canada, I reshaped it for undergraduate students in the Canadian context. I have since taught it four times, three versions of which steadily built upon each other.

The first iteration of the course in this new Canadian undergraduate context was largely jettisoned. I discovered part way through that I had made faulty assumptions regarding the knowledge base of my students, and this meant I had constructed the course poorly. There was one particularly memorable moment when I was setting up class to discuss the ethical challenges of peacebuilding aligned with statebuilding and counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. I found myself receiving almost uniformly blank stares from my students. So I paused and asked, “Are you familiar with the term ‘counterinsurgency’?” I discovered that of the twenty or so students in the room, the only one who confidently knew the term was an American student who had lived in the Middle East. I was puzzled, as the term was widely used in my previous teaching context, and Canadian troops had engaged in counterinsurgency measures alongside their coalition partners in Afghanistan. In doing more research, I found that the Canadian military documents referring to counterinsurgency were made public only through Wiki-leaks, and that government and media had avoided counterinsurgency language for Canada’s extended engagement in Afghanistan despite its

appropriateness.⁶ Context had shaped the basic working knowledge of my students in ways that I had not anticipated.

Another important discovery about the context was that my working model of how students engaged each other in discussions also did not transfer across institutions or national borders. I had become used to undergraduate and graduate students who were ready and willing to speak out and to challenge each other right away; students who, if I offered a provocation, would leap into the fray and energetically discuss merits and demerits of ideas. I found my new set of students reluctant to speak strongly, particularly in ways that would challenge each other's ideas or counter a provocation of mine. Ethical deliberation requires careful and open thinking, and I quickly realized that to make ethical engagement work well with PACS undergraduate students in this new context, I needed to enter into the process of ethical discussion and exploration very differently.

Some elements of my pedagogy have remained the same, such as a robust emphasis on active learning, particularly the use of simulations in order to support student learning about applied ethical challenges in peacebuilding.⁷ However, my learning objectives have evolved over time, and the content as well as some of the ways I deploy active learning have shifted (e.g., more use of pair or group-share techniques).⁸ In the following sections I outline elements of my pedagogy that have developed as a result of teaching ethics in the PACS program at Conrad Grebel and the University of Waterloo.

Open Thinking

Open thinking is critical for ethics. It includes the ability to ask questions, look for additional information to understand a given moral problem, and

⁶ The "Canada First Defense Strategy" issued in 2008 referred to complex international operations rather than counterinsurgency. The final version of the Canadian Counterinsurgency Operations manual, also completed in 2008, was posted on Wiki-leaks August 3, 2009: https://wikileaks.org/wiki/Canadian_Counter-insurgency_Operations_manual_13_Dec_2008.

⁷ Joel Michael, "Where's the Evidence That Active Learning Works?," *Advances in Physiology Education* 30, no. 4 (2006): 159-67.

⁸ The PACS 332 Ethics of Peacebuilding syllabus is available at https://uwaterloo.ca/peace-conflict-studies/sites/ca.peace-conflict-studies/files/uploads/files/ethics_of_peacebuilding_-fall_2015.pdf.

examine a problem from multiple perspectives before coming to judgment. In applied peacebuilding, open thinking also necessarily occurs in the midst of doing peace work, when decisions are taken in haste and may require revisiting in order to feed into future, better peace work. I have found students grapple with three main challenges with respect to open thinking in the classroom: dealing with relativism, relying on religious moral authority, and rationalizing decisions after they are made. These challenges reflect common counterfeits for moral thinking, as Anthony Weston, an American philosopher and educator, has noted.⁹

For the majority of my students, the primary constraint on open thinking is a tendency to relativize. The assumption is that everyone's opinions are equally good. It may be that PACS students are particularly prone to this assumption. While it is helpful in many ways for those growing up in a multicultural context, it short-circuits open thinking in ethics, because few or no questions are asked of each other's decision-making. The task for me became one of helping equip students to engage in constructive, creative, and expansive conversations about moral values and ethics rather than to shy away. One element of this enterprise means thinking together as a class about the ways in which moral value engagement occurs in the public domain and is a positive, important part of social engagement—discovering times when relativism doesn't work (e.g., when people make choices as a society and codify values into laws, such as laws on euthanasia). An activity that involves students identifying issues on which they are dogmatic typically proves the point. Another element is working to develop students' linguistic and conceptual base to engage in questioning (discussed below).

A much smaller set of my students are deeply religious—primarily Christian or Muslim, and sometimes from other religious traditions. For these students, religious teachings are at the forefront of their moral thinking, and can sometimes constrain open thinking because the teachings are taken as self-evident. I have used Weston as a conversation partner to help address these issues, as he artfully discusses the limits of religious authority in applied ethics and highlights the necessity for interpretation when trying to

⁹ Anthony Weston, *A Practical Companion to Ethics*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 6-15; Anthony Weston, *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 29-37.

apply sacred teachings to modern issues.¹⁰ This is helpful for students who have not thought about how their own religious moral teachings connect to social ethics and collective decisions. Weston's work also provides a foil to react against. Canadian students are quick to point out that they do not find religious discourse in the public sphere as common as Weston suggests occurs in the United States. This reaction then gives us another entry point to excavate the tendency towards relativism that students find more in line with their experience in school and daily life in southern Ontario.

A final concern related to open thinking is the tendency of students to stop probing an issue once they have come to an initial decision. Some students, whether because of good training or natural inclination, do continue to ask questions and explore issues deeply, something that produces more sophisticated and carefully reasoned ethical analyses. Others stop after thinking about one or two dimensions of an issue. My challenge was (and is) to help students, including the weaker and less motivated ones, to engage in deeper analysis. This is a challenge not only for students but for peacebuilding practitioners whose ethical thinking is often constrained for similar reasons, such as other demands on their time or uncertainty as to what or how to think about ethics.¹¹ I found it required me to structure the syllabus to support deep thinking and reflective skills, to which I now turn.

Thinking Deeply

A course on ethics requires asking questions about what constitutes good ends and right means in peace work, as well as considering what this means in applied settings. It necessitates asking questions about the core values of the field—and PACS majors generally choose the field because they like its core values. I have found that asking big questions (e.g., What is good, *really*? What happens when bad occurs because of our good intentions in peace work?) is delicate work that requires finding or creating a space that allows the class to navigate between cynicism ("We can't do any good through peacebuilding") and optimism ("I'm a well-motivated, justice oriented

¹⁰ Weston, *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox*, chapter three "Ethics and Religion," 59-71; and Weston, *A Practical Companion to Ethics*, 23-36.

¹¹ Reina C. Neufeldt, *Ethics for Peacebuilders: A Practical Guide* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

activist and anything I do is good”). Creating this space involves nurturing the energy and hope that students have, but also equipping them to ask and respond to tough questions and difficult challenges, and hearing how others have engaged the same issues.

Pedagogically, this required expanding the part of the course that examines moral values and supports general applied moral reasoning skills, and giving up some peacebuilding-specific content. I used to cover moral values and moral (or ethical) theories in two weeks. I now take six weeks to examine moral values, explore five moral theories, and work on creative problem-solving in applied ethics. This slower pace allows us as a class to unravel different dimensions of, or perspectives on, what constitutes good and right, as well as to practice applying these different ways of thinking on their own terms. We read about a moral theory—consequentialism (particularly utilitarianism), Kantian duty-based ethics, virtue ethics, ethics of care, *Ubuntu* ethics—I provide additional input, and then we use active learning tools to consolidate our understanding of what each moral theory involves when judging good ends or right actions.¹² In teams in a subsequent class, each theory is applied to a peacebuilding-specific scenario in order to reinforce the learning. I have found that examining and applying each theory separately strengthens the ability of students to analyze a problem from a consistent moral perspective, and that this in turn improves their ability to analyze issues deeply. These classroom discussions are lively, and students have responded very positively to this change (if course evaluations are any indication).

Looking at five different moral theories validates the assumption that there are different ways of understanding how good or right is theorized. While this might seem to support students’ tendency to relativize, what I find it actually does is provide a language to question different understandings of the good or right. This enriches our classroom discussions. People feel more confident in raising questions and pursuing lines of inquiry that are in conflict, and thus deepen the conversation around “good” and “right.”

¹² For background on Ubuntu ethics, see *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*, ed. Munyaradzi Felix Murove (Scottsville, South Africa: Univ. of KwaZulu-Natal Press; 2009); Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

An example will help to illustrate. Towards the end of the course, I run an exercise where teams apply a specific moral theory perspective to a post-accord peacebuilding scenario. The task is to choose the sequence of activities from a list of options, given a certain amount of funding available (as in life, not all options can be funded). Teams apply one unique assigned moral theory standpoint to the respective situation. Working in groups helps individuals to reason consistently from a single perspective and to pursue that line of reasoning carefully. Each group then reports their chosen sequence of activities. The moral value frameworks inevitably inform the teams' different prioritizations of activities. For instance, consequentialist groups prioritize immediate security and then focus on institution building to benefit the greatest number overall, while Ubuntu and care reasoning groups prioritize local-level community-building responses that engage relationality directly.

The exercise makes manifest the ways moral values affect how we understand what is needed, and shows there are multiple valid considerations in determining what constitutes good or right that must be navigated in peacebuilding. It also means our work to determine a course of action is not yet done, and the disagreement produces tension over values in the classroom (just as in peacebuilding contexts). Rather than settle on one vision or primary moral values perspective, we as a class must think further about how to use the tension to generate a better response in trying to satisfy multiple moral values—if possible. The better response requires deeper reflection on the context in which we are engaging in peacebuilding, creative thinking, understanding which values are held by which stakeholders, and wrestling with whose values are or should be foregrounded in decisions. It is a collective experiential and analytic exercise. I run this exercise to solidify understanding of the moral theories, to apply them to a concrete peacebuilding problem, and to surface (and experience) a very real challenge in peacebuilding work.

Engaging the Self

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle contends that we investigate the nature of good not simply for the sake of *knowing* the good but for *becoming* good.¹³

¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Christopher Rowe and Sarah Broadie (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 1103b.

Similarly (although less ambitiously), one of my learning objectives is that by the end of the course students can articulate their own moral value commitments. While I did not originally name this as a learning outcome, it became one when I realized it was integrally related to why I was teaching a course on ethics in PACS and why students were interested in taking it. This dimension, however, requires personal engagement and self-assessment as part of reflective practice.¹⁴

When I taught this course at the graduate level, engaging the self was easy, as the students were highly committed to a future career, or were mid-way through that career, and were vested in the questions we were exploring. Undergraduates, while also vested in questions around pursuing good, presented a much more diverse array of interests and were earlier in their career journey. This meant they engaged the material more as a sampler platter than a full meal entrée. They were interested in tasting different things that were well-presented, but they were not yet ready to commit to one dish. My challenge was to provide them space to talk about an issue that mattered to them which was related to peacebuilding, broadening what was offered on my sampler platter syllabus while at the same time helping them develop a way of thinking about issues systemically.

In response, I developed what is now my favourite assignment: an “Ethics Blast.” It is a formal ethical soapbox, in which each student shares, in a cogent, two-minute speech, an ethics issue of concern to him or her that is related to peacebuilding broadly understood. The presentation is short and allows students to explain a moral problem, talk about why it is important (to them and to us), and identify one action that we can take in response to it. Students also utilize one of the moral theories we cover to help analyze the issue (they choose which theory). The goal of these presentations is to encourage students to think through an ethical issue carefully that matters to them, and to provide an opportunity to share their insights with peers.

This assignment brings a tremendous array of interests into the

¹⁴ See Sandra I. Cheldelin, January Makamba, and Wallace Warfield, “Reflections on Reflective Practice,” in *Research Frontiers in Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (Fairfax, VA: Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, 2004); Victoria J. Marsick and Alfonso Sauquet, “Learning through Reflection,” in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, ed. Morton Deutsch and Peter Coleman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

classroom, and allows students to articulate a stand on a particular issue. Afterwards we talk about the issue and our responses as a class, and we get to engage with each other's interests and challenges. In Fall 2015, the issues included the health of banana plantation workers in Panama (challenge: buy organic, fair-trade bananas), the stigma associated with disability (challenge: remove the word 'retarded' from our vocabulary), environmental racism (challenge: travel to an area where multiple First Nations communities live close to hazardous material dumps), and the large volume of waste the average Canadian generates (challenge: generate less). These were just some of the issues students raised, and in response we talked about ourselves—the bananas we eat, the way we consider disability, the waste we produce—and contemplated how to do better. It is a regular, contained exercise in self-reflection, and conversations tend to be most animated when discussing issues with which students have personal experience (e.g., buying bananas). Discussion gets more difficult when we are talking about the Canadian government's action vis-à-vis the conflict in Ukraine or United Nations peacekeepers in Haiti. Yet these issues too provide an opportunity to reflect upon how fully we are connected to events and people in the world.

Another element of self-reflection is addressing the problems of self-justification and the failure to explore an issue openly and deeply (discussed above). This involves what Chris Argyris and Donald Schön term “double loop learning,” and includes reflection in action and reflection on action.¹⁵ It involves thinking systematically about how one applies moral values as well as stepping back and assessing which moral values matter and are most appropriate to consider in a given context—developing *phronesis* (moral discernment), to use the Greek term.

The final course assignment is designed to work on these skills of reflection. The last two classes are dedicated to a simulation, and the take-home final is an analysis of one or two decisions made during the simulation experience. In the analysis, students apply three moral theories to analyze the decision(s), compare and contrast arguments for ethical action vis-à-vis the decision, and conclude with recommendations for how they could have responded more ethically. As with double-loop learning intentions, the paper is not an *ex post facto* justification of decisions but is rather an

¹⁵ Argyris and Schön, *Theory in Practice*, 24.

ethical appraisal of those decisions. It is challenging for students. The initial single loop learning is important, as reasoning through a decision again helps to solidify skills in producing a carefully reasoned moral argument from at least one moral value perspective. Rethinking which moral value perspective(s) is (are) most appropriate draws students into questioning their initial assumptions. The essays that they produce are, for the most part, highly engaging and thoughtful. Even when students are early on their journey of developing ethical reasoning skills, the intensity of the simulation experience and the opportunity to reflect even when, or maybe particularly when, they know the reflection will be read and graded generates papers that capture their voices, elements of self-reflection, and animated engagement with moral theories.

Conclusion

My approach to teaching ethics is informed by Peace and Conflict Studies as a discipline, with its interest in creative problem-solving. This past fall, I had several memorable conversations with a mature student who was delighted to find Ethics of Peacebuilding so practical. She mentioned several times over the semester how she found herself thinking more about ethics in her daily life. Other students had similar responses. Indeed, this last semester a highly engaged set of students routinely stayed after class to further discuss issues and concerns. While it is hazardous to generalize, there appears to be a pattern, namely that students are surprised to find ethics *practical* in the sense that it relates to their daily lives and decisions. The assumption appears to be that ethics and moral reasoning are otherwise separate from daily life. For several years, I too was reticent to use the term “ethics” for fear that it would relegate my concerns to a highly select and separate audience. However, I have found this not to be the case. It turns out that a lot of people are interested in what it means to be good, do good, and contribute to collective flourishing, and that there is much to be learned in the process of teaching ethics.

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Teaching Ethics: How My Approach has Changed

Harry J. Huebner

Introduction

Teaching in general is a challenge because it is not clear what precisely, as teachers, we are doing or asked to do. Are we training minds to think creatively/correctly about a particular subject matter? This begs the question of what such thinking is and what criteria pertain to the practice. Are we training students to live lives worthy of the calling to be well-formed human beings? While this gets closer to what ethics teachers may think they are doing, it nevertheless raises its own set of questions, especially in our culture, as to who gets to name the standards.

Some people would hold these challenges to be radical alternatives, while others would hold them in a complementary relation. Regardless of how the matter is parsed, the really big challenge for ethics teachers is that contemporary pedagogy tends to be suspicious of anyone who would even claim to train students to become particular kinds of people. Even though, truth be told, good teachers inevitably do this, for it is well known that students emulate their most beloved instructors. Nonetheless, this pedagogical reticence has resulted in university ethics curricula consisting primarily of meta-ethics because, frankly, on whose authority are we permitted to say anything about what is right and wrong?¹

This essay is more overtly autobiographical and self-reflective than I am used to writing. I adopt such a style here because I take it to be my assignment for this issue of *The Conrad Grebel Review*. Hence, with some anxiety, I reflect on how my understanding of the discipline of ethics and my experience of teaching ethics in a college/university setting has changed over the years. How one teaches and what one teaches, even at what level one

¹ The distinction between meta-ethics and normative ethics is a standard division within the discipline. Meta-ethics discusses how ethical terms are used. Normative ethics seeks to show what makes certain actions right or wrong. For a discussion of the distinction, see Harry J. Huebner, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: History, Movements, People* (Waco, TX: Baylor Univ. Press, 2012), 161-62.

teaches, are deeply interconnected. It is not the case that one pedagogical approach fits all; in fact, I am not convinced that I have a “theory” of how to teach. Even within my own courses, I teach very differently depending on the subject matter. My reflections here focus primarily on teaching at the introductory level.

The Challenge Analyzed

How did it come to be like this? As a philosophy student in the late 1960s and early ’70s, I had to read an assigned essay by Jean-Paul Sartre entitled “Existentialism is a Humanism.”² This was a formative read. Whatever tensions there may have been between studying philosophy and having grown up Mennonite in southern Manitoba, this essay aroused my interests in a special way. At the time it seemed to name the state of modernity in a particularly clear manner, even though the essay, originally a lecture given in 1947, had as its purpose a defence of existentialism against its critics.

Sartre distinguishes between Christian and atheistic existentialism. He says that “what they have in common is simply the fact that *existence* comes before *essence*—or, if you will, that we must begin with the subjective.”³ He clarifies with an example. A paper-knife is made by an artisan, beginning with a concept and then using certain material to make the concept real and functional. That is, there is something that the knife is *for*, and this something is fully determined by the artisan’s idea and the material available to bring it to reality. For the knife, then, essence precedes existence. Religious folk, according to Sartre, see human beings as analogous to the paper-knife. We humans are created by God, who has fashioned us after an idea and a function. We too are *for* something. Sartre contends that, as an atheistic existentialist, he can say with greater consistency that since God does not exist “there is at least one being whose existence comes before his essence.” In elaborating, he says, “we mean that man (sic) first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards.”⁴ For Sartre

² Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1956), 287-311.

³ Ibid., 289; emphasis in original.

⁴ Ibid., 290.

we humans are not *for* anything! In fact, we are “condemned to be free”⁵ and are nothing other than what we define ourselves to be by our actions.

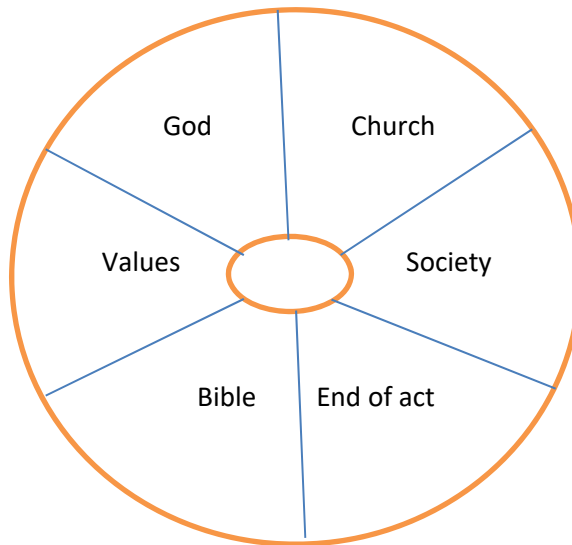
What was interesting to me at the time was that this view raised, more starkly than I had seen before, the question of whether there is indeed anything “given” to the notion of being human. It seemed that what Sartre was espousing as atheistic existentialism was the dominant practice of living in the 20th-century Western world. He was defining the autonomous individual. Of course, Christians would not accept Sartre’s overt atheism, but accepting his view wasn’t necessary in order to go with his program. What was necessary for Christian ethics was that we place ourselves before God, who calls us to make choices to act in ways that might please God.

What Sartre did in his essay was draw the conclusions of “the turn to the subject” that had begun with René Descartes’s *cogito*, then cemented into the human psyche by the rationalistic philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and finally given Christian “evangelical” voice in the writings of Søren Kierkegaard: Ethics, like religion, is an altogether subjective and hence private matter. Hardly an arbitrary claim! From David Hume (philosopher, d. 1776) to Max Weber (sociologist, d. 1920) to Lawrence Kohlberg (psychologist, d. 1987), the disjunction between facts and values was made so total, and the values side so inadmissible for pedagogical training, that ethics—often (mis) understood as “value theory”—can at best be an empirical enquiry describing what values have in fact been held or are being held by individuals, groups, and cultures. But how then does anyone who wishes to speak of Christian ethics teach?

How Then Does One Teach?—Take 1

When I began teaching ethics at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in the early 1970s, I used variants of the following diagram as an aid. I took whatever issue was being discussed—abortion, war, euthanasia, suicide, homosexuality, gender equality, cloning, environment, and so on—and asked how we could negotiate a response in light of what we believed about God, church, Bible, current values, what was going on in society, and how we saw the ends and consequences of an action.

⁵ Ibid., 295.



To make a personal decision either on what to believe about specific issues or on how to act, the self is called to be informed and then to choose from among the options that best “fit” with one’s values. Of course, this approach creates extreme anxiety, exactly as Sartre described. We feel keenly responsible to do the right thing, but we have no firm basis upon which we can say with certainty, “here is the Christian view of what is right.”

This is the model of teaching ethics that Kant, Kierkegaard, and especially the neo-Kantian historicist Ernst Troeltsch (d. 1923), taught me.⁶ Every generation, indeed every person, must figure out what is going on and how to fit into the current culture in a faithful manner. I found the most compelling account of a variant of this approach in H. Richard Niebuhr’s *The Responsible Self*.⁷ Niebuhr too had learned deeply from Troeltsch,

⁶ My graduate studies in Kant’s philosophy of religion in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto, and my 1981 dissertation at the University of St. Michael’s College on “The Continuity of Axiology and Epistemology: An Examination of the Presuppositions of Ernst Troeltsch’s Historicism,” had me believing that ethics was a generic discipline of thought and hence whatever I was doing in teaching ethics, I needed to do it for everyone. Universalizability and cultural relevance were essential criteria.

