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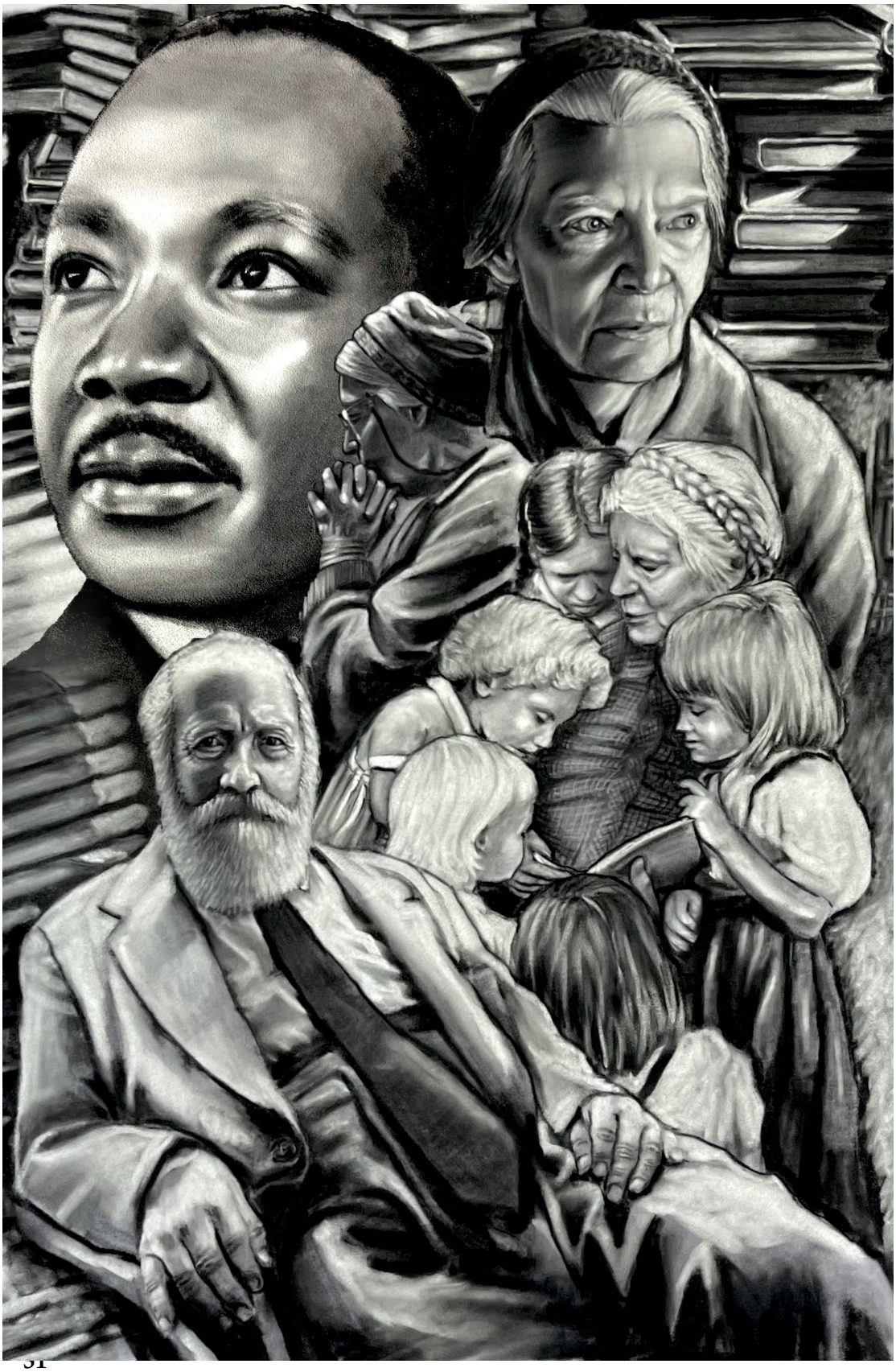

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THE JOURNAL OF DIALOGIC ETHICS: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives

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The Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives exists to promote dialogue within and among religious and/or interhuman traditions in response to emerging communication ethics issues in the current historical moment. The journal provides an academic home for a multiplicity of faith perspectives, welcoming both articles that speak from the particularity of a religious tradition and articles that engage interfaith dialogue directly. In addition, the journal welcomes a variety of interhuman perspectives addressing issues of dialogue.

The Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives is an open-access journal that publishes two issues per year containing original articles that advance theory and research about communication ethics implications between and among religious traditions and interhuman perspectives. Manuscripts submitted to the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* should be original material not under consideration for another journal or publication. At the editor's discretion, each submission will undergo masked peer review by two members of the editorial board. Suggestions for revision will keep issues of argument, style, and contribution to the areas of communication ethics and interfaith/interhuman dialogue in mind. The editor makes final publication decisions.

THE JOURNAL OF DIALOGIC ETHICS:
Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives

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Articles

Reviews

Editorial Introduction

Annette M. Holba

This issue of the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* continues to celebrate the contribution of Ronald C. Arnett to the communication discipline and its intersections with other fields of study. Arnett's scholarly engagement opens invitational spaces for dialogue and debate around topics, concepts, and praxis that touch individuals, organizations, and communities. This is a collection of essays that were presented at the 17th Biennial Communication Ethics Conference, centered on "Communication Ethics as Tenacious Hope," at Duquesne University in the summer of 2023. With these essays, we continue to see the deep impact of Arnett's scholarship and leadership. Most of the essays in this issue were presented by their authors at the conference, including Timothy L. Sellnow, Amit Pinchevski, Basak M. Guven, and Justin Bonanno. These essays either engage the scholarship of Arnett or focus on his leadership in the discipline. The essay contributed by Ellen Paul and Jon Radwan, while not presented at the conference, demonstrates an embodiment of dialogical and interfaith commitment by bringing different perspectives together in conversation. This issue also offers a debut book review for this journal, extending our mission beyond stand-alone essays. The inaugural book review is offered by Rhiannon Grant.

In the first essay, "Holy Sparks of Dialogic Civility: A Drama in Three Acts," Timothy L. Sellnow's keynote address reflects a poetic narrative around his decades-long work with Arnett from when he was one of Arnett's first students until he came into his own scholarly acclaim. This essay provides a rich and textured account of honor and respect through Sellnow's experiences, impressions, and engagement with Arnett over time. It truly is a celebration of Arnett's scholarship, leadership, and friendship.

Amit Pinchevski's essay, "Beyond Dialogue: Communication Ethics between Interpersonal and Impersonal," was another keynote address at the conference. It employs Arnett's earlier metaphor of dialogic civility, suggesting that the term denotes a potential turn toward thirdness, which offers a counterpoint to the application of dialogic civility. Pinchevski's essay begins with Arnett's thinking, which moves him toward offering an alternative between impersonal and interpersonal and rescuing thirdness as a realistic possibility.

Basak M. Guven's essay, "Situating the Self in the Mud of Everyday Life: A Call Reminding of the Practical Philosophy behind the Doing of Theory," enters

into a discussion signifying a philosophy of communication ethics that is specifically aware of "post-isms" that invite competing narratives and perspectives into dialogue that can establish hope for future dialogue. Guven brings together the works of Arnett, Seyla Benhabib, Martin Buber, and Hannah Arendt, among others, to provide a meaningful and pragmatic invitation toward dialogic engagement.

In Justin N. Bonanno's essay, "Leading with the Good: The Role of Rhetorical Commonplaces in Communication Ethics," the role of commonplaces in varying communication ethics perspectives is explored. Bonanno considers how they interrelate to and potentially extend Arnett's notion of commonplaces, which can be a way to navigate problematic situations involving competing goods. Bonanno makes the case that it is important to emphasize the significance of the good, which can enable relatability across competing narratives and provide opportunity for coming together in dialogue and building mutual understandings.

Ellen Paul and Jon Radwan, in their essay "Catholics and Latter-day Saints: A History and a Coming Together," acknowledge that communication between Catholics and Latter-day Saints has been and still is rare. Convening a panel discussion from these differing perspectives, Paul and Radwan invited participants to share some history of their faith traditions and explore some of their theological similarities and differences. Bringing Catholic and Latter-day Saint voices into dialogue resonates with the notion of commonplaces in Bonanno's essay. Understanding the commonplaces between Catholics and Latter-day Saints can provide opportunities for opening and sustaining discussion and understanding.

Finally, this issue includes a book review of Eleanor Nesbitt's (2023) *Open to New Light: Quakers and Other Faiths* (Quaker Quicks series). A review of this new publication is fitting for a journal focusing on dialogic perspectives. Rhiannon Grant provides insight into strengths of the book and areas for further development. Grant suggests that Nesbitt's text provides an opening for further development and understanding of the Quaker faith and traditions. We hope you find the inclusion of a book review to be a useful addition to the journal.