⁷ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York:

having written his dissertation on Troeltsch's philosophy of religion.⁸ Niebuhr's paradigm of "responding to what God is already doing" instead of the traditional models of both deontology (duty to do the right thing) and teleology (seeking the highest good) seemed creative and refreshing. It helpfully exposed the limits of Kant and utilitarianism.

Teaching ethics on this model required that we pay special attention to the self, choice, what's going on around us, and decision-making. The challenge was to teach students to make good decisions. But as is plain rather quickly, the task is impossible. What could possibly constitute a "good" decision? Since "good" is conceived of in terms of subjective values, on the basis of whose values would decisions be judged to be "good?" This does not mean that ethics class was not a lot of fun. To be in a setting where teacher and students debate issues like war, environment, sex, and the economy, and where they bring all kinds of interesting perspectives to bear on the subject, and to hear extremely diverse perspectives, all of which must be taken seriously, can be quite entertaining. But it is not clear how it advances an understanding of anything "good" or "right."

This approach assumed a kind of "emotivism,"⁹ where ethical issues are in principle irresolvable. To change someone's mind about an issue thus involves changing the person's attitudes and emotions. And how is that done? Normally, by making the case against the opposite view as revolting and disgusting as possible, and by making the case for the view defended as positive and pleasant as possible. That is, by changing emotions. This is the form that much moral discourse takes in society today. Just listen to political speeches. The case against abortion, for example, is made by showing the most horrific pictures and asking how anyone could possibly have positive emotions towards what these images depict.

An emotivist view makes it very difficult, on a scholarly basis, to

Harper and Row, 1963). Niebuhr was no existentialist. He sought to combine the thought of Troeltsch and Karl Barth.

⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, "Ernst Troeltsch's Philosophy of Religion" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1924).

⁹ Emotivism is the view that ethical statements do not assert anything that is true or false but are merely expressions of emotions; they are emotive utterances. To say something is good is to utter a positive emotion or attitude towards it, and to say something is bad is to utter a negative emotion towards it. Ethical debates are therefore never resolvable.

measure as better or worse any presentation of moral rules, standards, or values. It is akin to teaching students to like the taste of Gete Okosamin giant squash, which some of us might think important but no one would consider justified as a subject of study in universities.

Reconstruction

I have traced my teaching, beginning with the aid of luminaries such as Kant, Troeltsch, and Niebuhr, all deeply nurtured by the Enlightenment vision. And I have found it necessary to assess where the Enlightenment has taken us. On the one hand, it liberated thought (consider Kant's *sapere aude* ("dare to reason")) from a tradition that at times seemed content with "declaration" as a sufficient rationale for truth. On the other hand, tradition had kept the world united, refusing the ugly binaries of fact and value, faith and reason, and so on.

The pre-Enlightenment world indeed held some sway over me. Although grossly generalized, here is how it seemed to work with such thinkers as Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274). Ethics is a "science" based on the knowledge of God through divine revelation found in Scripture and reason.¹⁰ It serves as a structure of knowledge (*scientia*) underwriting particular virtues that well-formed human beings must practice. The virtues are not subjective values that one may or may not hold; they are moral skills that one should learn to excel in. A helpful analogy may be a game like football. The skills appropriate to football are determined by the end (purpose) of the game, and they are *required* (not optional) to play the game well. Similarly, the moral virtues are required for people to become who they are created to be by a benevolent creator. Hence, ethics and faith are intrinsically connected—faith is not private, and ethics is a public skill available for all to practice.

North American students find this model of ethics to be quite foreign. It challenges and threatens their cherished view of the autonomous self that has been re-enforced since childhood, namely that we should be able to express ourselves in thought and action in whatever way we choose, provided that it does not interfere with the rights of others to do likewise.

¹⁰ By the term "science" Aquinas means something like knowledge based on faith and rational discourse (*scientia*) making faith intelligible. Faith and reason, like facts and values, are not discontinuous bifurcations.

Hence, when it comes to the ethics of relating with others, consent is the principal ethical category.

My approach to teaching ethics changed significantly in the mid-1970s, when I began to see the paucity of what I had learned from my teachers. I became more and more convinced that how we ought to live and what we should do has fundamentally to do with *who we are* both as individuals and as communities. And who we are has to do with how we place ourselves into the drama of life given to us by creator God. That is, the autonomous self is not the center of the moral enterprise. My original model simply couldn't deliver on the Christian moral life. Rather, life emanates from divine action. This I learned especially from Karl Barth (d. 1968), who had issued a sharp *Nein* (No) response to a Troeltschian style of approach to theology and ethics.

On a Barthian view, God calls a faithful community of believers into being who seek to express a life of praise to God. This was the life of Abraham (the Call), of Moses (the Commandments), and Jeremiah (the Prophet), and so on. And it is the call of faithful communities today—the church—based on the confession that Jesus Christ is Messiah. Herein lies the moral mandate for Christians: placing ourselves into the life of a concrete Christian community that both foreshadows a future and postshadows a past. The original creation of peace and justice (Genesis 1 and 2) is embodied in Jesus Christ and will be consummated in the last days. This is the reality, like the game of football, into which we are invited to live a life of faithfulness. This “game” of commitment and struggle *is* the ethic. Or, as Stanley Hauerwas has put it, “the church is a social ethic”¹¹ as distinct from the church *having* a social ethic.

This reading of the context of faithfulness requires a significant rethinking of the moral enterprise. No longer can what is going on around us determine what social issues should be addressed and responded to. It is instructive to see that the peace that Christ teaches, and the violence he names in the Sermon on the Mount, for example, go far deeper than what was readily apparent to his hearers. Many simply could not see what he was talking about. A significant task of Christian ethics is to open up (uncover)

¹¹ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 99.

what is hidden; to expose what is wrong (harmful, destructive) with what is taken to be normal. Ethics is about entering a space from which we learn to see properly, long before it is about learning how to act or make decisions.

What is required to teach in this mode changes everything. It requires viewing Christian ethics as practical theology.¹² When it does this, it pays attention to several key factors. First, anthropology. The Christian story says human beings are created in the image of God. Although we are not told exactly what this means, somehow it entails that we are not ordinary animals. Human beings share a likeness with God that makes interchange or communication with God and others possible. This means that humans are best understood not as autonomous and independent but as deeply relational, communal, and interdependent. Moreover, this is not something that we *produce* from within ourselves; this “nature” is fundamentally *given* to us. In one sense, at least, we are not free. We are who we are because of what we have been given. At the same time, we are profoundly unlike God. While God is infinitely within us, God is also infinitely transcendent. We are disobedient, we sin, we reach far beyond our grasp, and we fail even in our best intentions. The potential of our salvation as well as our faithful walk does not lie within us but beyond us, to the very creator to whom we owe our existence and to others.

Second, the incarnation is a seminal event for Christian ethics. When God is reconceived through the faithfulness of Mary (“May it be with me according to your word,” Luke 1:38), we see humanity in its fullest possible expression. Who we are comes into focus in Jesus Christ. This is the affirmation of the early church creeds when they speak of Jesus Christ being “fully God and fully human.” It follows from this that Jesus is both worthy to be followed (fully God), and capable of being followed (fully human). Theological anthropology, therefore, ties human identity not to a reality that we create on the basis of our actions, but to a reality that emanates from creator and redeemer God.

¹² When ethics becomes theology, much changes. Immediately it ceases to be abstract and is provided with content. Generic thinking and universalizability are then no longer its characteristic features. Karl Barth is important here.

John Howard Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus*¹³ and Stanley Hauerwas's books such as *A Community of Character*¹⁴ give a nuanced account and interpretation of what incarnation ethics entails. Following Jesus has concrete social import in ways that Troeltsch and Niebuhr thought impossible. The dominant teaching of ethics popularized by these and other scholars was that Jesus was far too radical to be a model for social responsibility, given contemporary sensibilities. To teach moral responsibility therefore required looking elsewhere for guidance than to the one who says "love your enemies" and "turn the other cheek." Moreover, the argument goes, Jesus never intended his teaching to be a guide for how to live within the world as we know it—it was for a future time!

Yoder and Hauerwas presented an alternative that challenged this reading of the Jesus story. With them it became possible to ask what it might look like if Christians gave up the Kantian principle of universalizability and developed a view of ethics based on discipleship. In fact, Hauerwas critiques the notion that there is such a thing as ethics in general, suggesting instead that every ethic needs a qualifier.¹⁵ Why? Because without it, ethics is abstract and without content in precisely the way that the Kantian categorical imperative demands. Christian ethics is for Christians, not in the sense that non-Christians should pay no heed but in the sense that Christian ethics without theological convictions (such as, that in Jesus the Messiah has come) is vacuous. This insight made it possible for me to teach ethics as a Christian "theological" discipline.

On this approach, Christian ethics is, as I have suggested, about ecclesiology, the third key factor in this reconstruction. That is, it is about a "community of character" called forth to live out the story following from the confession that "Jesus is Lord." The story calling us to live in faithfulness to the life and teachings of Jesus has its roots in the creation narrative, Abraham, and the prophetic witnesses, and culminates in the cross and resurrection. Christian ethics thus has to do with bearing witness in concrete

¹³ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972, 1994).

¹⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

¹⁵ Cf. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 17-24.

human existence to the confession that life is a gift in response to divine mercy. This is a life where outcome is trumped by faithful witness.

The church relates to the social and political realities around it as a specific space, which in open acknowledgement places people into what God in Jesus Christ is doing; calling to account the abuses of power, upholding the vulnerable, feeding the hungry, and foreshadowing a future reign of peace and justice. It does this through cleansing and commitment rituals, through practices of compassion, love, forgiveness, and through offering alternative interpretations and actions for the redemption of all humanity.

Fourth, this approach assumes a particular account of how we place ourselves, others, and the entire creation within the moral imagination. Like the ancient Christian philosophers have argued, it requires that we distinguish between who we are (or where we are) as a matter of contingent fact, and who we could be if we were fully who we are meant to be. While our identity is given in the “word made flesh,” it is never fully expressed by us. This is important, for it guards against an all-too-common Christian arrogance. The language invoked here is that of virtues and sins. Traditionally the seven deadly sins¹⁶ are the behaviors that pull us away from being fully who we are; the virtues are the skills that help us be more fully who we are called to be.¹⁷

The moral community, then, forever seeks ways of avoiding the powers that thwart the path toward goodness and of cultivating the skills (virtues) that move towards goodness. We are never fully there, but we can be on the way. Such practices as forgiveness, worship, and seeing rightly move us in this direction. Yet these are not merely the practices of the church, for the church seeks constantly to point towards, and to give expression to, what the world is called to be and ultimately will be.

How Then Does One Teach?—Take 2

As my view of Christian ethics changed, so did my style of teaching. I wrote *An Introduction to Christian Ethics* out of these new convictions. Students

¹⁶ The seven deadly sins are: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride.

¹⁷ Here I have learned much from Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre's *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981, 1984) articulates the failure of the discipline of ethics in Western Christian thought. His lament that ethics had become an altogether unintelligible discipline seems exactly right, and his reconstruction of ethics on the basis of Aristotelian and Thomistic thought is compelling.

need to understand how the history of Western development and thought has made the common notion of ethics unintelligible. That is, their first learning should be in effect an unlearning of contemporary habits of thought. For example, students find it very difficult to conceive of life from the standpoint of gift and patience in a world of technology, capitalism, and speed. They should learn to see what alternative approaches there are within history itself, approaches often crowded out by more “enlightened” views. The first task of teaching is thus to present a historical account of the failure of ethics.

Second, given that several academic disciplines have defined the terms in which ethics is discussed, students must learn this language in order to enter into ethical discourse. Hence, the most salient contributions of theology, philosophy, psychology, and sociology must be briefly presented. Third, the approach I am suggesting has to do more with modeling one’s life after another than with learning how to think correctly or decide wisely. Students are encouraged to consider models of how people of faith have gone before them, and have lived and reflected on matters of faithfulness. These lives are examples of how it has been done—not perfectly, but as a matter of contingent fact. My book presents twenty-two stories of theologians and their biographies and thoughts. The pedagogical conviction behind this is that students can learn how to be good people best by encountering real lives rather than merely by hearing moral theories and debating moral issues. The challenge is to learn the importance of nuance, place, and passion.

As for ethical issues, they get discussed once students gain the capacity to see that issues have contexts and histories, and can appreciate that what makes something an issue comes out of moral imagination. What this additionally means is that the Christian narrative must illuminate the human complicity within a world of consumerism, and the violent protection of goods and property not only from our immediate neighbors but from the poor nations. Justice and peace are not concepts that apply only to particular issues, they are ways of being. Teaching Christian ethics is therefore about asking how we see the Christian faith, and how we can live it in such a way as to be part of what God is doing in the world. It is about how we understand humans being in the world before it is about how we decide to act. Yet, at the heart of it all, this teaching is about inviting students into an active way of seeing the world and their place within it; into a place of worshipping God

in a broken world, and breaking through the manifold pain with concrete signs of hope.

I grew up in a Mennonite family and church where *Nachfolge* (discipleship) was taught and practiced. When my mother gave us moral counsel, she did not list rules to follow or acts to avoid. She challenged us instead to “remember who we are.” Presumably, she meant by this—at least this is how we children understood it—that we were to remember we were followers of Jesus Christ. This was our moral guide. Upon reflection, these words suggest that it is important to become people of character (both as individuals and communities) worthy of bearing the description “Christian.” We are indeed *for* something; we are not our own.

It is interesting for me to realize that at the end of my teaching career, after studying philosophers and theologians of significant import, I have come to teach ethics much like my mother taught me as a child. For students to notice this, and to take up the challenge of remembering who they are, is perhaps to offer them something too simple. Yet it could well be that there is little that is more profound.

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Self and/as Victim: A Reflection on “Mennonite” Ethics

J. Alexander Sider

Writing this essay has been interesting, because I have had to confront explicitly the question of whether being Mennonite affects the way I teach ethics. This question highlights the role in my teaching played by unexamined assumptions about how “Mennonites” do, or should do, ethics (*which* Mennonites is a pertinent question, but I will not address it here). I will begin by naming and clarifying two of those unexamined assumptions, describe the way that I teach ethics, and then draw some conclusions about how what I do might be thought of as “Mennonite.” My approach to ethics has less to do with isolating a distinctive set of Mennonite practices or beliefs, analyzing them, and recommending them to others, and more to do with cultivating self-knowledge in the space created by acknowledging ourselves and others as victims, victimizers, and survivors.

Much of Christian ethics played in a Mennonite key trades on the idea that there are “Mennonite distinctives” that should be celebrated and that ought to affect how ethics is done. I have no use whatsoever for this view. The valorization of Mennonite distinctives has characterized a brand of white heteropatriarchal Mennonite theology and ethics that I hope is in rapid and irrecoverable decline. I do not say this because the Mennonite distinctives which have been suggested are not really all that distinct, although that is true. That claim disguises a much deeper problem of exclusion and methodological violence, namely that Mennonite-distinctives-language is a privilege engine. Its effect has always been to theorize a normative version of Mennonitism that has (at least) two functions.

First, “Mennonite distinctives” creates marginalized Mennonites who constantly need to prove their bona fides vis-à-vis the normative version. One might think of the neocolonialist attitudes with which Mennonite theology and worship in the southern hemisphere is met by culture-appropriating white Mennonites in North America, or, within North America itself, of the way LGBTIQ+ Mennonites in Mennonite Church USA today consistently bear the burden of proof for showing just how they “measure up” to being

Mennonite. Here is an example that combines the two: Mennonite World Conference (MWC) met in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in July 2015, and, among other elements, worship included music from around the world, as it had at previous world conferences. Inclusiveness undoubtedly formed part of the rationale for the gathering's singing of hymns and sacred songs from around the world, but as in any inclusion effort one has to ask, Who is the inclusion for? Is its effect to provide moments of welcome for people from across the globe, or does it have more to do with showing that North American Mennonites can be welcoming, that they can absorb musical marginality with virtuosity while not disturbing their sense of being central to Mennonite experience? What does the need to demonstrate inclusivity say about actual levels of inclusion and marginality within MWC, both about the groups of Mennonites whose inclusion is being signaled through songs, worship, and global villages, and about the groups of Mennonites, like Pink Menno,¹ whose exclusion was also signaled in being relegated to the parking lot?

Second, "Mennonite distinctives" clears space for privileged squabbling about the right way to state whatever normative version of Mennonitism is under consideration (pacifism or nonresistance in the 1940s, nonviolent atonement or not in the 2000s). The word "Mennonite" is an empty box until it is filled up with someone's version of what Mennonite means, and that version, whatever it is, will not only be good for some people and bad for others, it will also end up plaguing the people whom it privileges. To paraphrase Judith Butler, the word "Mennonite" creates a polity through constitutive exclusions that "return to haunt the [polity] predicated upon their absence."² In Butler's understanding, the return of such exclusions forces an "expansion and rearticulation" of what the structure under consideration itself means, which she argues should be a liberalizing movement. But where Mennonites are concerned, the return of the excluded has just as often resulted in a reassertion of exclusion as it has in an expansion or rearticulation of what being Mennonite is about.

¹ See www.pinkmenno.org for a description of the group's rationale and activities.

² Judith Butler, "Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism" in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), 11.

A third function of Mennonite-distinctives-language is to furnish Mennonites with an untiring sense that they are better at Christian ethics than other Christians are (Lutherans don't really care about discipleship, Catholics don't really care about nonviolence, Methodists don't really care about community, and so on). Apart from the narcissism involved in this stance, Mennonites are often guilty of comparing apples and oranges, Mennonite theologians with Catholic lay people, for example. So, when Mennonites point to the views of North American Mennonite theologians on Christian nonviolence to say that the church of Jesus Christ is nonviolent while ignoring both the overall decline in support for Christian nonviolence among members of Mennonite and affiliated churches since World War II and the current (largely, but by no means exclusively, lay) Catholic peace movement that began in the second half of the 20th century, they are making a rather clumsy and inaccurate comparison. Such comparisons are ideological, propping up Mennonite identities, diminishing others, and obscuring internal faults by presenting the lacunae in others' views as essential but those of Mennonites as accidental. In this sense, the Mennonite distinctives agenda is exclusionary: it is built around a deliberate marginalizing of the wider Christian tradition and isolates Mennonites from it in ways that build up traditions of ignorance about what “other” Christians do or believe. So, North American Mennonites, with their distinctives in hand and harking back to the ethical dualism of Conrad Grebel and Michael Sattler, have never really moved on to figure out what the point of being Mennonite is if it is not to allow you to compare yourself favorably to other Christians.

That last bit may overstate the case somewhat, but I think that among the faculty currently teaching ethics at Mennonite institutions in the US and Canada, more than half of us are skeptical about Mennonite distinctives—whether they exist in any generalizable way, and, if they do, whether they are useful for ethics. If the Mennonite distinctives agenda was ever important to Mennonites teaching ethics, it was to a generation wrestling with the way the Niebuhr brothers capitalized on Ernst Troeltsch's dismissal of the Anabaptists and framed Christian pacifism as countercultural in irresponsible and idealistic ways. Of course, those same ethicists had to contend with (and even produced) a Mennonite historiography driven by ideological concerns with how Mennonites fit into North American society,

which meant they had to demonstrate both the existence and continuity of Mennonite distinctives over the last 500 years. In a sense, however, between 1989 and 2000 Mennonite theology went mainstream in North America, so some of us in graduate school at the time did not have to prove that the Radical Reformations were worth investigating, generate a defense of pacifism, or otherwise invest heavily in articulating “distinctives.”

Why do I harbor this assumption that Mennonite distinctives are central to the way Mennonites teach ethics? I doubt that the assumption is descriptively true of Mennonite ethicists today; I wonder whether it has ever been a descriptively true assumption; and, I wonder, if it has not been descriptively true, why do I keep assuming that it has been and in a way that very clearly steers how I teach?

One possible reason is that Christian ethics suffers in Mennonite colleges and universities not because there are few people there with relevant expertise, but rather because many faculty members without relevant expertise think they have it. In our general education curricula, we do not regularly ask English professors to teach Sociology, Mathematics professors to teach Chemistry, Education professors to teach Kinesiology, or History professors to teach Spanish. But we do regularly ask such professors to teach Christian Ethics, at least under the guise of teaching the “compatibility” of Christian faith and values with the said disciplines. What happens when, as entire faculties at universities, we institutionalize on a long-term basis the assumption that some general undergraduate training—or, as an outlier, a seminary course or so—is sufficient to allow instructors competently to “integrate” Christian ethics into their own discipline? One sure outcome is a dilution of appropriate disciplinary grammars and methods in order to accommodate the blunt skills of non-specialists. A concomitant outcome involves students learning inordinately simplified or badly parsed versions of Christian moral reasoning, the kind of thing for which one forgives Sunday School teachers, but which is hardly appropriate as an outcome of undergraduate education.

I am not simply suggesting that Mennonite universities and colleges should respect the disciplinary boundaries of modern academia. Such boundaries, after all, are the product of early 20th-century university administrative and professional credentialing structures, structures which

have always been in flux. I think it is a good thing that, in contrast to reinforcing clear professional and disciplinary boundaries, Mennonite institutions have invested heavily in interdisciplinary programs. Moreover, I am in favor of disciplinary distinctions when they are justified by the growth of bodies of knowledge that are too varied and intricate to be competently examined by one set of faculty.

What I object to is the assumption, enshrined in general education curricula, that Christian theology and ethics are not such bodies of knowledge—that anyone with an advanced degree in any discipline is in principle qualified to teach college-level courses in these subjects by dint of personal religious affiliation. As one example, which I use only because I doubt that Bluffton University stands alone in this predicament, I teach a general education course at Bluffton called “Christian Values in a Global Community,” which examines moral issues pertaining to globalization, underdevelopment, and ecological change from a Christian perspective. I am one of six or seven faculty members who more-or-less regularly teach sections of the course, which we offer every semester. In all of our curriculum, this is the one course in which the need to play up Mennonite distinctives is most conspicuously on display. Yet, for the 20-plus years of its existence, it has had no specifically stated learning objectives. In consequence, the learning objectives that instructors assume are often vague and unmeasurable: for instance, students “should find the course moving.” Yet I am met with incredulous stares when I ask whether my colleagues would think “finding it moving sometimes” is an appropriate outcome for a course in their own disciplines.

A second unexamined assumption I harbor is this: during the 20th century many Mennonites thought that Christian ethics equaled the application of biblical principles to life. This view involves a foundationalist biblical hermeneutic that teaches people to refuse to take responsibility for their interpretations of the Bible. For instance, one defense of pacifism from Mennonites is based on the claim that “the Bible teaches nonviolence.” Often, this view is grounded in the claim that the “clear” sayings of Jesus with regard to nonviolence are epistemologically basic and sufficient warrant for a superstructure of interpretation that accounts for the meaning of “more difficult” passages. Once what the Bible teaches or says has been discovered,

then the moral life is about applying the said teaching consistently without too much fancy thought.

While it should be obvious that discovery itself is a moral endeavor, the hermeneutical principles that people adduce to justify “straightforward” interpretations of the Bible are not really what interests me here. Instead, I take issue with the idea that the Bible is an agent of any kind, that it “says” or “teaches” anything, not only because the Bible is a book, as good for propping open a door as it is as scripture, depending on what one needs to use it for, but also (and far more importantly) because treating the Bible as an agent of any kind deflects moral responsibility away from its readers.³ If readers of scripture are passive recipients of the meaning of texts, then blame for the negative consequences of applied interpretations can be laid upon the Bible (or God) rather than upon the interpreters themselves. If the text yields its authoritative meaning on its own and this meaning has a practical force, then it makes little sense to hold readers accountable for attempting to put it into practice.

The problem with this approach to the Bible is that texts do not interpret themselves. What the text “says” or what we “hear” when we “listen to the voice” of scripture is a metaphor for the activity of interpretation, because people interpret texts. Even calling a text “scripture” is an interpretive act, because “scripture” is not a quality that inheres in some texts. Instead, it names a commitment made by people to interpret texts as sacred, and this commitment places the moral agency exercised by interpreters—not the agency ascribed to a text—at issue in reading the Bible. Such moral agency will be a function of what interpreting people are like, because moral agency not only elucidates but also presumes ontology.

Hermeneutics depends on answering ontological questions, albeit often tacitly and certainly inconclusively. Interpretation is based on and demands prior discernment about what kinds of things are good for you. Representatives of the Roman Catholic tradition often addressed such questions with appeals to “natural law,” and they recognized that, just as

³ See Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1ff, and Dale B. Martin, *New Testament History and Literature* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2012), 15-32.

much as hermeneutics demanded an ontology like natural law, so also natural law was affected by hermeneutical issues, including those of scriptural interpretation. Likewise, the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” identifies multiple, mutually implicating factors in Christian self-understanding, and makes little sense apart from the recognition that the “normed norms” of reason, tradition, and experience are themselves ways of answering ontological questions that are not only inflected by “what the Bible says.”

As with natural law and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, one might also draw attention to “the Gospel of All Creatures,” which some early Anabaptists used precisely as a way to gain ontological purchase on the interpretation of scripture *beyond* the Reformation mantra of *sola scriptura*. It is not so much that they said, “Well, Scripture speaks of the suffering of Christ, and, look, so also many other things tell of the importance of sacrificial suffering,” as it is that they said, “Even if scripture did not speak centrally of the suffering of Christ, we would still know that redemptive suffering is the way of all things, because of the myriad examples we see every day all around us.” That is, the redemptive force of suffering was, for proponents of the Gospel of All Creatures, a comment about nature, ontology, what kinds of things creatures are. It helped to create a hermeneutical principle for interpreting scripture and did not merely reflect “what the Bible says,” since what the Bible says was the very issue under contention.

To sum up this long and winding road, I assume that Mennonite ethics as taught in post-secondary settings has been rather deaf to the moral complexity of the hermeneutical concerns I have enumerated above, short circuiting them with ahistorical appeals to the Bible, peace, or, sometimes, to community—without attention to the phenomenological, performative, and historical details of how, in fact, communities do interpret.

I could go on in the vein of “assumptions that I harbor but teach against,” but I want to transition from talking about what I think people should not do, to what I do when I teach ethics. At Bluffton I teach three general education religion courses in which I ask students to address the same moral question from differing angles. These courses are Christian Theology; Christian Ethics; and War, Peace, and Nonviolence. The moral question framing each class is this: Under what conditions can you live your life without victimizing

others? My fundamental perspective is that everything important about Christianity falls within the compass of this question. To be clear, asking about victims is not morally reductive; for Christians it is, instead, a central part of coming to know ourselves as worshipers of a crucified and forgiving God.⁴

At the center of the Christian imagination is a story about a victim. Whatever else Jesus of Nazareth did, he went to his death as a victim of the collusion of state and sacerdotal power. The canonical Gospels portray him as having gone to his death a willing victim (“I lay down my life of my own accord”) and a forgiving victim (“Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”), and these features clarify the way he was victimized. But, as recognitions of the specificity of Jesus’ story, these characteristics must not be universalized. When Christian theologians and biblical scholars have paid attention to the rhetorical and ideological registers of the Gospels’ portrayals of Jesus’ victimization, the result has sometimes been to recommend Jesus’ attitude to others who are being victimized, often with appalling results. If we think carefully about Christian martyrdom narratives from the first three centuries, we can see that such recommendation was going on from quite early within the Christian movement. It is difficult to avoid concluding that Jesus’ death was being written about *in the New Testament* in such a way that it provided a model of how Christians should face violent death, and that, moreover, many martyr narratives were refractions of the already-refracted model Jesus narratives. There is a difficulty here with the need to subordinate individual narratives to the plot of a master narrative in a way that robs these stories of their own integrity.⁵ It is hard to overstate the case for paying attention to this problem, in light of the way Mennonites have helped perpetuate the myth that acts of victimization are somehow redeemed by the attitude or responses of survivors.⁶ Surely such redemption is not

⁴ My key touchstones for the understanding of “victim” that I use here are the many works of James Alison, especially *Jesus the Forgiving Victim: Listening for the Unheard Voice* (Glenview, IL: Doers Publishing, 2013), as well as Rowan Williams, *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1994). Behind both texts stands Sebastian Moore, *The Crucified Jesus is No Stranger* (London: DLT Press, 1981).

⁵ See Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2-3.

⁶ See, e.g., the articles and posts collected on *Our Stories Untold* (blog), www.ourstoriesuntold.com;

impossible, but an ethic that relies on it both normalizes victimization and places an inappropriate moral burden on survivors; each of these outcomes needs to be resisted and dismantled wherever it is found.

If, however, dimensions of victimization are unavoidable in the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, it is because the image of the crucified imprints upon Christian imaginations the recognition that in the person of Jesus God dies a victim of human aggression, that, therefore, God is where the victims are. Thus, the great questions of Christianity—questions about how people today learn to live with the story of God the victim as the focus of their own stories—ask about victims. Who victimizes whom? Why? And how would things need to change in order to be different? So, when I ask students to consider the conditions under which they might live their lives without victimizing others, I am personalizing these large questions.

Ethics as I see it is a tool for cultivating self-knowledge, not in the much maligned post-Enlightenment individualist sense of the self, but in the sense of the self as a projection, emanation, or symptom of what James Alison calls “the social other,” by which he means “everything that exists in the universe, on a human level (not God). This includes anything with the capacity to move us emotionally or physically (e.g., other people, weather, country, geography, etc.).”⁷ Self-knowledge for Christians has a lot to do with coming to acknowledge the ways you participate in the stories of victims, which might include your own story of being victimized, being a survivor, or both.

It is extremely tough work to broach this set of subjects with my students. If anything is complicating for the sense of self with which they approach college, it is acknowledging the space in their lives occupied by victims. I do not mean simply in the bland sense of an inability to take on board the full weight of the unacknowledged ways in which their lives are built on the backs of others—although cultivating consciousness about this

Ruth E. Krall, *The Elephants in God’s Living Room: Clergy Sexual Abuse and Institutional Clericalism*, vol. 1, Theoretical Issues (Enduring Space, 2012), especially chapter 10: <http://ruthkrall.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2015/09/The-Elephants-in-Gods-Living-Room-Vol-1-%C2%A9.pdf>.

⁷ Alison, *Jesus the Forgiving Victim*, 89.

reality is often where we focus our academic attention in courses in Christian ethics. I mean, instead, the sense that many of my students are survivors of one kind or another or may have victimized others in direct ways, and that they are only just beginning to grapple with such facts about themselves. For instance, many of these students come to college with experiences of sexualized violence in their pasts; sometimes these experiences are reinforced by further experiences in college, and each leaves a traumatic hole in the lives not only of survivors but often of perpetrators as well.

My point here is not that everyone is a victim, though I take the force of the claim that perpetrators of sexual violence can in a sense also be victims of rape culture, of assumptions and practices that normalize sexual violence. Instead, my point is that stories about victims are central to self-knowledge for survivors and perpetrators, and that coming to know oneself in the face of stories like those created by experiences of sexualized violence will involve disavowing deflective strategies of self-presentation.

So, the three courses that I teach are all arenas where we test and build our capacity for cultivating self-knowledge with and as victims. How can you live your life without victimizing others? is not simply a question about adopting practices of walking softly in non-injurious ways through the world, though it is at least that. It is also a question about the kinds of character ingredient in a sense of self that is being released from the anxiety generated by its past of injury and harm. Here are some of the forms these questions take:

1. If God is not a thing of any kind, not in any sort of competition with anything that is, not an object to be grasped by the senses or intellect, always pulling human hearts and minds forward in a never-ending journey of transformation from “glory unto glory,” then what could it mean when Jesus identifies the first and greatest commandment as “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might,” other than “to love your neighbor as yourself”? Many theological problems are generated by our failure to read the parallelism between the first and second of the greatest commandments as *exegetical* (parabolic, midrashic) rather than *additive*, for the God whom Christians worship has no image but the image that

God created in the human being. God the human is God the victim, so how does your trust in God turn you toward victims?

2. What social practices are necessary to acknowledge victims and survivors, participation in which is partially constitutive of those stable dispositions of mind and body Christians call virtue or moral excellence? Hospitality, receptivity, vulnerability, charity, moderation, truthfulness, fidelity, patience—what forms do these strengths take in human lives informed by Jesus, and how do they depend for our induction into their practice on the presence and acknowledgment of victims and survivors in our lives? How are these strengths enriched in their embodiment in human lives as we move toward consciousness of our propensity to victimize and, having been so conscientized, away from the behaviors and compulsions in which we are entangled and with which we create victims and maintain their victimization?

3. And, finally, not Is war permissible or justifiable, and if so, under what conditions? but What kind of victims are created by war, and how have Christians encountered those victims? Beyond categories like “just war” or “pacifism,” which might be summarized as methods of avoiding by logic the realities of violent conflict as victim makers, and in any event indicate a theological conflict that is probably irresolvable, we can ask about and attend to who the victims are, and what is necessary to end the victimization and restore or transform relationships disfigured by violence.⁸ In addition to technique questions of the kind addressed by restorative justice and peacebuilding professionals, there are also relevant historical and theological

⁸ Two recent relevant critiques of the theological stand-off between just war and pacifism are Mark Allman and Tobias Winright, *After the Smoke Clears: The Just War Tradition and Post-War Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2010), and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, *Women’s Bodies as Battlefield: Christian Theology and the Global War on Women* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Each book cites “just peacemaking” as a promising alternative to the just war or pacifism dichotomy, although in my view, their chief strength lies elsewhere, namely in the attention paid to the effects of violent conflict on civilian and vulnerable populations.

contextualizing perspectives to offer on these topics. What, for instance, did the Pax Dei mean for children and women in 10th-century France? How did the transition from militia to standing military affect vulnerable populations and religious minorities in the 19th-century US? How has the use of drones and smart technologies changed Christian perception of, resistance to, or support for using military lethal force? Obviously, these questions are pertinent not simply to an appropriately contextualized understanding of state-sponsored war but also to just policing, Black Lives Matter, disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and the ever-expanding panoply of concerns in which the stakes of persons who experience victimization and marginalization are being visibly represented.

So, is the key to the Christian life “authentic community,” “peace,” “simplicity,” “discipleship,” or a combination thereof? No. How, then, is what I do “Mennonite” in a recognizable way?

A course that is an arena for testing and building the capacity to cultivate self-knowledge with and as victims connects to stories about Mennonite history and people. One of the original engines for articulating Mennonite distinctives was the story about Mennonites as persecuted people. While this story has been a way of reinforcing privilege (Marlene Epp’s work on how sexualized violence gets excluded from Mennonite martyr narratives to privilege the death of men is pertinent here),⁹ a pedagogy that personalizes large questions about victimhood presumes a similar ontology to what characterized the Gospel of All Creatures. That is, I try to organize my classes so that the students’ own experiences and reflections on victimhood form the approach of inquiry to theological questions about God and the self.

Perhaps because of persecution, early Anabaptist communities grabbed whatever was at hand (popular theologies, personal reflection, folklore, guild laws, snippets of scholasticism) to make sense of and justify their theological claims. Most of those communities were not particularly

⁹ Marlene Epp, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2000).

sophisticated, nor did they have the resources to articulate and institutionalize what they were saying and doing in systematic, unrepachable ways. Our situation is not that different. Ableist ideology, racism, and ethnocentrism, heterosexist and cisgender bigotry, global capital, and all the other functions of the heteropatriarchal Evangelical-capitalist resonance machine—these ideas and their representatives are as surely lethal to many of my students as the various Magisteria of the 16th century were to early Anabaptists, so we must use whatever is at hand to have conversations that allow students to reflect on their own personalities, experiences, and cultural markers on “big questions” regarding victimhood, all while not being overly concerned that these reflections fall properly within “Mennonite tradition.”¹⁰ The issue is not Does the pedagogy measure up to some standard of being Mennonite? That is no question of life or death. By contrast, How can I live my life without victimizing others? is.¹¹

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¹⁰ For an explanation of the “Evangelical-capitalist resonance machine,” see William E. Connolly, *Christianity and Capitalism, American Style* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2008).

¹¹ My thanks to Peter Dula, Stanley Hauerwas, Isaac Villegas, Joseph Wiebe, and Jackie Wyse-Rhodes for reading and commenting on drafts of this essay.

Teaching Health Care Ethics from a Peacemaking Perspective

Brenda Srof

The contemporary health care scene is mired in ethical complexities for which the simplicity of the Hippocratic oath's requirement to "do no harm" is inadequate for addressing today's dilemmas. Ever-increasing technological sophistication and soaring costs in health care are major factors that create ethical conundrums from which societies struggle to emerge. Societal expectations demand that health care improve the quality of life and the duration of life, contributing to unrealistic expectations of what a health care system can deliver. In this climate, patients and families need to understand ethical reasoning within a modern context, necessitated by a concern for stewardship and public welfare. This paper describes the study of ethics in the Goshen College nursing program, not simply to give a glimpse into its complexity but to invite the reader to participate in a dialogue about health care from a perspective of stewardship and peace.

Development of a Health Care Ethics Course

Goshen College, a four-year liberal arts college, offers undergraduate degree programs, select graduate programs, and a study abroad program. Rooted in the Mennonite Church USA, Goshen describes itself as a community of faith and learning, striving to foster personal, intellectual, spiritual, and social growth in every person.¹ Discussions to open a baccalaureate nursing program at the College began in the early 1940s against the backdrop of a nation at war.² The baccalaureate program opened in 1949, at a time when hospital-based technical education was the norm for preparing registered nurses.

The model for education in nursing at Goshen College within the theological context of the peace church was visionary in terms of the ethos of Christian service, and corresponded to a call for a broader context of holistic

¹ Goshen College, *Undergraduate Course Catalog*, 2016-2017.

² Vicky Kirkton, "Senior Nurse's Pinning Ceremony Address," *Goshen College Bulletin*, September 2013, 3.

nursing practice that connected the natural and social sciences.³ Building on the foundation of the historic peace church as well as a holistic model of nursing care, it was fitting that a health care ethics course be introduced into the nursing curriculum. Professor Anne Hershberger was instrumental in insuring that the content of this course, added to the curriculum in 1990 and cross-listed in Bible and Religion, was informed by an understanding of ethics grounded within a Mennonite worldview. She had dedicated her scholarship in nursing to the study of ethics in health care.

In its earliest form, the ethics course recognized that advances in medical science and engineering required a reasoned approach to bioethics, one that questioned society's growing love affair with technology, drawing instead from peace church perspectives on stewardship and mutual care in the community context by building on the work of Goshen College campus physician Willard Krabill. In the 1980s and '90s, a time of prolific scholarship and interest in the discipline of bioethics that focused largely upon ethical dilemmas, Krabill advocated for a theological narrative to challenge and inform the nation's affinity for technology.⁴ Noting fundamental shifts from a natural approach to death to a medically managed death, he supported the palliative and hospice movements as an approach to care at the end of life. Citing factors such as the rise in litigation, the secularization of health, and the growing aging population, he called for congregations and communities to discuss stewardship in health care utilization.

Hershberger, a sibling of Krabill's, had developed her own expertise in health care ethics by participating in studies in Bioethics and Sexuality at New York University and in Bioethics in Family Nursing at the University of California San Francisco, and by spending a sabbatical year at the Kennedy Center for Ethics at Georgetown University. Her distinct contribution was the beginning-of-life perspective with an emphasis on nurturing healthy families.⁵ Krabill and Hershberger's contributions have extended to the

³ M. Patricia Donahue, *Nursing: The Finest Art*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Mosby, 1996).

⁴ Willard Krabill, "Death and Dying: Prevailing Medical Perspectives," in *Medical Ethics, Human Choices: A Christian Perspective*, ed. John Rogers (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984).

⁵ Anne K. Hershberger, "Premature Parenthood: Is it Possible to Prevent Teen Pregnancy?" *Mennonite Medical Messenger* 44, no. 3 (1993): 40-42; Anne K. Hershberger, "Recognizing Ethical Issues," in *Ethics and the Educated Person: A Teaching-Learning Resource*, ed. Anne K. Hershberger (Goshen, IN: Goshen College, 1993).

broader community, in the development of health care ethics committees at several facilities in Goshen, and the facilitation of discussion of topics related to health care and bioethics at Mennonite gatherings. In addition, the pair have been important writers and speakers on respecting sexuality as integral to the health of one's whole being. Hershberger's edited book, *Sexuality: God's Gift*, is a comprehensive study offering insight on sensitive topics within a tenor of celebration for God's creation.⁶

When I began teaching the health care ethics course in 2001 following Hershberger's retirement, I built upon the foundation that she and Krabill had laid. Over the course of my tenure, the national landscape of ethics has changed, as has the make-up of the course. While technological advancements have not slowed, there is greater acknowledgement of the value of palliative and hospice care. The enactment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in 2010 also marks a new chapter for health care in the United States.⁷ Organizations such as Physicians for a National Health Program⁸ are raising an ever more important voice in support of single payer systems in the US. Pressures for deciding how to pay for health care are mounting in Canada as well, against the backdrop of an aging population and rising costs.⁹

Although the looming crisis of the aging population is not new, the current shortage of nursing professionals juxtaposed with the growing population of the aged makes for an increased shortage of resources to care for persons in the last decades of life. The failure of society to acknowledge the limits of health care resources contributes to the impasse in moving reasonable health care policies forward.¹⁰ And while public opinion regarding physician assisted suicide (PAS) has remained relatively unchanged since

⁶ Anne K. Hershberger, *Sexuality: God's Gift*, 2nd ed. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999).

⁷ Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 42 U.S.C. § 18001 (2010).

⁸ This organization's website is www.pnhp.org.

⁹ Susan Lunn, "Ottawa Favours Targeted Health-care Spending over Increased Transfer to Provinces," *CBC News*, June 23, 2016, www.cbc.ca/news/politics/philpott-health-accord-1.3649864, accessed Nov. 2, 2016. Shanifa Nasser, "Ontario Budget 2016: Mixed Reaction From Health-care, Student Groups," *CBC News*, February 25, 2016, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-2016-budget-reaction-students-hospitals-1.3464871, accessed November 2, 2016.

¹⁰ Daniel Callahan, *The Troubled Dream of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

2005, with 47 percent of American adults approving of PAS laws, there is an increasing sentiment that physicians should do everything possible to keep patients alive.¹¹

The Goshen College health care ethics course is also changing. In 2014-2015, in an effort to extend it to a broader multi-disciplinary cadre of majors, its designation changed from primarily a nursing course to a core curriculum course—more particularly, a course within a block of offerings in the “Peacemaking Perspective.” The goal of perspectives courses is to provide “an interdisciplinary thread that helps students see how knowledge is created and revised in multiple areas of study.”¹² Using high-impact educational practices such as collaborative learning and intensive writing, the course seeks to build skills in active reflection on ethical issues in health care.

Nursing students are required to enroll in this course, but a small number of students from biology, business, social work, psychology, and even physics have joined the roster and lent their voices to the discussions. By and large, biology students comment on the usefulness of the course in preparing for medical school and a career in medicine. One molecular biology student has made this comment:

Even though I took this class just because I needed a peacemaking perspective course, I realized that the course is going to be one of the most critical courses in my professional life on the first day of the class. In fact, I suggested that this course should be required for every pre-health student. At the beginning of the school year when I began reading *Being Mortal*,¹³ I was very passionate about the end of life theme. The book criticizes the modern healthcare system and suggests a solution. It was such a

¹¹ See Michael Lipka, “Americans of all Ages Divided Over Doctor-assisted Suicide Laws,” *Pew Research Center*, 2014, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/10/22/americans-of-all-ages-divided-over-doctor-assisted-suicide-laws/, accessed November 2, 2016; and Pew Research Center, “Views on End-of-life Medical Treatments: Growing Minority of Americans Say Doctors Should do Everything Possible to Keep Patients Alive,” www.pewforum.org/2013/11/21/views-on-end-of-life-medical-treatments/2013, November 21, 2013, accessed November 2, 2016.

¹² “The Goshen Core,” www.goshen.edu/core/, accessed November 2, 2016.

¹³ Atul Gawande, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014).

huge intervention for me because I had never learned anything about end of life decisions and the end of life dilemmas that many people go through. The most important thing I have learned from the course is how important our roles as healthcare providers are going to be at the end of a patient's life. The course has reignited my ambition of becoming a physician and impacting many people's lives.¹⁴

Setting the Stage: Course Premises

For the majority of students, this is their first venture into a health care ethics course. Some who take it have had little or no experience in the clinical setting, while others such as fourth-year nursing students have completed at least five clinical courses and have perhaps been employed in some capacity in the health care industry. For many who tell stories of their grandparents' decisions at the end of life, this is the frame of reference they bring to the course.

Another evolution of the course pertains to the declining enrollment at the College of students from an Anabaptist faith community perspective. At the same time, there is a growing population of Hispanic students, with this group comprising 20-25 percent of the nursing student body. The diversity of both faith and ethnic make-up is a welcome shift, but it demands that assumptions be made clear when students enter the course. Krabill and Hershberger were well rooted in the Mennonite tradition with its themes of stewardship, social justice, community living, and Jesus as model for life. These basic tenets were, and still are, at the foundation of the course. On the first day of class, I provide students with a list of foundational statements and assumptions, giving them an opportunity to add more points to it. These statements and premises include the following:

- This course will allow us to learn a common language to process ethical problems.
- We will learn to listen more carefully and more openly to those with opposing views.

¹⁴ Tae Gyung Hwang, a senior year biology major at the time of this writing (2016), is currently enrolled at the University of Michigan School of Dentistry. Used with permission.

- We will use a variety of literature on ethical issues.
- We will primarily use a clinical orientation and use, but not get lost in, philosophical reflection.
- Health and freedom of choice values will be upheld.
- Bioethical decisions will be made, if not through careful reflection, then by default.
- Health care resources are limited, so this will temper our decision-making.
- Death is a part of life's experience and not an enemy to be avoided at all costs.
- Society is attracted to sensational medical treatments.
- Our moral beliefs are related to underlying worldviews.
- Examples used in the course focus on real life issues of human significance with which students can readily identify.
- This course's greatest contribution to participants will be to help them learn how to think about bioethical problems, know what questions to ask, determine what resources to draw on when facing such issues, not to determine "correct" decisions.¹⁵

Theoretical Perspectives

The major theoretical perspectives or threads central to the course are two-fold. The first theoretical thread explores what it means to be a person created in the image of God. The second thread centers on relationships of shalom and covenant, calling forth questions of how we are to be in relation to one another in community. These threads are interconnected. Mennonite writers emphasize the centrality of Jesus, the transformative experience of grace, the expression of communal relationship with God, and the expression of

¹⁵ Hershberger, "Recognizing Ethical Issues," 62.

faith in discipleship as central tenets in understanding the person in moral community.¹⁶ Similarly, Joseph Kotva elucidates Anabaptist theology as the discernment of Scripture within the context of the faith community and the Gospel stories of Christ's life and teaching. Kotva observes that "the true church is visible through the transformed lives of its members and their commitment to mutual support and accountability."¹⁷ With this Anabaptist perspective, the emphasis is on moral responsibility within the faith community. The parable of the Good Samaritan is used in class as a representation of genuine caring presence, challenging the status quo, and practicing Christian beneficence.

The American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics, Provision 1, states that "the nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person."¹⁸ More specifically, respect for dignity affords protection of persons, such as protection from harm in the course of receiving medical care or participating in research. Also embedded in respect for dignity is the Judeo-Christian concept of the *imago dei* (the person is made in the image of God).¹⁹ Exploration of what it means to be person is part of the moral education important for students in Christian liberal arts colleges. Students in the Goshen course may experience transformation as they explore, ponder, and dialogue in such a way that the theme of personhood will be meaningful for them in their professional lives.

Course Outline and Methodologies

In the transition of the health care ethics course from a disciplinary offering to a peacemaking perspectives offering, I have sought out meaningful methodologies to connect peacemaking, ethics, and the Anabaptist faith perspective. It is important to me that the foundational elements include philosophical underpinnings, major theories and principles of ethics,

¹⁶ Roman J. Miller, "Viewing Bioethics Through Anabaptist Eyes," in *Viewing New Creations with Anabaptist Eyes: Ethics of Biotechnology*, ed. Roman J. Miller, Beryl H. Brubaker, and James C. Peterson (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing, 2005), 87-88.

¹⁷ Joseph J. Kotva, Jr., *The Anabaptist Tradition: Religious Beliefs and Healthcare Decisions* (Park Ridge, IL: Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith, and Ethics, 2002), 2.

¹⁸ American Nurses Association, *Guide to the Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: American Nurses Association, 2015), 1.

¹⁹ American Nurses Association, *Guide to the Code*, 8.

and major tenets of the Mennonite faith tradition (discipleship, truth, stewardship, and peace).²⁰ Building on these components, the broad content categories include: 1) major schools of thought, theories, and principles; 2) ethics in professional relationships; 3) the nature of personhood; 4) ethics considerations across the life span; and 5) the health care delivery system, including allocation of resources. Key assignments flow from the course objectives. Table 1 presents several representative objectives aligned with the assignments and specific questions.

Table 1. Health Care Ethics: Course Objectives, Assignments, and Examples

COURSE OBJECTIVE	STUDENT ASSIGNMENT	SPECIFIC EXAMPLE
Given a case study presenting conflicting moral choices, describe the ways in which ethical theories, principles, and decision-making models facilitate thinking about the case in constructive ways.	Response Paper	Given a case study, describe how the case would be addressed from deontologic and teleologic perspectives.
Using a variety of resources from the ethics literature, critically analyze arguments related to conflicting moral choices in health care.	Final integration paper	Integration paper that asks the question “What is the interconnection of distributive justice and the ethical practice of peacemaking?” or “How does the code of ethics of your chosen profession inform views and practice of honoring the personhood of others?”
Using a variety of resources from the ethics literature, critically analyze arguments related to conflicting moral choices in health care.	Decision-making model application assignment	Given a case study, apply a given decision-making model as an approach to addressing the dilemma.

²⁰ General Conference Mennonite Church; Mennonite Church USA, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995).

COURSE OBJECTIVE	STUDENT ASSIGNMENT	SPECIFIC EXAMPLE
Describe selected ethical problems/dilemmas present in contemporary healthcare practice.	Point Counterpoint Student Presentation	Sample questions for debate: Should truth-telling depend on the patient's culture? Should prisoners be allowed to participate in research? Should public health override powers over individual liberty in combating bioterrorism? (Levine, 2010) ²¹

The Nature of Morality: Introduction to Ethics

Meaning is developed when students learn to listen to the varying perspectives of class members. In one model exercise, they are asked to indicate on a continuum how much they agree or disagree with the statement, "Watermelon should only be eaten in the summertime." This non-threatening first question forges discussion as to the merits of seasonal watermelon consumption versus random consumption. Students are then asked to think about where they would place themselves on a continuum representing their agreement or disagreement with the statement, "There are some things that are simply and absolutely right or wrong." As they articulate their own positions, they identify their beliefs and values, and explore constructs of moral relativism, metaethics, ethical objectivism, and moral responsibility.

Moral certainty is tested in the video, "What's the Right Thing to Do?"²² In this video, Harvard professor Michael Sandel models a framework for moral discourse, using the classic case of a trolley car careening out of

²¹ Carol Levine, *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Bioethical Issues*, 13th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2010).

²² Michael Sandel, "What's the Right Thing to Do? Justice with Michael Sandel," TED video, filmed September 2005; www.ted.com/talks/michael_sandel_what_s_the_right_thing_to_do, accessed November 2, 2016.

control. The trolley car driver must decide if he will continue forward and kill five people standing on the main track, or pull a lever, switch the track, and kill one person on a secondary track. Students in the video as well as those in my classroom engage in active debate on the moral choice. From the first day of class, students recognize that their current moral frameworks may be insufficient for addressing the complex dilemmas in health care. One student stated it this way: “I thought I knew myself and my moral frame, but my classmates and I just can’t stop talking about class last week. The first class session makes my head swim because I am challenged to think about my own thinking.” The Sandel video and student engagement in the chaos of unknowing is a natural prelude to an introduction to the ethics theories (beginning with deontology and teleology) and principles. These theories and principles are themes to which we return in every session.

At first blush, the principles of ethics appear to be without controversy. For example, the merits of such principles as beneficence and non-maleficence are dispositional for health care providers. However, using Beauchamp and Childress’s model, we begin to dissect beneficence, engaging in questions of “obligatory” versus “ideal” beneficence.²³ In this model, health care providers are obligated to render action when such action can prevent harm without significant risks and burdens to the provider, and the benefits are expected to outweigh burdens.²⁴ Peter Singer, contrastingly, advocates for an altruistic ideal beneficence, a type of beneficence that not only prevents harm but promotes good. He sets a relatively high standard for beneficence, drawing attention to issues of global poverty and society’s obligation to respond in positive ways.²⁵

Rosemarie Parse is a nursing theorist steeped in the phenomenological tradition. In essence, her theory is “grounded in the view of the human as unitary (different from the sum of parts) and focuses on optimal well-being and quality of life.”²⁶ This view contrasts with predominant views in

²³ Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 7th ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

²⁵ Peter Singer, “The Why and How of Effective Altruism,” TED video, filmed March 2013; www.ted.com/talks/peter_singer_the_why_and_how_of_effective_altruism?language=en, accessed November 2, 2016.

²⁶ Rosemarie R. Parse, *The Human Becoming School of Thought* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage,

medicine and nursing that see the human as a “mechanistic bio-psycho-social-spiritual being.”²⁷ Health, according to Parse, is an ongoing process of becoming, composed of the lived experiences of humans engaged in shifting perspectives woven through the fabric of life. Although I don’t review Parse’s theory in class, for me it is a paradigm that beckons ethical perspectives to reach beyond the historically rooted theories of teleology and deontology. In a postmodern society, students quite naturally engage in the phenomenological, seeking an understanding of the patient’s story as central to patient care.

A more holistic view of the person, offered through a narrative theoretical perspective, points to the connectedness of life and the patterns of human becoming in what Parse calls the emergence occurring in “genuine human presence.”²⁸ I am personally curious about the notion of genuine human presence, and I want students to ponder this construct. Given the traditional patriarchal mores in health care practice, I contemplate how to move students from a mechanistic model to a view of health care provider and patient in genuine presence and mutuality. It is my desire that they commit to the centrality of authentic relationships, and to the sacredness of what Martin Buber calls the “I-Thou,” not the “I-It,” of human relations.²⁹

If the sacredness of authentic relationship is normative in health care, what role does developing virtuous character play? To explore this question, I ask students to reflect on the nature of a person who for them represents virtuous character, with the emphasis on virtues as not so much something we do but as characteristics of who we are. W.F. May’s description of the covenant relationship of physician and patient as a sacred consecrated bond between healer and person, noting that genuine relationship requires active engagement, ties in well here.³⁰ Being a person of virtue requires nurture of one’s character, self-examination, and personal discipline.

1998), 6.

²⁷ Ibid., 6.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971).

³⁰ W.F. May, “Code, Covenant, or Philanthropy,” *The Hastings Center Report* 5, no. 5 (1975): 29-38.

Ethics in Professional Relationships

In an increasingly economically stressed health care system risking dehumanization, the ethics of professional relationships must consider the concepts of role fidelity, paternalism, self-determination, and veracity. Numerous case examples demonstrate the conflict between beneficence, paternalism, and role fidelity on the one side, and self-determination and autonomy on the other. In a classic video, *Does Dr. Know Best?*, prominent figures such as US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop and psychiatrist Willard Gaylin of the Hastings Center engage in a case study of a young woman with cervical cancer who defies recommended treatment modalities.³¹ Issues of paternalism, privacy, and self-determination emerge as the case gains in complexity over the course of the video. Inevitably, the student dialogue turns to the language of patient rights versus physician rights. While paternalism is passé in the 21st century, students appreciate the dilemma of preserving the provider's autonomous rights while simultaneously preserving the provider's overarching duty to honor the patient's right to self-determination.

When class discussion begins to meander to the theme of rights, I ask students to take caution. An appeal to one's rights sometimes makes demands in unhealthful ways. Rather, the expression of moral behavior should manifest itself in our caring for God's handiwork with gentleness, stewardship, respect, and holistic living.³² Therefore, addressing moral questions from the perspective of whose rights prevail is limiting, and disengages the discussion from the tenet that we belong to God and are established in community with God from whom we receive life and sustenance.³³

Given the theme of communal relationship, one student has reflected that "It seems that we are focusing a lot of attention in our society on paternalism versus self-determination and this is troubling to me. I think the focus of the discussion needs to be broader to discuss moral relationships in the context of the broader society." To this end, I ask students in a written reflection assignment to examine the limitations of individualism as a

³¹ Ethics in America, "Does Doctor Know Best?" YouTube video from Columbia University *Seminars on Media and Society* (1989), www.youtube.com/watch?v=1godZGrAq00, accessed November 2, 2016.

³² Miller, "Viewing Bioethics," 94.

³³ Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

trump card in ethical decision-making. They reference codes of ethics for their respective professions, for example the right to self-determination articulated in the ANA Code of Ethics, Provision I.³⁴ But the reflection also calls on them to view the person within the context of the broader moral community with attention to the principles of justice. They are asked to hold in tension these two competing commitments: honoring patient autonomy and promoting broader justice.

Holding this tension in place, we turn our attention to issues such as organ procurement. Steen Jensen illustrates this well in the video *Organs for Sale*, examining the need and desire of wealthy individuals against the encroachment on, and violation of, persons in poor communities in countries where organs can be bought and sold.³⁵ Students have mixed responses to this video. Some see no harm in a man from a wealthy country purchasing a kidney from a tenant farmer in an impoverished one. Others see deeper injustices at work that create untenable situations in which persons caught in economic desperation go to great lengths (or take great risks), such as selling kidneys in order to preserve family survival.

Ethicists M.C. Brannigan and J.A. Boss state that we often make cultural definitions of morality based on a desire to maintain the status quo, depersonalizing beings in order to obtain some utilitarian good.³⁶ Students begin to understand that if we desire the greater good and commit ourselves to work for justice for those oppressed, there may be limits to resource allocation in health care. Others agree that there are such limits.³⁷ Contrary to the growing view that physicians should employ ever-expanding technology to keep people alive, recognition of the sanctity of life should prevent an ultimate trespass upon the person by extensive use of technological resources in cases of medical futility.³⁸ Christian authors such as Bouma et al. recognize there are limits such that “health and life of the body are goods that we may

³⁴ *Code of Ethics, Provision I*, 15.

³⁵ “Organs for Sale,” video, dir. Steen Jensen (New York: Filmmakers Library, 2004).

³⁶ M.C. Brannigan and J.A. Boss, *Healthcare Ethics in a Diverse Society* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 2001), 15.

³⁷ See Hessel Bouma III, Douglas Diekema, Edward Langerak, Theodore Rottman, and Allen Verhey, *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989); Paul Ramsey, *The Patient as Person* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1979).

³⁸ Ramsey, *The Patient as Person*, xiii.

and must seek, but they are not the greatest good, and they may need to be risked and sacrificed in the pursuit of other goods.”³⁹

The Nature of Personhood

In terms of our response of beneficence to others, I wonder what it is that students must grasp about “being.” Presenting them with a bowl of apples, I ask them to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions of an apple. Typical and expected answers include the fruit’s taste, shape, crunchiness, and color—all attributes and characteristics that could also describe other fruits. At some point, a wise student will finally proclaim the genetic structure as the necessary and sufficient condition. The follow-up question becomes What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of personhood? I then introduce counter-posing definitions of personhood, comparing the writings of Joseph Fletcher⁴⁰ with those of Bouma et al.

Fletcher’s seminal work sets a high bar for defining the person as a specific subset of humanity, framing the necessary and sufficient conditions of personhood as minimum intelligence, self-awareness, a sense of time, concern for others, curiosity, control of existence, and ability to communicate. (This is a summary of his total list.) In contrast, Bouma and his co-authors set forth personhood as being created by God, in the image and likeness of God, and caring for persons from the moment of conception, at which time humans are intentionally designed with a special moral status as God’s creation. Whereas Fletcher’s definition implies that those falling outside a specific set of criteria are somewhat less deserving of health care resources, Bouma et al. honor the sanctity of life perspective.

In small groups, students are given cards on which are written each of Fletcher’s characteristics constituting the human profile. I ask them to rank the cards from the most to the least important. In almost every case, self-awareness and neo-cortical function rise to the top of the list. Using the Socratic method to delve into deeper levels of thought, I help students to see that many people could possibly fall outside of the community of persons based on their categorizations: undocumented immigrants, children with

³⁹ Bouma et al., *Christian Faith*, 44.

⁴⁰ Joseph Fletcher, *Humanhood: Essays in Biomedical Ethics* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1979).

trisomy 21 (Down's Syndrome), or fetuses who have the potential for characteristics of personhood. Fundamentally, how we make decisions about belonging in the club called personhood will continue to shape health care priorities and care responses.

Fletcher's criteria present a fragmented view, as if one can somehow disentangle the various elements of human existence in order to justify withholding resources from an individual without a proper claim to personhood. The nuances of neurological and physiological functioning that place a human inside or outside the club can lead to serious consequences. Such segregation propagates the language of individual rights, and perpetuates prejudices leading to racism, sexism, and ageism. History is rife with examples of outcomes of limitations placed on personhood, such as the Nazi war crimes of Josef Mengele's experiments on twins, the gross negligence and disregard for human dignity represented in the Tuskegee trials, and the misinterpretation of utilitarian ideals in the case of early gene therapy research for the 18-year-old Jesse Gelsinger.⁴¹ In the end, the conceptual theme of personhood lends itself to looking outside the individual perspective to a global perspective, thinking about how members of moral communities are moved to the fringes in systematic ways based on race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomics. The personhood theme provides a thought-provoking base around which questions of faith, virtue, morality, and professional responsibility can be examined.

Interconnections of faith, virtue, and personhood are evident in responses to an assignment that connects to the students' affective mode of learning. Upon entering the classroom, they find tables laid out with photos taken from *National Geographic*.⁴² Without knowing the nature of the assignment, they choose a photo that in some way creates an emotional affinity for them. They discuss it with classmates, and make a conjecture as

⁴¹ Jesse Gelsinger suffered from an X-linked genetic disease, ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency. His death in 1999 is marked as the first death directly related to gene therapy. See "The Biotech Death of Jesse Gelsinger," *New York Times*, November 28, 1999, www.nytimes.com/1999/11/28/magazine/the-biotech-death-of-jesse-gelsinger.html, accessed November 2, 2016. See also Gregory E. Pence, *Medical Ethics: Accounts of the Cases that Shaped and Define Medical Ethics* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

⁴² Leah Bendavid-Val, *National Geographic: The Photographs* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2008).

to why it created a personal connection for them. They are then asked to write a short essay answering the question, “What does the photo say to you about personhood?” Some responses typically discuss racial discrimination and denial of health care resources to those refused status as persons, some describe the lack of claim to personhood on the part of refugees experiencing war-zone trauma, and others depict family members consoling one another as they donate the organs and tissues of a dying child.

As well, some responses discuss unfair distribution of resources as a key component for denying personhood, racial discrimination as a failure to recognize the intrinsic worth of, and the importance of understanding the historical narrative of, each person. For this assignment, one student selected a famous photo taken by Steve McCurry on assignment in a crowded Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan. This photo, known almost universally as “The Afghan Girl,” first appeared on a *National Geographic* cover in 1985. The student, reflecting on the photo and the theme of personhood, wrote:

It is almost hard for me to imagine a life like hers and mine existing in the same plane of time and space, but it does. We are, after all, both people here on Earth. We both have families who we love. We have goals and needs and desires. But how is it that others respect my needs for safety, love, and education, but not hers? Does someone’s value as a human rely solely on other people’s perception of that value? I would like to say no. If you had asked me just three weeks ago how I defined personhood, I would have mumbled something about consciousness and relationships with others. But there are devil’s advocates with tricky follow-up questions. What about those who are comatose, or have severe handicaps? I think I must now revise my definition of personhood to this: the presence of a spirit or a soul. The first provision of the nursing code of ethics talks about “compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person.”⁴³ So regardless of whether I live in North America with a *National Geographic* subscription and loving brothers, or in a refugee camp in rural Pakistan with

⁴³ *Code of Ethics, Provision I, 1.*

no family at all but the people who hide from the bombers with me, the respect and care I deserve is the same. Though we claim to work for justice, life remains vastly unfair. Isn't it interesting that so much of what shapes our personhood—our thoughts, relationships, even eyes—lies in the hands of others?⁴⁴

As noted earlier, exploring what it means to be a person is an important part of the moral education for those attending a Christian liberal arts college. Students may experience personal and professional transformation as they engage with the theme of personhood.

Ethics Across the Lifespan

Ethical theory, ethical principles, and the meaning of personhood are applied in the course to topics representative of health experience across the lifespan. For example, questions at the beginning of life include those of eugenics, prenatal genetic testing, and abortion. Ethical issues in childhood and adolescence include mandatory immunization, including immunizations for human papilloma virus. The themes of ethics at the end of life take considerable time and attention. Sentinel cases in modern media dramatize the issues. The Terri Schiavo case dramatizes the debate for decision-making rights at the end of life. This case, beginning with Schiavo's massive brain injury resulting from cardiac arrest in 1990 and ending with her death in 2015, was wrought with bitter entanglements between husband and parents on the extent of end-of-life care, decision-making authority, and questions about the fundamental nature of the human person.⁴⁵ This case reveals that polarization among the public regarding sanctity of life, the right to die, and decision-making rights is counterproductive, and only serves to further trivialize the person. In Schiavo's case, the communal experience of transformational grace was sadly lacking.

The values of communal relationship and stewardship, not of individual rights, is affirmed by Daniel Callahan, who explores the intensive use of technology at the end of the natural course of one's life. Callahan

⁴⁴ Anna Cullar, a junior nursing major at the time of this writing (2016), continues as a student at Goshen College. Used with permission.

⁴⁵ *Terri Schiavo: The Right to Die*, e-book, www.nytimes.com/store/terri-schiavo-the-right-to-die-tb074.html (New York: New York Times Company, 2013), accessed November 2, 2016.

advocates for the “taming” of death and the nurturing of societal values that negate the predominant narcissism in our society. As persons face the end of life, “narcissism struggles with altruism; the insistent clamor of desires and wants wrestles with the claims of morality.”⁴⁶ To tame death, says Callahan, society must return to the circle of family, friends, and children as a supportive group for dialogue when facing end-of-life decisions. When seemingly insurmountable conflicts arise, the responsive health team will facilitate navigation to peaceful resolution.

In the final class assignment students engage in reflective discourse on the foundational themes. In writing about end-of-life decisions and roles of health care providers, a biology student has observed that:

When a patient faces the end of their life due to age or terminal illness, the doctor and the patient discuss the diagnosis and prognosis—an extremely difficult conversation for both parties. Nevertheless, the beauty of being a healthcare provider is having the ability to build relationships with patients and to affect their lives in positive ways. Healthcare providers play a significant role in enhancing the quality during the final days of terminally ill patients. In order to accomplish the role, they should be interpretive rather than paternalistic in order to guide patients to make appropriate end of life decisions and provide palliative care instead of curative care to enable patients to live a normal life with their loved ones.⁴⁷

Witnessing the transformation of students throughout the course is extremely satisfying. In the last class session, I scatter mustard seeds on the desks and read the parable of the mustard seed. As students continue the process of developing virtue and moral character, they can be the mustard seed, growing to great heights and providing shade for the weary.

Summary

My approach to teaching ethics bears in mind that ethical decision-making

⁴⁶ Callahan, *The Troubled Dream of Life*, 25.

⁴⁷ Tae Gyung Hwang, a senior year biology major at the time of this writing (2016), is currently enrolled at the University of Michigan School of Dentistry. Used with permission.

requires affective as well as cognitive involvement.⁴⁸ Whereas all theoretical perspectives provide insight into moral dilemmas, the perspective of personal narrative seems most in keeping with understanding the relational aspect of personhood within created humanity. This approach reminds us that we are not disconnected bits and pieces but part of a larger pattern, a human narrative that gives purpose to our lives.⁴⁹ The discussion of themes through case studies, open dialogue, and faith exploration helps us remember that sharing in the suffering and burdens of others is central to our communal relation with God.⁵⁰ As Anne Hershberger reminds us, “Ethical issues and matters of character pervade all areas of life and thought; therefore, it behooves educators to help students recognize ethical issues and the ramifications of their decisions for themselves and for those with whom one interacts in society.”⁵¹

Finally, as I reflect on the convergence of factors that led to the current course design, the launching of the nursing program at Goshen College after World War II, the initiation of a health care ethics class in the 1990s, and the evolution of this class into a core curriculum peacemaking perspectives offering, I am awed by the interconnectedness and relevance of it all. Basing health care ethics education on the foundational theoretical perspectives of the person in the image of God, and in relation to shalom in community, remains both a vision to uphold and the subject matter for important dialogue. As students emerge from the health care ethics course, may they continue to grow—and sow seeds of virtue and healthful living.

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⁴⁸ Arthur F. Holmes, *Shaping Character: Moral Education in the Christian College* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 55-56.

⁴⁹ Stanley Hauerwas, *God, Medicine, and Suffering* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990).

⁵⁰ Meilaender, *Bioethics*, 2.

⁵¹ Hershberger, “Recognizing Ethical Issues,” 23.

The Ground and Educational Ministry of Ethics: A (Darkly Hued) Anabaptist Perspective

James Samuel Logan

Ethics on Planet Earth and in the Classroom

Ethics begins with human birth into an un/known geo-historical world. Any particular human birth world is governed by an underlying ethos or distinctive world view, which (for better, worse, and all points in between) grounds ascribed cultural narratives that feature racial-ethnic-gender-communal-trans/national identities, as well as principles, virtues, values, customs, and common practices that bind human associations in the natural and, for most people, spiritual world(s). Indeed, I set the classroom stage for the teaching of ethics by helping students to understand that complex and subtle social-cultural histories, stories, and ideological understandings always undergird families, communities, societies, and nations. All these domains of human life work in interactive union to shape and reshape the individuals who inhabit these intersectional spheres of human life, which are persistently engaged from within and from without.

Within one's birth-world and beyond it there are universal truths that ground all ethics, namely, the basic human quest to grapple with the contingencies, complexities, tragedies, and promises of natural, temporal, life. In this regard ethics—the art and/or science of continuous moral inquiry, reasoning, and action—routinely meets us in our common desire for safety, security, and protection; in our desire for associations with, and belonging to, those things that give life ultimate meaning and purpose; and in our desire to have our human dignity valued, affirmed, and respected by others.

It is in the context of such universal observations and concerns that I contend in my religion classrooms that ethics, as noted by Dietrich Bonhoeffer is very much, “a matter of history” and “a child of the earth.”¹

¹ A rendering of Bonhoeffer's fuller thought concerning the datum of ethics reads as follows: “Ethics is a matter of blood and a matter of history. It did not simply descend to earth from heaven. Rather, it is a child of the earth, and for that reason its face changes with history as

Or to put it as many liberation theologians, feminists, womanists, and queer theorists have contended, religious and theological ethics are always informed by historical traditions forged in particular times and places. This notion goes back at least as far as the teleological virtue ethics of Aristotle, who maintained that moral reasoning begins with what is known to us—that is, what is sufficiently self-evident requiring no “reason why,” the portion of knowledge about the world that is “without qualification.”² This point about the earthbound quality of all ethical understanding, whether “meta-ethics,” “normative ethics,” or “applied ethics,” suggests that no ethical system, theory, philosophy, or theology is devoid of a necessary historical ground that roots it in temporal time and geographic place. In this regard, I often draw on the contention of the great African American public intellectual, James Baldwin, who noted that

. . . the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations.³

So it is in the particular context of the wisdom of Black American history and intellectual genius, Christian liberation, Anabaptist ethics of various sorts, and ancient virtue ethics that my teaching of ethics finds its datum as it expands out to encounter and engage a rich variety of other moral traditions of struggle and hope in a cosmopolitan society and world. The ethical ground of my classroom teaching understands that an Aristotelian *politics* (the science of the whole) informs, and is informed by, *ethics* (the science of the part).

While my philosophy of teaching ethics is always in a state of becoming, a foundational understanding I carry into the classroom is that

well as with the renewal of blood, with the transition between generations. There is a German ethic as well as a French ethic and an American ethic. None is more or less ethical than the other, for all remain bound to history....” See *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 10: Barcelona, Berlin, New York 1928–1931*, ed. Clifford J. Green (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 360.

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1095b.

³ James Baldwin, “The White Man’s Guilt,” *Ebony*, August 1965, 47.

teaching is a political activity. By “political” I mean that teaching is a power-activity that contributes to ways in which we employ our various forms of agency to organize our common lives together in the natural-spiritual world. What goes on in classrooms is both a reflection of, and a contributor to, the politics of living that is happening in families, communities, the wider society, and the world. Hence, as a politics, teaching is an activity related to the pursuit of power/influence, status, recognition, belonging, and control (often involving a variety of methods, strategies, maneuvers, and intrigues).

Given my view that any vocation, including teaching, ought to serve as a foreshadowing of the better moral world that people of goodwill seek to create, I tend to employ a collaborative, interactive, and dialogical seminar style of learning, with inclusive language as a communicative foundation. Even with this pedagogical foundation, it is still important that the art of lecturing be employed in order to lift out salient themes that might not appear so obvious in the texts or other materials under consideration.

As a teacher interested in religious, social, and philosophical ethics, as well as in constructive theologies, cultural criticism, and the role of religion in public life, I hope to help place students’ (and my own) constructive/normative assertions and moral commitments in conversation with various contemporary and historical ideas, figures, and social movements. I wish to assist students in developing their capacity to engage difficult moral problems in more complicated and subtle ways. As they discuss strong and opposing views about some of the most provocative ethical issues of our time, I try to foster an atmosphere where all members of the class can feel relatively comfortable expressing their views. Here it is important that all are treated with dignity and respect, as arguments that some will surely find objectionable will require that others be intellectually, morally, and psychologically vulnerable to views other than their own. Of course having said this—and with the best of intentions—liberal arts instructors like me will sometimes find themselves participating in the arduous task of discerning when a student’s (or my own) opinion or position crosses the line, and then regulating accordingly. This is always dicey terrain both inside and outside the classroom.

Race, Mass Incarceration, and the Black Body: Teaching as Ethical Ministry

I offer two specific case examples of the trajectory of my classroom teaching in light of my contextual ethos in the United States and at Earlham College, a Quaker liberal arts college. The social consequences of mass incarceration in the United States have been substantial. The complex intersections of bureaucratic, political, economic, and media-driven forces that fuel excessive spending, bodily confinement, community supervision, and surveillance as means of domestic crime control and corporate profit have compromised the societal good in the US. In her widely read and debated text, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness*, Michelle Alexander correctly notes that the entire collection of institutions and practices comprising the criminal justice system is not an independent system. Rather, the criminal justice system is “a *gateway* into a much larger system of racial stigmatization and permanent marginalization.” She goes on to contend that “This larger system, referred to . . . as mass incarceration, is a system that locks people not only behind actual bars in actual prisons, but also behind virtual bars and virtual walls—walls that are invisible to the naked eye but function nearly as effectively as Jim Crow laws once did at locking people of color into permanent second class citizenship.”⁴ Indeed, “The term *mass incarceration* refers not only to the criminal justice system but also to the larger web of laws, rules, policies, and customs that control those labeled as criminals both in and out of prison.”⁵ There is no doubt that the new Jim Crow, this new insidious caste system, has seriously exacerbated the destabilization of Black communities. With regard to the collateral social consequences of mass incarceration, Black communities experience a quite disproportionate brunt of the nation’s commitment to the new Jim Crow.

As a religion professor and director of a Program in African and African American Studies at a peace church liberal arts college, I view my

⁴ “Jim Crow,” the term commonly used for the systems of forced Black segregation and disenfranchisement in the Southern states from roughly 1865 to 1965, is inclusive of state and local laws, customs, and common social practices that restricted voting rights and relegated Black citizens to inferior public accommodations, housing, schooling, employment opportunities, and other markers of full and complete citizenship.

⁵ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 12-13.

teaching and scholarship as a Christian ministry against this state of affairs. My teaching of ethics concerned with race, mass incarceration, and the Black body can be seen in two courses I conduct as an expression of my vocational ministry: Criminal Justice and Moral Vision, and Religion and Culture of Hip Hop. After commenting on the socio-religious trajectories of these courses, I will offer something of the theo-ethical thinking and attitude that informs, and is informed by, my ministry of teaching.

In Criminal Justice and Moral Vision, my students and I work to articulate various religious and other moral visions that might serve as resources, inspiration, or foundations that might inform confrontations with the nation's new Jim Crow. From the start, I want students to understand the social context in which the course exists. I want them to know that I recognize that Black males are not the only group disproportionately targeted by US criminal justice systems. Indeed, Angela Davis's observation that the prison-industrial complex "trains its sights on black women and other men [and women] of color, as well as on poor white people," cannot be ignored.⁶ I do think, however, that some initial focus on Black men, and on Black communities in general, is appropriate because they represent the nerve-center (the ground zero) of debates over race, mass incarceration, and the Black body.

To say that a focus on Black people is to focus on the nerve-center of the debate over mass incarceration is simply to say that no other large community of US residents shares the same burden of disproportionate confinement and overall criminal corrections sanction, supervision, surveillance, and death. With the possible exception of the one or two percent or so of Native Americans, the prominence and urgency of a focus on Black "affirmative action" in the nation's carceral matrix is difficult to overstate. African American males make up less than 7 percent of the US population, yet they compose (perhaps conservatively) approximately 37.5 percent (750,000) of the of the nation's jail and prison inmates. Taken together, African American males and females represent (nearly) half the nation's inmates.⁷

⁶ Angela Y. Davis, "Race, Gender, and Prison History: From the Convict Lease System to the Supermax Prison," in *Prison Masculinities*, ed. Don Sabo, Terry A. Kupers, and Willie London (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2001), 35.

⁷ If Joseph Ryan is correct, by April 1999 Black people accounted for 65 percent of US inmates.

More than 600,000 Black males between the ages of 20 and 39 are being imprisoned, a devastatingly high number.⁸ More Black male bodies occupy prisons and jails than are in higher education: “for every black male who graduates from college, one hundred others are in prison or jail.”⁹ Unfortunately, since the commencement of the 1980s “war on drugs,” “the same disproportionate pattern is occurring with African-American females, whose rate of inmate growth has now surpassed that of males.”¹⁰ With the staggering increase in the confinement of Black female bodies since the 1980s, we see a significant expansion of the historical psychosexual and fetishized surveillance of the Black female body, along with the much higher rates of criminalization of their bodies.

The highly racialized state of the new Jim Crow expresses significant underlying anxieties within the body politic; these racial anxieties get expressed in the disproportionate stopping and frisking, sanctioning, and killing of the Black body.

One of the dimensions of what I am saying is episodically evidenced in the paramilitarized police terror, supervision, and surveillance of individual Black bodies and whole communities, as in Ferguson, Missouri, and in West Philadelphia, where in 1985 some sixty blocks were destroyed when a helicopter primed for war dropped a military explosive on the MOVE family headquarters, killing eleven adults and children during a standoff with police. Militarized police forces become increasingly frequent, as the armed forces turn over more and more of their weapons of war over to domestic police forces. The specter of hyper-paramilitarized policing in Black communities is evidence of a hegemonic order (both overt and covert), which routinely manages and punishes the perceived threats that frequently get mapped onto Black bodies.

See Joseph Ryan, “Black Prison Population Approaches One Million,” *Socialist Action*, April 1999, www.socialistaction.org/news/199904/prison.html.

⁸ James Lanier has reported that, as of July 2003, more than 596,400 Black males between the ages 20 and 39 were incarcerated. See James R. Lanier, “The Harmful Impact of the Criminal Justice System and War on Drugs on the African-American Family,” *National Urban League Annual Report 2003*, 4, nul.iamempowered.com/files/report_attachments/2003AnnualRpt.pdf.

⁹ Lanier, “The Harmful Impact.”

¹⁰ Ibid.

Leading up to this state of affairs is a long religious and racial history that has psycho-sexually degraded and criminalized Black bodies. From slavery, to the narratives of Jim and Jane Crow, to today's new Jim Crow, Black people have lived as a pariah people both resisting and conforming to anti-Black racism, which today is a constant feature of mass incarceration. The racial ethos governing Black bodies gets created and recreated by the routine discriminatory actions of individuals and systemic institutions under the influence of excessive national anxiety, fear, hate, vindictiveness, cynicism, ignorance, latent and overt feelings of White cultural superiority, and the desire to control and manage the surplus populations needed to secure cheap labor and high profits in an advanced capitalistic society.

With respect to the policing of Black bodies, I suggest to students in the Criminal Justice course that, among many other things, military-style policing and surveillance in Black communities functions as if these communities were a caste of domestic enemy combatants.

In the Religion and Culture of Hip Hop course, my students and I work to get at the moral significance of Hip Hop as a religious and cultural force adequate to mount a fight against the new Jim Crow. Viewing Hip Hop as a religious and wider cultural phenomenon, this course examines its synchronistic embrace and employment of traditional (sometimes transcendent) religious symbols, myths, and rituals. The course also explores the possibility that Hip Hop itself has become a "religion" to which many young and middle-aged people give their faith and fidelity as they pursue various desires for identity, justice, love, peace, and freedom. As is true with any religion, life philosophy, or other foundational commitment, my students come to understand that Hip Hop as a cultural force, just like religious institutions, has its "ever-changing mixtures of life-giving and malignant tendencies."¹¹

The ministry of this course aims, to a significant extent, to get a deeper understanding of the population of young people whose embrace of Hip Hop culture might provide moral resources or foundations for seeking bodily, communal, and spiritual identity and justice against mass incarceration. We examine Hip Hop because it now finds social-political expression and

¹¹ Jeffrey Stout, "Rorty on Religion and Politics," in *The Philosophy of Richard Rorty*, ed. Randall E. Auxier and Lewis E. Hahn (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 2010), 524.

cultural-stylistic form in most arenas of American life. Bringing to bear written texts, music, film, and other media sources, the course examines this phenomenon as a significant religious and cultural force for social change. Issues explored include Hip Hop's syncretism of religious symbols and sensibilities, its racial, ethnic, sex-gendered, and class dynamics, and its language and aesthetics.

A critical underlying viewpoint of this course is that popular culture, delivered in myriad forms like Twitter, Vine, Skype, Facebook, 24-hour television coverage, texting, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, LinkedIn, Orkut, Ning, Pinterest, myLife, LiveJournal, Yik Yak, and so on, has become the primary pedagogical medium for masses of people who want to understand and interact with the moral realities of life. Popular culture is the site of a whole lot of moral education and miseducation; this is especially true for those born in the generation of students currently occupying today's classrooms.

Finally, a word regarding the question of how my teaching informs, and gets informed by, my commitments to a Christian "theo-ethical" praxis that responds to the new Jim Crow. It is critical that any Christian contemplating the radical, countercultural, nature of Christian justice and love faces the realities and memories of the new Jim Crow dead on. We Christians, who are all too human, with trembling rage, fear, and anxiety, must stare into the pale dead face of our misery and anger on account of Ferguson, New York, Oakland, Cleveland, Beavercreek, Baltimore, Chicago, Baton Rouge, Falcon Heights, Tulsa, the Middle Passage, Slavery, and the entire New Jim Crow with the memory of an executed-yet-living God to guide us while living at the crossroads of Good Friday and Easter. A theo-ethical approach of difficult Christian love will also mean confronting the understandable and all-too-human Black bloodthirst for retribution as tragically expressed in the executions of New York City police officers Wenjian Lu and Rafael Ramos (by Ismaaiyl Brinsley), and the White Texas cop Darren Goforth, who was shot 15 times in the head and back by Shannon Miles. Peaceable Christian justice and reconciliation does not turn its back on any of this.

I tell my class that my Christian participation in a politics of radical human intimacy must lead me toward undoing practices and consequences associated with the systemic police violence visited among our communities

every day. I tell students that even peaceable Christians, in this moment, need a politics of pissed-off Christian intimacy that understands God's love of all creation to be the story in view of which they pursue reconciling justice and love in real time. Without getting into the thick systematic theology that arises from and informs my thoughts here, my attitude these days affirms a radical perusal of (not so fast) forgiveness and reconciliation in a manner that loses my civility, while embracing reconciling grace as the measure of supreme Christian love. A tricky moral balancing act, indeed.

In this regard, we Christians need to get a deeper understanding of what the cost of standing with the oppressed and marginalized really entails in contemporary US society. A theo-ethical response to the present situation will require that more of us commit to a much better understanding of the ordinary activists of the Hip Hop generation who insist on prominent roles in leading the struggle against the New Jim Crow. This will no doubt be very difficult for some seasoned adult Christian activists of an older generation. That youths and young adults are playing a prominent role against dimensions of mass incarceration can be seen when social media like Vine, Instagram, Facebook, and especially Black Twitter (with hashtags like #iftheyshotmedown," #IfTheyGunnedMeDown, #BlackLivesMatter," and #SayHerName) are employed to mobilize cross-racial and ethnic coalitional masses of young people onto the streets of many American cities.

Christian ethicists of every age in North America need to figure out what to make of the Hip Hop generation in times such as these, a time when J. Cole mobilizes Black young people with his tribute to Michael Brown called "Be Free," a half-century after "We Shall Overcome" first hit the blood-soaked streets of protest, justice, and freedom. This is the same J. Cole whose new, already best-selling album, *2014 Forrest Hills Drive*, contains the track "G.O.M.D." (Get off My Dick). Increased, uncomfortable, and hopeful Christian companionship with the Black youthful generation, who bear the brunt of excessive punitive policing, community supervision, correctional confinement, and death within the new Jim Crow, signals the risks of faith that requires Anabaptists getting our Christian convictions about peace and reconciliation fucked up in the name of Jesus Christ. Indeed, my contribution to the teaching and articulation of Christian ethics has now become a costly, unsanitized, and often raggedy theo-ethical approach that dances toward

justice and love in this particular place and circumstance of time.

Grounding moral confrontations with the new Jim Crow in the classroom, I ask students to consider, discuss, debate, evaluate, and critique the professor's commitment to the moral clues that present themselves in the Christian God's self-unveiling as the lowly-born, tortured, spat upon, beaten, crucified, and risen Jesus Christ of Nazareth. I argue with them and they argue back that the way of this humiliated Jesus has been demonstrated in a Gospel tradition which aims at the restoration of justice, love, and grace in human relationships. Jesus sets us ablaze with active hope for justice and love, for friend and foe alike. The grace modeled for Christians in the Jesus tradition is a profound justice and love for others that speaks of our primal interrelatedness, our radical mutuality for the cause of difficult, costly, and reconciling liberation from the new Jim Crow.

Black and Anabaptist Virtue Ethics in the Classroom

My teaching of theological (and more broadly religious and philosophical) ethics in relation to my teaching about mass incarceration, as well as across other interdisciplinary courses, is grounded in my constructivist membership in a historically forged American Blackness and with my membership in the Mennonite Church USA. My more than decade-long vocation as professor and program director at a Quaker institution has been undergirded by a committed Anabaptist Mennonite faith perspective, and a cultural-political praxis that seeks to correspond with an active hope and vision for a reconciled society and world within an *eventually* just and peaceable Christian framework of love. It is with humility and respect that I affirm the difficult and hope-inspired work of Jesus Christ in space and time. As I see it, Anabaptist Mennonite faith, hope, and love work in the service of engaging partnerships of often costly grace, and peaceable reconciliation among a complex diversity of conceptions of happiness, which my students are more than happy to school me on. Indeed, my teaching is inextricably connected to what I hope are love-inspired relationships with the wider organic and inorganic world.

I deeply believe that the pursuit of Christ-centered love in the classroom, even when not specifically articulated, foretells, for me as a Black and Christian professor, a vision of ever-closer reconciliation with the Christian God. Such

reconciliation, at once unspeakably difficult and beautifully sublime, must commit itself to critical conversations and partnerships with interlocutors across the liberal arts disciplines and university professions, in churches and other places of worship, and in the wider society and world. Many interlocutors will no doubt have commitments to religious, philosophical, theoretical, and other foundations of truth and justice very different than those of Christians, whose reconciliation even among ourselves continues to be in a state of becoming.

At the heart of my teaching ethics is a difficult, joyous, and ongoing embodiment of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love—as well as the cardinal virtues of classical antiquity, derived from Plato and adopted by Christian tradition: practical wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Always attending to the development of Christian character, or “excellence” in community, my teaching is meant to express a moral commitment to the temporal-systemic reconciliation of that which is conflicted, alienated, or estranged. Foundationally, Christian love (principally *philia*, *eros*, and *agape* as the ultimate scriptural forms) lies at the heart of present and eschatological Christian reconciliation with the God who offers into human history the “politics of Jesus” as a supreme yet historically contested gift. Trying to live out a politics of what I imagine to be a “hold-up-not-so-fast” reconciliation has been the aim of my work as I teach against, for example, highly racialized mass incarceration and paramilitary policing at home, and against the Israeli occupation of Palestine abroad.

I wish for my students to absorb well the domestic realities of life’s complex material and moral estrangements, as well as signs of a better hope, which lie both within and beyond the immediacy of the professor’s or student’s particular narratives of life: we must pay moral attention to clean water; adult literacy; corporate degradation of weeping mountains stripped for profit around the world; monstrous narratives of genocide that routinely accompany human history; gang violence, brutal policing, imprisonment culture; First Nations rights; exploited-yet-dignity-inspired migrant farm workers of North America; courageous survivors of devastating natural disasters worsened by the weight of racial and ethnic xenophobia; and gross indignities of a domestic and world-wide slave trade that ensnares predominantly women and girls in numbers too great to count.

I try to tell students that a critical and necessary domestic focus on reconciling moral hope ought not to preclude paying active attention alongside others to the confounding levels of human alienation, neglect, and hostility beyond North America. Moral attention must be given to the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, the wide expanses of Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and even, perhaps, to J.R. Tolkien's fictitious and factious "Middle Earth" representing the elusiveness of creaturely reconciliation on grounds that are sexed, gendered, racial, tribal, greed-laden, religious, and otherwise. I invite students to give their ethical lives to the service of the elusive moral good, right, and fitting, whether they are ultimately committed to the Christian Christ, the Muslim Allah, the Jewish Adonai, Buddhism, Hinduism, atheistic or agnostic human reason, scientific truth, Voodoo, Obeah, Santeria, Jainism, Daoism, Deism, or any other spiritual or secular ethical foundation or admixture thereof to which they offer up their faith and fidelity.

From wherever my students' (and my own) moral foundations emerge, a robust dialogue concerning the life-affirming, versus death-dealing, elements of life together is routinely present. Indeed, my vocation of teaching ethics and scholarship at a Quaker college has been deeply inspired by a reconciling, interrogating, and unyielding embrace of Christian faith, which actively lives (once again) at the intersection of Good Friday and Easter.

I suspect that living at such an intersection reflects the peacable ethical teaching of Anabaptist Christians, whose call is to foster human interconnectedness, belonging, celebration, and joy in a manner that affirms the Gospel in both our particular societies and the wider world. This is to say—drawing on Menno Simons, Allen Boesak, and Karl Barth, respectively—that teaching ethics signifies the profound Christian confession that "true evangelical faith cannot lie dormant: It clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; It comforts the sorrowful; It shelters the destitute; it binds up that which is wounded; It fights poverty, seeks justice, [respects and preserves the natural world] and foretells [of] peace."¹² Such reconciling faith must never be "an

¹² Quoted with some paraphrasing and addition from Menno Simons, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, ed. C. J. Wenger (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 307, and Allen Boesak, in Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Influence: Toward an Economy*

escape into the safe heights of pure ideas” (theological or otherwise). The pursuit of such reconciliation is “an entry into the need[s] of the present, sharing in its suffering, its activity, and its hope.”¹³

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of Care (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 72. The original Boesak source, “God van de armen” [“God of the Poor”], is in *Met de Moed der Hoop, Opstellen Aangeboden aan dr. C. F. Beyers Naudé* [Encouraged by Hope: Essays Dedicated to Dr. C. F. Beyers Naudé] (Baarn, The Netherlands: Baarn, Bosch en Keuning, 1985), 73.

¹³ Quoted with some paraphrasing and addition from Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 100.

Teaching Christian Character and Ethics to Generation Z

Paulus Widjaja

One of my students in a Basics in Christian Ethics course once raised a serious concern. He said, “I feel intimidated in this class when we are discussing about smoking. I know that smoking is ethically wrong and is not good for my health and the health of people around me. I do really try to quit smoking, but I haven’t succeeded yet. When this class keeps discussing how bad smoking is, I feel intimidated.” His statement was shocking for me as a teacher, since I had never imagined he would bluntly state his concern that way. It shows that teaching ethics has a distinctive nature as compared to teaching other subjects: teaching ethics is not only about transferring cognitive knowledge from teacher to students, it is also about transforming the conative¹ aspect of the students, that is, growing the wisdom that enables them to have certain attitudes, behaviors, actions, and so forth. Indeed, it is about the formation of character.

Context of Duta Wacana Christian University

Before I go further in explaining the Basics in Christian Ethics course that I teach in the Faculty of Theology at Duta Wacana Christian University (DWCU) in Jogjakarta, I should offer some background about my students and the university. Unlike in North America, where students can enroll in seminary only after completing a bachelor’s degree, in Indonesia they may begin seminary study right after graduating from high school. Thus, the first stage of seminary study is basically equivalent to undergraduate study in the North American educational system. The seminary study is required of

¹ My use of the terms “conative” and “conation” comes from Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), and denotes the “fundamental eros that moves us to realize our own ‘being’ in relationship with others and the world. This ‘will to being’ prompts us to exercise our sensate, cognitive, affective, and volitional capacities ... to place and maintain ourselves as agent-subjects in relationship.” Christian conation, Groome further says, refers to the “‘character’ to realize the believing, trusting, and doing that is constitutive of lived Christian faith in the world,” 29-30.

candidates for ordination in most church synods,² and can be completed in four to five years.

DWCU was founded in 1906 as a school of Christian religion with the purpose of equipping and preparing indigenous Javanese who were expected to serve as pastoral assistants for Dutch pastors after the completion of their training.³ The Christian⁴ denominational tradition behind this school was *Gereformeerd* Calvinist. In 1962 it merged with another Christian school, whose denominational background was *Hervormd* Calvinist, to establish Duta Wacana Graduate School of Theology.⁵ Even though they both came from the Calvinist tradition, they represent two different kinds of Calvinism. The theological gap between the two denominations is similar to that between the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church in North America before they merged.

Several years later, other synods, one of them Mennonite (*GITJ*—Javanese Christian Church of Indonesia), also joined in, bringing the number of synods backing the seminary to five. Seven other synods, including yet another Mennonite synod (*GKMI*—Muria Christian Church of Indonesia), then joined the group to form a total of twelve synods that are the collective owners of this academic community. In 1985 the seminary became a university.

Now there are 15 study programs in the university spread across seven departments, including Faculties of Theology, Business, Architecture and Design, Biotechnology, Information Technology, Medicine, and Language Studies. A Faculty of Dentistry is on the way. The Faculty of Theology offers Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral programs. The Faculties of Business and

² The term “synod” refers to the national union of churches from a particular denomination that has a common history, and is established by the consent of those churches to organize themselves together under one legal body. The Mennonite denomination in Indonesia, for instance, is distinguished into three synods; each has its own history, independent from the others.

³ Indonesia was at that time under Dutch rule.

⁴ In Indonesia, “Christian” refers to Protestants as distinct from Catholics.

⁵ In 2004 the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, or *NHK*) and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland*, or *GKN*) merged into the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (*Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*, or *PKN*). Long before these two Calvinist denominations officially merged, their seminaries in Indonesia had merged in 1962.

Architecture and Design offer Bachelors and Masters programs. Other departments offer Bachelors programs only. The student body consists of about 3,800 students, nearly 500 of whom study in the theology department at all levels.

Format of the Basics in Christian Ethics Course

Intended for undergraduates in their third semester, Basics in Christian Ethics is an obligatory course in the Faculty of Theology. The aim is to introduce basic understandings of ethics and some approaches in Christian ethics, with the emphasis on character ethics.⁶ My own intention is to bring students to a realization that when we talk about Christian ethics we have to examine not only the ethical decisions that we human beings make—that is, our *doing*—but, more important, the character of each person as an agent who makes and carries out those decisions—that is, our *being*. The agent always takes precedence over the decision. This emphasis encourages students to move from the question of What? to Who? This paradigm is very important, because discussions in ethics quite often pay too much attention to the analysis of the object of an ethical decision—the doing—while forgetting that behind the doing there is always a free agent who establishes reasons for the doing and then carries it out.

Seen from the paradigm of character ethics, the issue of smoking, for example, is related not simply to the act of smoking itself, independent of the agent and those around the agent, but also to one's character as smoker, about who one is and wants to become. It is not just a question of whether smoking can be justified ethically, but whether the kind of person who pursues individual pleasure, even if claiming it is at his own risk, while damaging himself and the people around him, can be justified. Moreover, it is not only about an individual person's decision but about one's relation with others as well. What needs to be examined is therefore not just what the individual desires but how that desire is related to the lives of one's loved ones, even to everybody else outside of oneself. It is not the case that if one is aware of the risk of an action and is willing to take that risk, then the action

⁶ I use the term "character ethics" to refer to what in ethics discourse is usually called "virtue ethics." Indeed, virtue is a very important element in this kind of ethics, but the whole issue is about character, not simply about virtue.

can be justified. It is about seriously taking into account one's loved ones and everybody else.

The same paradigm can be applied in discussing the role of social media in modern life. It is not simply about whether one's posting, one's status, or one's picture profile can be justified ethically, but about the kind of person one shows oneself to be through what one posts on virtual walls. Nor is it just a matter of freedom of speech or self-expression. Rather, it is about the acquisition of space in the public sphere for private interests, about the way of life that diminishes the public sphere even as the private sphere is expanding seemingly without limits. The discussion must therefore proceed from what can be posted on the internet to what kind of person thinks that we have the right to share private matters in public, even when that public sphere is a virtual one. It is about enlarging our private life at the risk of losing a more accountable and transparent public life.

By the end of the class, I ask students to offer short reflections on the four main themes of the course. The four "teaching blocks" are divided among the total fifteen sessions. Five sessions in the first block comprise an Introduction to Christian Ethics: What is Ethics?, Ethics and Moral Development; Approaches in Ethics; Foundations of Ethical Decision Making; and Representative Models in Christian Ethics. In the second block, addressing Christian Ethics and the Scripture, the sessions include Old Testament Ethics; New Testament Ethics: Synoptic Gospels; New Testament Ethics: Pauline Writings; and The Use of Scripture in Christian Ethics. The third block, on Christian Ethics and Character Formation, comprises The Role of Community in Christian Ethics; Screening of the Film "Amish Grace"; Virtues; Telos, Narrative, and Social Practice; and Christian Ethics and Moral Issues. The last block, on Christian Ethics and Christology, has one session: Modeling Jesus Christ.

The course is designed for three credit hours a week, meaning each weekly classroom meeting should last for 150 minutes. However, I divide each session into two parts. Students meet in small groups for 50 minutes of discussion before class, and then as a whole in the classroom for 100 minutes of lecture. They are required to submit written reports on the small group discussion, including a summary of what each student says. I design the class this way in order to encourage students to finish the reading assignments for

the respective sessions before they come to class. If they aren't prepared, then obviously they can't participate actively in the discussion, both in the small group and in the classroom, and this will be evident in the process report.

This kind of process, in my opinion, is very important, because the educational system in Indonesia is mostly lecture-based. Students are not used to doing independent study or research. They are expected to sit and listen while the teacher lectures. This situation is due to both the feudal system we have inherited and the difficulty of getting resources for teaching. This makes students depend heavily on the knowledge of their teachers. Therefore I try to create a system in which students are encouraged to read the materials and engage with them directly, not waiting for, or depending on, a lecture from me as teacher.

Six Key Challenges

Language and Resources

Teaching Christian ethics, as I mentioned earlier, is not simply a matter of transferring knowledge. It is also a matter of forming and transforming character. Yet the transferring of knowledge is not insignificant. In this regard, one of the biggest problems I face is the availability of resources in a form that is accessible to students, but even more crucial, resources that are available in the Indonesian language, the official language used in Indonesian schools. There are many books on Christian ethics that are available in the library, a number that increases significantly when we include the vast array of e-books and e-journals. However, the problem is that English is neither the primary language for Indonesian students nor the language used in Indonesian schools. In fact, every student in Indonesia has to study English as their third or fourth language. But in a country with more than 500 local languages and one national language which is different from any of the local languages, English is not common. Moreover, the further east one travels in Indonesia, the less familiar people are with English. My students come from all over the country.

Let me paint the picture. The textbooks in Christian ethics that I used almost 40 years ago in seminary are still used today in many Indonesian seminaries, not necessarily because they are classics but because so few books on the subject are available in the Indonesian language. Furthermore,

most Christian ethics books available in the Indonesian language are written by Catholic theologians and are more about moral philosophy than about Christian ethics in the sense Protestants commonly understand it. Fortunately, a publication such as Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee's *Kingdom Ethics* has been translated and made available in the Indonesian language, and thus helps a little.⁷ Books written by Western missionaries who used to teach Christian ethics in DWCU, such as Malcolm Brownlee and Verne H. Fletcher, and books by Indonesian Christian ethicists such as Eka Darmaputera are also helpful.⁸

Denominations and Traditions

The biggest challenge, however, relates not so much to technical problems such as the availability of books written in the Indonesian language or the Catholic tone of books that are available. Rather, it relates to teaching Christian ethics in an interdenominational setting such as DWCU, namely dealing with the issue of different church traditions that students bring to class. Addressing the use of violence or Christian social responsibility, for example, is not simple. I have to show and explain the theological premises behind different ethical positions found in different theological traditions, but without claiming that one particular tradition is necessarily better than the others. What I prefer to do is to challenge students to think critically, explore, and find out for themselves the kind of Christians they want to become. I want them to feel secure and not intimidated by my Mennonite background (a minority tradition in this university). It is a big challenge, yet it is actually fun to accompany students in this endeavor.

Basic Knowledge

Another big challenge in teaching Christian ethics to so-called Generation

⁷ Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

⁸ Malcolm Brownlee, *Pengambilan Keputusan Etis Dan Faktor-Faktor Di Dalamnya* [Ethical Decision Making and the Factors Involved in It] (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup, 1995); Verne H. Fletcher, *Lihatlah Sang Manusia!: suatu pendekatan pada etika Kristen dasar* [Behold the Man! An Approach in Basic Christian Ethics] (Jogjakarta: Duta Wacana Univ. Press, 1995); Eka Darmaputera, *Etika Sederhana Untuk Semua: Perkenalan Pertama* [Simple Ethics for Everybody: The First Introduction] (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1992).

Z, whose main characteristic is their intensive use of the internet from an early age, is to bridge the gap between Scripture and the reality of the world. On the one hand, having been born and raised in a digital culture where everything is made easy, simple, fast, and even instantaneous, the majority of my students, if not all, have limited knowledge of the Bible. Even though many of them are from Christian families and spend a lot of time in church activities, they do not have sufficient biblical knowledge. Perhaps this is not a unique problem of theological students but pertains to all Christian youth. Nowadays the Bible has to compete with computer games and social media to get their attention.

On the other hand, ethics is a unique field of study. It is different from other fields in that it can never stand by itself; it always needs other fields of study as its partners. We cannot discuss the ethics of smoking, abortion, cloning, or in vitro fertilization without having at least a little knowledge of medicine. We cannot discuss the ethics of stocks, bonds, or taxes without any knowledge of business and economics. Thus the challenge is not simply how to encourage students to know the Bible better, but how to encourage them to learn about other fields of study, even if it is only a little bit of everything else. However, since I cannot cover the two sides at once, I take up the first issue, the Bible, in the Basics in Christian Ethics class and the second issue, other fields of study, in an advanced elective ethics class.

The lack of knowledge of the Bible creates a serious problem in developing Christian character ethics, since character ethics depends so much on the clarity of *telos*—the center and orientation of life—and the availability of narratives as watersheds for ethical decision making. The *telos* functions like the sun for determining a direction. We will have difficulty in knowing where is East and where is West when there is no sun in the sky to serve as the focal point against which we determine our direction. So it is with virtue and vice. It is hard to determine whether a kind of bravery, such as demonstrated by suicide bombers, is a virtue or a vice until we have clarity about the *telos* we use to judge the action. Yet this *telos* itself is known and learned only through narratives. Thus a lack of knowledge of the Bible will have serious impact on knowing what our Christian *telos* should be.

Concrete Issues

There is still another challenge. It is related to the way Generation Z youth live. As noted earlier, I divide the Basics in Christian Ethics course into four blocks. In the last iteration of the course (Fall 2015), I distributed questionnaires to students at the end of every block. I wanted to get their responses to my materials as well as my methods. The result of that brief survey is very interesting. The questionnaire completed by 52 students shows that in the first block, Introduction to Christian Ethics, the session on The Foundations of Ethical Decision Making is the one that the majority of students like the most (52 percent), followed by the session on Representatives of Models in Christian Ethics (21 percent). The reason for this is that they feel that these sessions provide concrete practical guidance in ethical decision making and help them analyze ethical issues.

In the session on The Foundations of Ethical Decision Making, I draw inspiration from Stassen and Gushee's *Kingdom Ethics* to show the different layers we need to be aware of when talking about ethical norms, namely, immediate judgment at the very top of the pyramid, followed by rules, principles, and basic beliefs. The succeeding layer is deeper and always provides a ground to modify or annul the previous layer. Thus an ethical rule, for instance, can be changed or modified on the basis of ethical principle, and ethical principle can be modified on the basis of basic beliefs.

By knowing which level we are talking about, we can have a better ground in discussing ethical issues with others. By contrast, the discussion of a certain ethical issue will lead us nowhere if we are talking about one certain layer while our partner is talking about a different layer. A discussion about divorce between a person who sticks to the rule "what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matt. 19:6) and another person who talks about the essence of marriage will lead them nowhere, because the one bases his opinion on rule while the other bases hers on principle. Most of my students love such clear and concrete sessions, compared to more abstract, discursive, and analytical sessions.

So it is with the session on Models in Christian Ethics. Students love it because, according to them, this session provides concrete models about how they can make ethical decisions from a Christian perspective. In this session I discuss the differences in ethical approaches that some leading

figures in Christian ethics have taken, such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Karl Barth, John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

Within the second block, Christian Ethics and the Scripture, students overwhelmingly like the session on The Use of Scripture in Christian Ethics the most (82 percent). They say that this session has enlightened them in the way the Scripture is related to practical problems, while not treating the Scripture merely as an ethical dictionary. They also value this session because it connects the Old and New Testaments as one integrated Scripture, not as separate from each other.

In the third block, Christian Ethics and Character Formation, students like most (49 percent) the session featuring the film *Amish Grace* (about the forgiveness that followed the killing of Amish schoolchildren in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, in 2006),⁹ followed by the session on Christian Ethics and Moral Issues (26 percent). Here again, students say they like those sessions the most because they see concrete issues and concrete examples of how Christian ethics is to be lived.

From all that I have said so far, we can see that students value the sessions in which they can get in touch with real problems and concrete ethical decisions. On the one hand, this shows what they expect in an ethics class. They want to deal with real issues, not with analytical discourse or theory. On the other hand, this finding also shows what has become the main characteristic of Generation Z. They don't want to spend too much time in learning about the foundation upon which an ethical decision is made. They want a quick answer and an instant process to solve the problem. This is just like what happens in their everyday life: when they have a problem, they go to the internet in order to find an immediate quick answer. They are impatient about having to learn and reflect on too many theories. "Quick," "fast," "instant," and so on are the categories they use to determine answers. They seem not to bother at all with the issue of finding the "right" or even "proper" answers.

Foundations and Stories

In general, it is often said that Generation Z does not care about a foundation for anything in their lives. For them, faith, religion, marriage, relationships,

⁹ *Amish Grace*. Directed by Gregg Campion (20th Century Fox, 2010).

career, and so on do not require one foundation upon which to stand firm. Everything is open-ended. Reality is virtual. Their sentences, as demonstrated in their text messages, are over-punctuated, broken, and under-constructed. That is just the way they are. To push them to think through theories and to find a solid foundation for their arguments is rather ineffective. While *telos* is important in character ethics, as noted above, it should be presented not as foundation upon which we stand but rather as orientation toward which we walk. This is not as easy as it might seem to be. No wonder that students suggested on the questionnaire that they want more study cases, concrete examples, and applicative questions in class, and that they feel the reading materials and class assignments are just too much.

What is also interesting is that students are more enthusiastic not only with discussing concrete cases but with sharing personal stories. The attitude and response of the student who felt intimidated by discussions about unethical aspects of smoking suddenly changed when I shared my personal story of grief in losing my father-in-law because of lung cancer due to smoking, and my struggle in taking care of my own father, almost completely paralyzed for nine years from a stroke likely due to smoking. Personal stories seem to be more respected and accepted by students than abstract moral arguments. This fact re-emphasizes the importance of narrative in character ethics. People can make sense of an ethical decision when they can find proper narratives that become the watershed of the decision. This means that Generation Z is actually not anti-foundational after all, but rather has a different kind of foundation. A mere analytical academic moral argument is worth less for them than a sincere, concrete, touching personal story. They have to be won through their heart, not through their head.

Life Examples

Lastly, more than anything else, Generation Z is sick of the hypocrisy they find in society. Correspondingly, they will respect a teacher who not only talks but, more importantly, walks the talk. This is the biggest challenge in teaching ethics to Generation Z. While they are identified as high-tech and high-touch, living in a high-tech culture, they also long for high-touch from the people around them. They judge their teachers by the life examples they provide. It is the life example that really provides the foundation for the

teacher's authority. This bears out what my former Christian ethics professor, Glen Stassen, always says: Christian ethics is about following Jesus. Christian ethics is nothing until we can demonstrate that we really walk in the path that our great teacher, Jesus Christ, has shown to us.

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Teaching Ethics While Queer and Mennonite

Yvonne C. Zimmerman

I knew that I wanted to be a religion professor since I was roughly nineteen. Sometime during my junior year at Goshen College I narrowed in on Christian ethics. I envisioned teaching at a Mennonite College. But it wasn't until I was about twenty-five that I began to grasp how deeply hostile Mennonite institutional contexts are to queer people. I began to understand that the Mennonite Church, specifically Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA), wanted nothing to do with queers like me and was willing to bring the full strength of its institutional power to communicate that rejection to any queer person wanting to offer their gifts to the church. "It's not personal. That's just how we feel about gay people" is a message I received from the Mennonite Church long before those devastating words actually rolled off the tongue of a family member.

By the time I began doctoral work at the Iliff School of Theology and University of Denver a few years later, I was angry and hurt that the church which had nurtured me as a young person could so flippantly reject me as an adult—the wrong kind of adult. I was not oblivious to the change in the air in some quarters of the Mennonite world: Germantown Mennonite Church, Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship, and the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Interests, etc. Rather, because of my experience and the experiences of other queer Mennonites, I was no longer sure that 'Mennonite' was an association or identity that I desired. As I began to see that teaching Christian ethics at a Mennonite college was not in my future, I started to distance myself from Mennonite contexts.

I completed my Ph.D. in 2008 and began teaching Christian Ethics at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO), a seminary just north of Columbus, Ohio, the following fall.¹ To be sure, the United Methodist

¹ The Academic Dean at MTSO who oversaw my appointment to the faculty was Mennonite. I would be remiss not to acknowledge that I have benefited tremendously from the support of several individual Mennonite scholars working both within and outside Mennonite

Church has its own issues with institutionalized homophobia; however, at the same time there are certain ways my queer Mennonite identity registers as an institutional asset to the school.² For instance, as more LGBTQ persons seek theological training, MTSO is invested in creating an atmosphere of welcoming inclusion that includes hiring LGBTQ persons as faculty and staff. Additionally, many United Methodists hold Anabaptist peace traditions in high esteem and engage them with genuine interest, even if they do not always claim them as their own. In this way, the past eight years of teaching Christian ethics at MTSO has offered me something I have not previously had: space and institutional encouragement to explore and to practice enacting Mennonite and queer *together*.

This is a big deal, because I barely remember what it is like not to have a shadow hanging over my Mennonite legitimacy. In Mennonite spaces, LGBTQ people are constantly bombarded with the message that their queerness equals failure at Mennonite authenticity. Coming from Mennonite families, growing up in the church, attending Mennonite schools, making sincere professions of faith, membership in Mennonite churches—none of it matters. Rampant homophobia in the Mennonite Church, enacted with smug theological sanction and smooth biblical warrant, runs roughshod over people's bodies and spirits while crying "Peace, peace!" For this reason, the relationship between my Mennonite identity and the way I teach Christian ethics is complicated. My approach to teaching ethics is characterized less by simple appreciation of Mennonite theology or intellectual resonance with Anabaptist moral sensibilities than by painful experiences of community failure in relation to what it means to be queer and Mennonite.

Deconstructing Mennonite

I gained valuable theological and intellectual traction on the nature of the relationship that I embody as a queer Mennonite ethicist when, at the recommendation of a dear friend and colleague, I picked up Stephanie Krehbiel's dissertation "Pacifist Battlegrounds: Violence, Community and

institutions.

² The United Methodist Church's homophobia is arranged a bit differently from Mennonite homophobia, and is targeted primarily at ordained clergy. The fact that I am not ordained permits me to be situated in a space of relative freedom.

the Struggle for LGBTQ Justice in the Mennonite Church USA.” In brief, Krehbiel’s argument is that Mennonite conflicts over LGBTQ inclusion are struggles over the definition of violence.³

Her project begins with a sketch of the conceptual framework Mennonite peace theology traditionally assumes, a church/world dualism that posits a strong oppositional relationship between the church and the world. In this theological imaginary the world is the source and purveyor of violence; the church, understood as the source and harbinger of peace, embodies an alternative community that occupies a space outside of, and therefore *exempt* from, “worldly” dynamics of power. This imaginary shapes Mennonites’ understandings of violence and nonviolence, such that violence is conceived primarily in terms of militarism and nationalism propagated by and through the state, while nonviolence is understood as avoiding and resisting worldly forms of power.⁴ Pointing out that from the 16th century on, Mennonites’ movements within Europe and to North America were “largely dictated by the desire to avoid the involuntary conscription of their young men into military service for the nations in which they lived,” Krehbiel argues that a hallmark of Mennonite pacifism is its emergence from “conversations among Mennonite men about how to resist masculinist nationalism and militarism.”⁵ To the extent that they were successful in this endeavor, Mennonites saw themselves in the terms of the communion hymn composed by Menno Simons as “people of God’s peace.”

Many Mennonite peace theologies employ some version of this theological imaginary in which a peace/violence binary is mapped onto the church/world binary. Krehbiel draws attention to how one consequence of mapping these two binaries onto one another is an externalization of violence, so that violence and its causes are thereby located entirely *outside* of the church.⁶ But, in turn, this externalization of violence leaves no way to account for violence that takes place *within* the church and religious communities. She explains, “Mennonite institutional discourse is dependent

³ Stephanie Krehbiel, “Pacifist Battlegrounds: Violence, Community and the Struggle for LGBTQ Justice in the Mennonite Church USA” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 2015), 146.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 7, 34.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

upon a collective theological imaginary in which the power created by social privilege and histories of inequality *does not exist*.⁷ Because it is not waged by the state; does not take the form of militarism or sing the songs of nationalism; wields no weapons; often leaves no visible physical marks; and is perpetrated by respected church leaders or upstanding members who profess nothing but love, these internally fomented abuses—"domestic" violences, if you will—are rarely recognized as violence. The violence that Mennonites commit against one another is largely unintelligible as violence in the terms of this binary framework.⁸

Krehbiel's analysis is powerful, because she invites queers like me to understand painful experiences of being queer and Mennonite through a framework of systemic institutionalized violence rather than one of personal pain. The difference between these two frameworks is immense. Pain is just personal—particular, if not idiosyncratic, to the individual. A framework of personal pain places the onus on the person experiencing the pain to 'get over' or otherwise deal with it.⁹ By contrast, a framework of violence recognizes the infliction of this pain as an organized social practice. Political philosopher Iris Marion Young describes the systemic nature of violence as "directed at members of a group simply because they are members of that group."¹⁰ She explains that violence is a form of oppression, less on account of the specific acts committed and more on account of "the social context surrounding them, which makes them possible and even acceptable."¹¹ Moreover, violence is never the victim's fault. A framework of violence places the onus of responsibility on the system to stop perpetuating harm. Krehbiel's dissertation helped me get an intellectual handle on grasping that my inability to trust the Mennonite Church and, by extension, most Mennonites, does not reflect a personal shortcoming. I am not 'too sensitive' or unnecessarily paranoid. Rather, I am responding to unacknowledged and

⁷ Ibid., 35; emphasis added.

⁸ Ibid., 6, 146.

⁹ On personal pain and its limitations as a premise for political activism, see Dawne M. Moon, *God, Sex and Politics: Homosexuality and Everyday Theologies* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004), especially chapter 8, "Gay Pain and Politics."

¹⁰ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990) 62.

¹¹ Ibid., 61.

continuing violence.

Krehbiel further insists that not only have the dynamics of violence within the church been overlooked and benignly neglected, but also the existence of violence in Mennonite communities has been aggressively suppressed and resolutely denied. Needless to say, suppression and denial are notoriously poor violence prevention strategies. The systematic denial of violence and dynamics of power within the church has provided convenient cover for Mennonite leaders, like John Howard Yoder, Luke Hartman, and differently, Ervin Stutzman, to abuse power against women and LGBTQ people with relative impunity in the church.¹²

In the essay “Toward a Christian Feminist Liberation Hermeneutic,” the late feminist social ethicist Beverly Harrison describes theology as functioning dialectically. She explains that theology “either masks or reveals power and relationships; it is life giving or it is life denying.” She continues, “In its masking function, the theological perspective perpetuates and reproduces existing alienated relationships; in its revealing function, it opens the way to realizing concrete good as shared power and a deeper relationship with God, world, and neighbor.”¹³ Mennonite theology functions dialectically in the way Harrison describes. In its revealing function, Mennonite peace theology discloses peacemaking as the heart of the gospel. In its masking function, however, it conceals precisely the power and relationship that need

¹² On John Howard Yoder, see Rachel Waltner Goossen, “‘Defanging the Beast’: Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder’s Sexual Abuse,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89, no. 1 (January 2015): 7-80; on Luke Hartmann, see Lauren Shifflett, “Now We are Free,” Our Stories Untold blog, April 12, 2016, available at www.ourstoriesuntold.com/now-free-2/, and Marissa Buck, “Good Intentions Aren’t Enough: How Church Authorities Slid My Sister’s Sexual Abuse Under the Rug” Our Stories Untold blog, April 21, 2016, available at www.ourstoriesuntold.com/good-intentions-arent-enough/. On Ervin Stutzman, see also Stephanie Krehbiel, “The Violence of Mennonite Process: Finding the Address of the Present, Part 2,” *Pink Menno*, February 10, 2014, available at www.pinkmenno.org/2014/02/the-violence-of-mennonite-process-finding-the-address-of-the-present-part-2-of-2, and also Stephanie Krehbiel, “The Discernment of Knowledge: Sexualized Violence in the Mennonite Church,” *The Ethnographic Case*, May 2, 2016, available at <http://somatosphere.net/2016/05/the-discernment-of-knowledge-sexualized-violence-in-the-mennonite-church.html>.

¹³ Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics*, ed. Elizabeth M. Bounds, Pamela K. Brubaker, Jane E. Hicks, Marilyn J. Legge, Rebecca Todd Peters, and Traci C. West (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 187.

to be clearly named: namely, violence in the church—against women, against LGBTQ and gender non-conforming people, against children, and against racial minorities.

The systematic denial of power and violence in Mennonite communities produces a practiced blindness that leaves Mennonites ill-equipped to comprehend the ways that power functions in and structures their relationships. According to Mennonite clinician and theologian Ruth Krall, “We do not see that our addiction to, internal tolerance for and denial of sexual harassment, sexual violence and domestic abuse have gutted the living peace witness of our denomination.”¹⁴ Moreover, this denial and ensuing blindness leave people without resources for naming their experiences and responding constructively to power.¹⁵ Krehbiel’s analysis shines a bright light on both the extent to which power is a mystified dimension of Mennonites’ communal life and the ramifications of this mystification.

Teaching Ethics While Queer and Mennonite

When I received the invitation to contribute an essay on teaching ethics, my initial response was to regard it as a test—*Is the way you teach Christian ethics Mennonite enough?*—or possibly a contest—*Who is the most Mennonite ethicist?* The constant shadow my queerness casts on my Mennonite legitimacy produces a certain paranoia. Having received the message so repeatedly that my queerness seriously compromises my Mennonite-ness, attempting to anticipate the trap—the unpassable test or unwinnable contest—is a basic survival skill: Don’t let them corner you.

Truthfully, writing about how Wesleyan thought shapes how I teach Christian ethics would be an easier exercise than articulating how my Mennonite identity informs my teaching. Four weeks of my “Introduction to Christian Ethics” course syllabus are the Wesleyan Quadrilateral: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. While the content of this unit on moral epistemology is not specifically Wesleyan or United Methodist, the structure is unmistakable. I have learned to include periodic references to John Wesley and to use theological concepts like prevenient grace, sanctification, and Christian perfection. By contrast, I seldom mention Conrad Grebel, Felix

¹⁴ Ruth Krall, as quoted by Krehbiel, “Pacifist Battlegrounds,” 7.

¹⁵ Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 173.

Manz, George Blaurock, or Menno Simons, and concepts like believer's baptism, revolutionary subordination, or nonconformity come up only rarely, usually as anecdotes.

Undoubtedly, the way I teach Christian ethics would not be 'Mennonite enough' for some ("Super-Mennonites," I call them). But what does teaching Christian ethics in a 'Mennonite enough' manner mean? Teaching only Mennonite authors? Using Mennonite theology as the standard for critiquing all other moral perspectives? On this point my pedagogy is influenced by the strong case Harrison makes against using one's particular theology as the exclusive basis for doing ethics. She writes,

I do not aspire to derive my moral theory exclusively from my theology, nor do I think that Christian ethicists ought to so aspire. Morality is the work of our *common* life, and the particularities of my convictions and my participation as a Christian, grounded in the way I have experienced revelation in my community, must answer not only to my community's sense of narrative and vocation but also to the sensibilities, principles, and values that inform the conscientious efforts of other morally serious beings. Not to acknowledge this is to me sheer Christian chauvinism of the sort which is indefensible in a pluralistic world.¹⁶

The task of morality is to serve the common good. Therefore, Mennonite ethics do not serve just the Mennonite Church; nor do Christian ethics serve only Christians. Christian ethics serve a wonderfully diverse and pluralistic world. The ability to engage across and among differences is more important, morally speaking, than preserving theological purity. By the very nature of the process, genuine engagement with others opens us up to becoming more, or more different, than we were previously. If all aspects of my approach to teaching ethics referred back to Mennonite theology or straightforwardly reflected my Mennonite identity, not only would this be pedagogical navel-gazing, it would parochialize the relevance and significance of Christian ethics in precisely the ways that Harrison cautions against.

¹⁶ Ibid., 16-17.

Nonetheless, ‘Mennonite’ profoundly shapes the way I teach Christian ethics. The quiet yet vicious violence waged against queer and gender non-conforming people by the Mennonite Church while publically proclaiming peace and nonviolence is a crucial point of reference for my approach. A central task of ethics is to provide “the moral language to confront our social world.”¹⁷ Hence teaching Christian ethics is an opportunity to intervene in how these dynamics of suppression and denial of power and violence are reproduced and re-enacted in religious life. This conviction shapes the topics I teach and the frameworks I use to teach them. For instance, I always assign Reinhold Niebuhr’s 1932 classic *Moral Man and Immoral Society* when I teach Christian Social Ethics.

I include this text not only because Niebuhr is widely considered the father of American social ethics, but on account of his keen insights into the relationship between peace and justice—or, more aptly, injustice. According to Niebuhr, peace always incorporates elements of injustice and coercion. “Social peace . . . inevitably incorporates social injustice which can only be eliminated by disturbing the peace,” he wrote.¹⁸ This observation was not an indictment of any specific situation. Rather, he meant it as a description of social and political life generally. Every social peace inevitably involves some injustice, some elements of coercion. Niebuhr saw this as unfortunate, lamentable, even tragic—but, nonetheless, unavoidable. He calls attention to the ways that peace and injustice are perfectly compatible. He argues that peace and injustice are in fact seasoned collaborators.

The compatibility of peace and injustice was something we didn’t talk about in the Mennonite world of my youth. We didn’t talk about it because we didn’t see it and couldn’t even conceive of it. I was taught to value peace above all else, as an absolute value. Niebuhr challenges simplistic valorizations of peace:

No society has ever achieved peace without incorporating injustice into its harmony. Those who would eliminate the

¹⁷ Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 132.

¹⁸ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932; reprint, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 229.

injustice are therefore always placed at the moral disadvantage of imperiling its peace. The privileged groups will place them under that moral disadvantage, even if the efforts toward justice are made in the most pacific terms. They will claim that it is dangerous to disturb a precarious equilibrium and will feign to fear anarchy as the consequence of the effort. This passion for peace need not always be consciously dishonest. Since those who hold special privileges in society are naturally inclined to regard their privileges as their rights and to be unmindful of the effects of inequality upon the under-privileged, they will have a natural complacency toward injustice. Every effort to disturb the peace, which incorporates the injustice, will therefore seem to them to spring from unjustified malcontent.¹⁹

Niebuhr articulates what I was taught *not* to think and socialized *not* to see: Peace is no guarantor of justice. In fact, peace can be the perfect safe haven for injustice. Working for justice requires interrogating, disturbing—literally upsetting—the peace of the status quo. The chaos this produces can easily be misconstrued as violence, especially by people who are privileged by status quo arrangements.

Niebuhr's critique does not cause me to dismiss the value of the Mennonite heritage of peacemaking; rather, it sheds light on the necessity of reframing the value of peace. Peace is dangerous when taken as an absolute value, because it plays into the hands of the powerful at the expense of the weak. The value of peace is as a consequence of justice. Cooperation, mutuality, and peace are important values, to be sure. But absent commitments to justice, these can be wielded to protect ensconced patterns of privilege, exclusion, and abuse that are so widely accepted they seem normal. As Niebuhr cautioned, "A too uncritical glorification of cooperation and mutuality . . . results in the acceptance of traditional injustices."²⁰ In short, I teach Niebuhr for the hard questions he provokes: What injustices do pious Christian espousals of peace gloss over or cover up? How does privilege foment complacency to injustice? How and where have Christians learned to defer to the values of peace and cooperation at the expense of seeking justice and telling the truth?

¹⁹ Ibid., 129.

²⁰ Ibid., 233.

Niebuhr reminds his readers that peace is not enough.

Krehbiel's observation that Mennonites have engaged in a collective refusal to talk about power is another way 'Mennonite' shapes the way I teach Christian ethics.²¹ I believe that it is morally imperative for Christians to talk about power. Further, it is imperative to theorize power beyond the distorting confines of the church/world binary. This binary exempts the church from relations of power when there is no evidence to support the validity of this exemption. No church or community stands immune from, or totally external to, power and its effects. An adequate ethics of justice and peace must recognize the generation of power in all social relations, including in Christian communities and the church.

For this task, I draw on the French poststructuralist philosopher and historian Michel Foucault, because he explicitly rejects binary conceptions of power (such as ruler/ruled, powerful/powerless, or in the case of Mennonites, church/world) that fix power in certain places and with certain groups while denying its presence in other locations and groups. Foucault argues that there is "no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix." He continues, "One must suppose rather that the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole."²² Power is not a binary affair—here but not there—but circulates throughout social life.

This non-binary way of conceptualizing power enables two key insights. First, there is no outside to power—no place where it definitively resides (i.e., the world) to the exclusion of other places immune to or exempt from it (i.e., the church). Power is everywhere. Here, power is not understood as intrinsically corrupt and immoral but simply as a fact of social existence. Nonetheless, power and the use of it are always ethical issues. Second, since power is everywhere, it does not come just from the powerful or from 'the

²¹ Krehbiel describes her dissertation project as a product of "my fascination with Mennonites not talking about power." See "Pacifist Battlegrounds," 5.

²² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 94.

world.²³ Power comes from everywhere.²³ A Foucauldian perspective enables Christians to acknowledge the presence and effects of power in religious communities, and not just as a corrosive, external dynamic to be avoided as much as possible but as part and parcel of their very existence.

Thus understood, the church is not defined by its exemption from worldly relations of power but by its commitment to, and practices of, building and enacting different relations of power. The way of peace to which Jesus' followers are called has to do not only with responses to external sources of violence but with the use of power in communities. The church's unique identity as people of God's peace does not consist simply in the negative (and passive) action of saying "no" to power by refusing physical violence. The church's identity is its empowerment by the Holy Spirit to use and generate power differently—the proactive activity of beating swords into plowshares (Isaiah 2:4, Joel 3:10). If peace is not defined by the absence of power but is better understood as another form of power that must be actively generated through the formation and reformation of rightly-related community, then refusal to talk about power is inconsistent with a genuine commitment to peace.²⁴ The church *must* talk about power, and this power talk must include frank acknowledgement of how power is used and abused within the church. The classroom is an important venue for these discussions.

Finally, I make a serious attempt to treat the classroom as a space of accountability for what my experience as a queer Mennonite teaches me about power. There is nothing "nonviolent" about MCUSA's assault on LGBTQ people and their allies, nothing "peaceful" about the harm it inflicts. Accountability means telling the truth about my experience: refusals by religious communities to acknowledge or talk about power does not thereby make them peaceful. Similarly, refusing to acknowledge power is not the same thing as protecting vulnerable people from violence. Refusing to talk about power does more to aid and abet those who abuse their power than it does to protect people from abuse. In fact, refusing to talk about power or denying the presence of it in the church is a crucial component of why power remains a mystified dimension of Mennonites' communal life. This reticence is not protection. It deprives people who are vulnerable to harm and abuse

²³ Ibid., 93.

²⁴ Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 16.

of the tools and resources to understand their situation. It's important to talk about power in the classroom and as an ethical issue, because such conversations are crucial for equipping people who experience harm and abuse in church communities and by religious leaders, and those who have witnessed this harm, with the critical insights and tools to comprehend and name the dilemmas they face, and to act creatively and effectively for change.²⁵

Working for peace requires justice—creating, maintaining, and sustaining just relationships. And justice requires telling the truth about power, including, if necessary, a commitment to the process of learning *how* to talk about power for the first time.

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²⁵ Ibid., 205.

Afterword

Trevor George Hunsberger Bechtel

The editors of the “Teaching Peace Studies” issue of *The Conrad Grebel Review* noted that contributors offered “limited consideration of Anabaptist/Mennonite religious beliefs” in their essays.¹ They offered several possibilities for this “near absence,” including academic expectations or the “unquestioned alignment of the values in the field of peace studies with Anabaptist/Mennonite values.” Interestingly, the essays on the teaching of ethics—a closely aligned discipline—in this present issue are full of biographical reflection and explicit attention not just to Anabaptist/Mennonite religious beliefs but to the appropriateness of working from Mennonite values towards the teaching of ethics.

A common thread running through these essays is the connection between the biography of the teacher and the material they teach. This perspective, that “how I live” must be consistent with “what I teach” and even “the life of Jesus,” is one that Mennonites have owned and made popular in the field of ethics. Another thread concerns the kind of communities that can resist racism, support victims, encourage discipleship, and move towards seeing God’s purposes realized. This expertise in discipleship and community is something Mennonites are known for in academic circles, and for which they enjoy a very positive reputation. There is no necessary correlation between “how I live” and a positive reputation, but it is not surprising that the one follows from the other.

The sources of this reputation include cookbooks, service, the martyr tradition, a history of anti-war pacifism and simple living, and a strong unity of worship, practice, and belief alongside the teaching and learning of ethics by Mennonites in denominational schools and beyond. Another source is the writing of John Howard Yoder and its very positive academic reception. Stanley Hauerwas and many of his students (mostly not Mennonite) magnified and amplified Yoder’s influence and spread it across

¹ Reina Neufeldt and Neil Funk-Unrau, “Teaching Peace Studies: An Introduction,” *The Conrad Grebel Review* 32, no. 2 (2014), 118-19.

other Christian denominations. Part of this story is told in Harry Huebner's essay in this volume.

However, Yoder was also credibly accused with sexual abuse. The institutional response to his abuse generally sought to protect reputations, curb his behavior, and avoid public attention. Secret and confidential processes were engaged at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) and elsewhere, but failed to bring him to account.² Yoder died in 1997. Recently, the careful, persistent work of people such as Rachel Halder and Stephanie Krehbiel has seen a tipping point reached on questions of sexual abuse and Mennonite institutions. The key example is a weekend at AMBS in March 2015 devoted to a solemn reconsideration of Yoder's legacy at that institution. Yvonne Zimmerman and Alex Sider address this new appreciation of the dynamics of power, sexual abuse, and surviving in their essays in these pages.

The 2017 meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics (SCE) also considered Yoder's legacy. Stephanie Krehbiel and Karen Guth presented papers, a service of lament addressed Yoder in light of his past presidency of the SCE, and a packed session featured Hauerwas, Sara Wenger Shenk, and Traci West. Hauerwas expressed contrition for his earlier defenses of Yoder and noted ways that Yoder's thinking was in error.³ Wenger Shenk detailed her coming to learn of the secret and confidential files on Yoder, and her decision to open them and hold the weekend of lament. West called for a complete culture change in the SCE, naming Yoder's abuse as endemic in a culture of whiteness and privilege pervading society generally and Christian ethicists as well. James Logan picks up on similar themes in his essay here.

Yoder's articulate writing and reflection on Mennonite experience achieved a significant academic following only to be called into question decades after his death. The instability of secrecy and confidential processes allowed Yoder, AMBS, and the Mennonite Church to escape attention when it could have moved toward real reconciliation. Mennonites have confidence

² This history is detailed by Rachel Waltner Goossen in "Defanging the Beast': Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89 (2015): 7-80.

³ Hauerwas's expression of contrition was heard with ambivalence by some, as it focused on academic questions rather than on accountability for the damage Yoder caused.

that they will treat each other well in the institutions they create and maintain, but the reality is that Mennonite institutions are no better than others. In fact, they may be more violent than others, given an unresolved history of martyrdom and an unwillingness to appropriately thematize power.⁴

Similar dynamics are now at work in the case of Luke Hartman, a former Vice President at Eastern Mennonite University, who resigned after being arrested for solicitation. In the wake of his resignation, a similarly secret and confidential process around an earlier abuse case at Lindale Mennonite Church became public. In reflecting on this case, Lisa Schirch outlines four Mennonite institutional patterns hindering prevention efforts: keeping secret files on credibly reported or admitted sexual offenders, using secret accountability processes, encouraging victims to keep quiet, and confusing sexual affairs with sexual violence.⁵ Following Schirch, I want to suggest that the teaching of ethics must start paying more attention to institutional processes and policies, particularly when involving secrecy and confidentiality. Secrecy and confidentiality are unethical practices for institutions due to the way they protect the use and abuse of power.

Why do secrecy and confidentiality in Mennonite institutions remain undertheorized? Most generally, ethics as a formal discipline is underrepresented in these institutions despite our reputation in ethics. Currently, only AMBS titles faculty as teaching ethics; there Janna Hunter-Bowman and Malinda Berry are professors of ethics. Perhaps people have been hired as ethicists but then titled more generically, as I was at Bluffton University. Or Mennonite institutions may presume that competence to teach ethics comes with a commitment to Anabaptist Mennonite values.

Sometimes ethics courses dissolve into the curriculum with the expectation that every course becomes an ethics course or that training in ethics becomes a common learning objective. Alternately, ethics courses may

⁴ This set of connections has probably been more thoroughly explored in Mennonite fiction and literary criticism than anywhere else. When seen as examples of unalloyed goodness, martyr stories may seem very promising as staples in an ethics course. But when the reception of these stories is used to reinforce a positive reputation, they may be deployed rhetorically in connection with institutional secrecy and confidentiality.

⁵ Lisa Schirch, "An Advocate Responds to Concerns from Others at EMU," *Our Stories Untold* blog, January 13, 2017: www.ourstoriesuntold.com/advocate-responds-concerns-others-emu/.

be a part of disciplinary capstones, not necessarily connected to Mennonite values like peacemaking or community. These courses may need to spend significant time addressing disciplinary codes, as noted in Brenda Srof's essay on Goshen College's nursing ethics course. The contrast here is between ethics as compliance and ethics as character. In disciplines like Social Work with highly codified ethics requirements, compliance with the standards of care defines the ethical task. In the Business Ethics course at Bluffton,⁶ we focused on the codes of ethics of our students' employers. It was interesting to watch students examine whether their employers were seeking to foster compliance or inculcating a particular character in employees. The Christian Ethics courses I taught focused on character, perhaps at the expense of attention to compliance. Finally, a systematic approach to ethics could be an underdeveloped aspect of the discipline, as suggested by Reina Neufeldt in her essay for this volume.

Another contributing factor could be the view that institutions are morally neutral, and that only the people working in them have moral agency. Change requires that leaders of these institutions voice new directions, that habits and policies are reviewed, and that the connections between institutional mission, policy, and agency are well understood. Sara Wenger Shenk's work recognizes that institutions are organisms with habits and histories. Her decision to move secret and confidential files into more accessible space, and to talk about that decision publicly, shows the beginnings of a change in the character of AMBS as an institution, not just a shift in leadership. And the graciousness with which she was received at SCE indicates that AMBS can again garner respect in the academic community without protecting Yoder's legacy.⁷ It could be argued that AMBS has simply sought to safeguard its reputation at every turn and that it has a consistent character in seeking to establish and protect that reputation, but the departure from secrecy and confidentiality, especially if it now becomes supported by new policy, suggests a shift⁸ in institutional culture.

⁶ This course is now an example of ethics courses dissolving into the curriculum.

⁷ The role of Yoder's reputation as one of the leading ethicists of the 20th century is important too. Would Yoder remain a significant target if he had published less, or if his work was being forgotten rather than expanding in influence?

⁸ It is not the wholesale transformation that West called for, but it is a shift in the direction of that transformation.

How deeply can we hold a commitment to truth-telling and transparency, institutionally? Academic institutions must follow—or challenge with consequences—the laws and codes of ethics of their regulating bodies. The rise of FERPA (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) in the US exemplifies how communication between stakeholders (faculty, staff, students, students' families) has changed. The contrast between compliance and character is regularly tested as FERPA is upheld or violated by those seeking to create the best learning environment. Files about a sexual abuser, a professor's performance review, a student's grades and plagiarism history, the annual budget, faculty salaries, the list of anonymous donors, the university's legal bills—which of these most requires transparency and truth-telling?

It is of course very difficult to find the right balance in our discourse that reveals the truth transparently without generating unnecessary ill will, eroding trust, or irresponsibly drawing attention to inadequacies. Decisions made over fifty years at AMBS show how hard this can be to do well. What balances to truth-telling and transparency are expected by an abuser's death, the limitations of time and social mores, compliance and legal expectations of privacy in human resources, the chilling effect of releasing formerly confidential records? Truth-telling institutions need constituencies and stakeholders willing to learn the complex nature of institutional life—and to extend trust and resources to sustain our institutions through possibly difficult times—as together we explore what it means to extend truth-telling and transparency across the parts of those institutions formerly guided by secrecy and confidentiality. This interaction between institutional speech and audience engagement parallels the relationship between professor and classroom. Taking the ethics of the institution seriously in the ethics classroom may in fact be a prerequisite for getting institutional ethics right.

Does the teacher of ethics then have a special obligation to seek institutional change? Institutions distinguish between their teaching and their operational practices. Nursing professors do not have a special duty to offer care in the dormitory, and accounting professors are not responsible for the institution's books. But does the strong connection between biography and ethics suggest something different for the ethics teacher? It indeed may, and this connection is more and more important for students, as suggested

by Paulus Widjaja in his essay in this volume. As well, we need a more robust relationship between the theory that all our disciplines bring to bear on institutional life and the operations of our institutions. The ethics teacher's responsibility to challenge and resource the institution should be matched by the institution administrators' responsibility to seek the expertise of those trained in ethics.

The classroom is one of the best environments for testing the strengths and limits of ideas. It was in the classroom where I first heard the more complete version of Yoder's story and told students of the difficulty of reading him in light of his life. However, this remained undertheorized from an institutional perspective and always had more the tone of a shared secret than of a moment of transparency. I hope that in future my efforts to teach ethics will benefit from recognizing the kind of life I must live in order to be a good teacher, the kind of community that I need to support me, and the shape of institutional policy and renewal that will allow me, and my students, to recognize the power and powers we exercise and against which we are aligned.

Trevor George Hunsberger Bechtel has served as Dean of Conrad Grebel University College and Associate Professor of Religion at Bluffton University. He lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Angela H. Reed, Richard R. Osmer, and Marcus G. Smucker. *Spiritual Companionship: A Guide to Protestant Theology and Practice*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015.

In their introduction to *Spiritual Companionship*, Reed, Osmer, and Smucker correctly note that while many fine books have been written about spiritual guidance and spiritual direction, most of them rely on Catholic resources and theology. The central contribution of this volume is to make a case for spiritual guidance with a Protestant “coloration.” This starting point affects not only their method of argumentation but also the practices and relationships they group under the rubric of spiritual companionship.

The book’s seven chapters are all organized in the same way, and each includes a section on cultural context, the contributions of Scripture, resources from the Protestant tradition, ways to imagine spiritual companionship, case studies or congregational examples, and specific, concrete practices for deepening spiritual community.

Chapter one suggests presence as a key way to understand spiritual companionship, while chapter two makes a case that spiritual companionship is central to congregational vitality. In chapter three the authors explore one-to-one spiritual direction or guidance, and in chapter four how the rubric of spiritual companionship might profitably adjust the ways small groups organize and conduct themselves.

Chapter five focuses on discerning God’s presence in daily life, chapter six combines life course theory with the notion of Scripture as a metanarrative to suggest how people might claim their own story and put it into conversation with the Bible, and chapter seven explores the need for leaders, especially, to have spiritual companions for their own growth and health as well as for the good of their ministries.

What I found most compelling was the strong case the authors made for spiritual companionship as central to congregational life, and the specific and varied examples they provided of ways this companionship could take form: in spiritual friendships, spiritual direction, pastoral care relationships, various kinds of already established small groups and support groups, and groups formed explicitly to encourage and deepen spiritual formation. I have been thinking about Christian formation in the congregation for a number of years as both a practitioner and a scholar; nonetheless, this book

expanded my imagination for ways spiritual companionship could both flow with and expand congregational life.

My chief complaint concerns a missed opportunity in the final chapter. The authors could have made a stronger case for congregational leaders to have spiritual companions themselves, on two counts.

The first is that pastoral leaders must practice what they preach. A congregation that is going to strengthen its ministry of spiritual companionship needs leaders who are on board not only intellectually but experientially. The second has to do with the authors' treatment of the pastor's personal covenant (168). They suggest discussing it with family members, church/ministry staff, and church members. This is a step in the right direction. Yet the temptation for pastors to fudge their answers to the authors' excellent questions (What is your prayer life like? Do you practice Sabbath-keeping? How are you attending to your relationships in ministry?) may be most lively precisely when they must be most truthful. The process the authors recommend doesn't sufficiently attend to the self-deception to which virtue-driven organizations and leaders are especially prone.¹ Blind spots are called "blind" spots for a reason. This is true for everyone, but the consequences of blind spots are more significant for those who lead, and thus the need for strong processes to tend to spiritual health is even more imperative for them than for "ordinary" congregational members. Every minister should have either a peer group or a spiritual director, and perhaps both, and I wish the authors had said as much.

Overall, however, I highly recommend this volume. As the testimonials on the back cover note, it could serve as a guidebook for pastors and lay leaders, Christian formation committees, or Sunday school classes, and could help congregations develop or strengthen ministries of spiritual companionship. It should become required reading in Protestant spiritual guidance training programs and other seminary classes that focus on Christian formation in the congregation.

Rachel Miller Jacobs, Assistant Professor of Congregational Formation, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana

¹ See Maureen O'Hara and Aftab Omer's chapter in Arthur C. Bohart, Barbara S. Held, Edward Mendelowitz, and Kirk J. Schneider, *Humanity's Dark Side: Evil, Destructive Experience, and Psychotherapy* (Washington, DC: The American Psychological Association, 2013).

Rosemary Freeney Harding with Rachel Elizabeth Harding. *Remnants: A Memoir of Spirit, Activism, and Mothering*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

... while we all have experiences of deep personal, even spiritual crisis in which it seems as if “nobody was there,” I believe that at the most fundamental and the most transcendent levels of our experience as human beings, we are never left alone. There is always accompaniment. There are always remnants.

Remnants: A Memoir of Spirit, Activism, and Mothering is the deeply moving and theologically rich memoir of Mennonite civil rights activist Rosemary Freeney Harding (1931-2004) written in collaboration with, and assembled by, her daughter Rachel Harding. The epigraph above is from page 161.

Through Freeney Harding’s life, *Remnants* “seeks to bring the indigenous wisdom of the African American community, particularly of women, into engagement with more academic understandings of intellectual production,” including theology and Christian ethics (xx). The book is relevant and meaningful for many audiences, including those pursuing scholarly matters of interest in African American and Afro-Atlantic religion, womanist theology and ethics, public theology, Anabaptist studies, mysticism, or social justice (xx).

Remnants is divided into six parts in addition to a foreword and an afterword. These parts consist of interviews, journal entries, poetry, and previously published essays, as well as Harding’s reflections on her mother’s life and influence. These materials proceed mostly in chronological order and are written in Freeney Harding’s voice. The content includes, for example, Freeney Harding’s ancestral history, experiences of racial segregation, learned spiritual values, participation in the freedom movement (including her work as a cofounder of the first racially integrated social service agency in Atlanta, Georgia—Mennonite House), and the influence of mystical traditions such as Buddhism and contemplative Christianity on her understandings of reconciliation and nonviolence.

Freeney Harding makes several key claims about spirituality and social justice activism. First, she contends that activism, informed by the values

of Black religion and culture that influenced her upbringing, is “grounded in the traditions of hospitality; healing practices; ghost and spirit stories; and a welcoming and inclusive community” (117). Second, she claims that self-love is necessary for working to end injustice, for it is only once we love ourselves fully, including our skin and bodies, that we can love others fully (69). Third, she connects nonviolence to an ethos of “accompaniment,” namely a willingness to walk alongside the others and even our enemies (160).

Freeney Harding also claims, fourth, that mothers and mothering are significant for spirituality and activism, since mothers and grandmothers often play pivotal roles in the formation of cultural and moral identity (218). Fifth, she recognizes how various systems and relationships of violence are mutually reinforcing. In other words, she takes an intersectional approach to violence and injustice. In particular she names the interrelationship of racism and settler-colonialism in comparing African American experiences of slavery and indigenous people’s experiences of colonization and genocide in America (94). She also identifies the ways in which sexism and racism compound one another (94).

Remnants offers valuable insights for Mennonite theology and ethics. Freeney Harding presents a view of discipleship that is embodied and that incorporates an emphasis on both the individual and the communal body of believers. Within this view is an understanding of body knowledge as a source of wisdom, an acknowledgement of the particularity of human bodies, and a commitment to the experiences of suffering bodies. Her view of nonviolence is also significant. She does not condone violence, nor does she suggest that nonviolence requires uncritical self-sacrifice. For her, nonviolence includes a quality of spirit that is able to transcend violence by giving strength to those who suffer and struggle for justice, and that is “even capable of including our inflictors in its aura” (159).

Freeney Harding saw this modeled in the Freedom Movement for racial justice in America. She writes that nonviolence in the Movement “meant that there was room for everyone—every ethnic group, every race, males and females” (169). Finally, as both an insider to Mennonite communities (upon her confession of faith) and an outsider (as an African American amidst predominantly Swiss Mennonites), she is well positioned

to see Mennonite theology's potential to be inclusive across difference, and incorporates an understanding of the holy as that which is not limited to one particular form or tradition (191).

Kimberly Penner, Ph.D. Candidate, Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, Ontario

Steven Charleston and Elaine A. Robinson, eds. *Coming Full Circle: Constructing Native Christian Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015.

In 1973 Vine Deloria published a book at the intersection of the experiences of Indigenous Peoples in the United States and Christian religion/theology with the provocative title *God is Red*. Now considered a classic, this work influenced many Native American theologians and helped draw attention to their scholarship in broader academic and ministerial circles. Steven Charleston and Elaine Robinson's collection of essays on Native Christian Theology seeks to spark the same kind of energy among Native and non-Native Christians both in academic and ministerial contexts, primarily in the United States.

The editors explicitly state that this volume is not to be considered a summation of Native Christian theology but a starting point for a plethora of Native Christian theologies, from a variety of contexts and experiences of Indigenous peoples across the US. This objective is achieved in their selection of contributions from a spectrum of theological contexts, including scholars, professors, ministers in different denominations, social workers, government workers, and community activists. The contributors come from diverse contexts, which in turn allows for appealing to a wider readership and for a deeper level of relatability.

This notion of relatability—and indeed relationality—runs throughout the pages of this collection. It is difficult to choose one or two authors to focus on, when their function as a whole is arguably most insightful. Individually,

they take up theological topics such as sin, salvation, creation, revelation, reconciliation, epistemology, ecclesiology, theological anthropology, mission, and liturgy. Each author draws on their experience as a Native Christian in their context(s), biblical scripture, reason, and traditions (both western-Christian and traditions of their Indigenous nations). Some authors put forward a pan-Indigenous Christian theology, while others emphasize the specificity of their context, language, and nation. At times, the former approach leads to an oversimplification of concepts and contexts, one of the book's weaknesses, while the latter provides a rich, challenging engagement across Indigenous and European Christian terrain.

The primary strength of this collection is its aim to foster relationships, conversation, theologizing, worshiping, and liberative work across Christian communities. Many authors note the complexity of navigating traditional Indigenous spiritualities and European Christian norms, and they seek to carve out space for their multifaceted identities as Native and Christian, walking an often precarious road of faith between communal and identity norms. This would be especially difficult in the Canadian context, in a society that heralds multiculturalism while supporting the ongoing colonization and oppression of Indigenous Peoples and lands.

The church is caught in the midst of these complexities and finds itself in a unique position to respond, if it takes the opportunity. I recommend this collection of essays to churches wanting to interrogate the histories of their theological, ecclesial, and socio-cultural norms, as well as wanting to engage the constructive and liberative theologies that Native Christians are imagining and drawing life from in order to restore health and well-being in their communities and relationships with all peoples.

Mennonite theology in Canada and the US has emphasized a commitment to nonviolence and peacemaking, valuing community and relationships. Indeed, European Mennonites living in North America have often considered themselves exceptional to western Christianity, distinguishing themselves from their Catholic and Protestant neighbors. However, it would be astute for Mennonite churches and academic institutions to consider their own theological norms and how these norms have contributed to a history of colonization in North America. As one of my best teachers always said: Theologies are not neutral to questions of

power. This is evident in the Mennonite operation of Indian Residential Schools in Canada and missionary boarding schools in the US. Even after the activity of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada, many Mennonites still do not know about their church's involvement in the harm and intergenerational trauma, violent assimilation, and genocide inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples. An honest and vulnerable engagement with the essays in this collection, and with the challenges they pose to Mennonite theological and ethical norms, would be a small step in the direction of truth and reconciliation for Mennonite churches and academic institutions.

Melanie Kampen, Ph.D. Student, Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, Ontario

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Conrad Grebel Review invites original article submissions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives on two specific themes:
(1) Sacramentality and (2) The Common Good.

SACRAMENTALITY

Possible topics include sacramentality, sacraments, ordinances, and pastoral practice in Anabaptist/Mennonite faith communities; sacramentality in ecumenical dialogues involving Mennonites; sacramentality in worship practices; sacramentality as a perspective on creation.

Length: 5000-7500 words / Deadline: October 1, 2017

THE COMMON GOOD

Possible topics include biblical, historical, theological, ethical, or practical perspectives on the common good; the function of the idea of the common good in Mennonite ethical discourse; the common good and economic inequality, war and peace, ecology and climate change, political institutions, race, and/or gender; the common good in ecumenical, interfaith, and/or public discourses; the common good as a relevant and rigorous concept.

Length: 5000-7500 words / Deadline: January 1, 2018

See grebel.ca/cgreview for style guide and general submission guidelines.

All manuscripts should relate to The Conrad Grebel Review's general mandate to publish on "theology, peace, society, and culture from broadly-based Anabaptist/Mennonite perspectives." Submissions on themes other than those above, but related to the journal's mandate, are welcome at any time.

CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

WHAT YOUNG HISTORIANS ARE THINKING

Ridgeview Mennonite Church

Gordonville, PA, June 5, 2017

The Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (LMHS), the Sider Institute for Anabaptist, Pietist and Wesleyan Studies at Messiah College, and the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College welcome paper proposals for their fourth annual symposium, What Young Historians Are Thinking. This symposium seeks to encourage young historians in their research and to provide an avenue for sharing their findings, both orally and subsequently in print through publication in LMHS's *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*. Organizers welcome proposals from undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students, those who have just started careers in history, and those who are "young" in scholarly study of historical topics (no matter what age).

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: APRIL 14, 2017

Submit proposals to younghistorians@lmhs.org or via postal mail to Joel Nofziger, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602.

MENNONITES, SERVICE, AND THE HUMANITARIAN IMPULSE: MCC AT 100

Winnipeg, MB, October 23-24, 2020

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has facilitated cooperation among Mennonite groups, constructing a broad inter-Mennonite, Anabaptist identity, and bringing Mennonites into global ecumenical and interfaith partnerships. This centennial conference invites proposals for papers examining MCC's past, present, and future, and reflecting on Mennonite response to the biblical call to love one's neighbor through practical acts of service. Proposals are welcome from various academic perspectives, including but not limited to anthropology, conflict transformation and peacebuilding, cultural studies, development studies, economics, history, political science, sociology, and theology. The conference will be hosted by the Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, in collaboration with Canadian Mennonite University.

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: DECEMBER 1, 2019

Submit proposals or questions to Royden Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9. E-mail: r.loewen@uwinnipeg.ca.

CALL FOR PAPERS

MENNONITES AND THE HOLOCAUST

CONFERENCE

Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas

March 16 - 17, 2018

The history of Mennonites as victims of violence in the 1930s and 1940s, and as relief workers during and after World War II, has been studied by historians and preserved by many family histories. However, this commemorative and celebratory history hardly captures the full extent of Mennonite views and actions related to nationalism, race, war, and survival. It also ignores extensive Mennonite pockets of sympathy for Nazi ideals of racial purity and an exuberant identification with Germany. In the last decade an emerging body of research has documented Mennonite involvement as perpetrators in the Holocaust in ways not widely known or discussed. A wider view of Mennonite interactions with Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, Roma, Volksdeutsche, and other groups as well as with state actors is now necessary. This conference aims to document, publicize, and analyze Mennonite attitudes, environments, and interactions with others in Europe that shaped their responses to, and engagement with, Nazi ideology and the events of the Holocaust.

Paper topics are welcomed from a variety of perspectives, such as social, economic, political, cultural, theological, religious, historical and gender analysis. Registration and lodging costs will be covered for all presenters. Some travel subsidies are available. Publication of selected conference papers is planned.

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 1, 2017

Submit a one-page proposal that includes a title, a description of the proposed paper, and a short explanation of the stage of your research (work-in-progress, new paper, previously published), and a 1-2 page CV to John Thiesen at jthiesen@bethelks.edu.

For more information: mla.bethelks.edu/MennosandHolocaust

Conference Co-rganizers: John Sharp, Hesston College, Hesston, KS; Mark Jantzen, Bethel College, Bethel, KS; John Thiesen, Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, KS