My final comment about this issue is that we continue to see the significance of Arnett's scholarship unfold in relation to the broader communication discipline and intersecting subdisciplines, such as dialogue studies, rhetoric, communication ethics, religion, and philosophy of communication (this is not an exhaustive list). The ideas crafted by Arnett over his long career touched the minds and hearts of his students and other scholars around the world. It is with this in mind that we continue our celebration of the scholarship and leadership of Ronald C. Arnett with deep appreciation.

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Holy Sparks of Dialogic Civility: A Drama in Three Acts

Timothy L. Sellnow

Abstract: This article, based on a keynote address honoring Ronald C. Arnett, weaves the experiences of the author, one of Arnett's first students, with the intellectual contributions Arnett has made to comprehending and responding to the challenges of current affairs. Arnett's substantial impact as an author is portrayed as a source of the same inspirational "holy sparks" that he eloquently identified in the works of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas. Distinctions are drawn between a dark form of fantasy, serving as the basis for denying and obscuring prevalent social risks, and opportunities for tenacious hope, through which the creative imagination is allowed to flourish in problem solving discourse. Current exemplars verifying the viability of such imaginative discourse are also provided.

Keywords: dialogue; risk; fantasy; imagination

For context, bear in mind I was one of Ronald C. Arnett's first students after he earned his PhD. Consequently, our relationship has touched six decades, starting in 1978. In those early years, A. J. Muste, clergyman and life-long passivist, was a repeated topic of class conversation. Muste silently held a candle in nightly solo protest to the Vietnam War outside the White House. When asked if he honestly felt his individual effort would change US policy, Muste offered these inspiring words, "I don't do it to change the country. I do it so the country won't change me" (Erickson 2017, para. 4).

I see the flicker of Muste's candle as a spark of hope—a refrain that no amount of darkness can hide a spark of light. The relevance of Muste's stance was apparent then and is apparent now in the substantial body of work published by Ron Arnett. In his work, Ron has manifested sparks of hope for the quiet, and a boldly advanced dialogic civility in a world that, without such advocacy for seeking common ground, is inclined to silence virtue.

When I was one of Ron's undergraduate students, the Speech Communication program resided in the Performing Arts Center at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota, USA. The building, modern for its time, also housed the music and theatre programs. Walking to and from class, one was often serenaded by the sounds spilling out of music practice rooms and performance halls. Theatre

actors taking breaks during dress rehearsals slipped in and out of character in the hallways. Thus, I think it is fitting to divide my presentation celebrating Ron's work into a prologue, three acts, and an epilogue:

Prologue: The Nature of Holy Sparks

Act I: Sparks of Love in a World of Individualism

Act II: Sparks of Imagination in the Darkness of Fantasy

Act III: Sparks of Tenacious Hope in Times of Peril

Epilogue

Prologue: The Nature of Holy Sparks

In his prolific career, Ron tirelessly challenged the perils of reckless modernity, where consideration of the future and the needs of those living at the margins of society are unapologetically ignored. In the context of Hannah Arendt's work, Arnett (2013) eloquently describes leaders whose sensibility is lost in modernity with the following analogy: "such persons of self-professed confidence are like those who run full speed ahead in the dark while asking others to follow, somehow failing to ask whether running at top velocity is prudent or even safe" (4). Ron turns to Arendt for an answer to such heedlessness: "Arendt countered modernity's optimism, undue confidence, and artificial light spread by the myth of the inevitability of progress with metaphors of genuine darkness and genuine light, permitting us to witness 'holy sparks' of genuine hope in places where many of us would know only fear and uncertainty" (3). Alongside a twenty-four-hour news cycle where the most extreme voices are amplified, Ron offers holy sparks as the kindling for dialogic civility, through which selfless compassion for one's brothers and sisters remains as it has always been—the best way forward.

Act I: Sparks of Love in a World of Individualism

As a teacher, Ron countered the obsession with self, inspired by reckless modernity, with an emphasis on dialogue, love, and compassion. As a sophomore, for example, my final paper focused on an application of Erich Fromm's work in an applied setting. As Ron collected our final papers in class, he sensed I was dissatisfied with my paper in its current form and casually asked me what I thought of my paper. I said I could have done better, but I ran out of time. His response was to give me two more days in the final examination period to further develop my thoughts. Ron constantly inspired us to drink deeply from the original works of great minds, like Fromm. And I accepted the invitation.

The added time he offered afforded me an opportunity to further examine the applications of Fromm's (2000) *The Art of Loving* in the life of a college sophomore at the edge of the 1980s. Fromm introduced me to the full range of love, from romantic love and its unrealistic expectations to love of parents,

brothers (and sisters), ourselves, and God. This is knowledge that influenced my classmates and me, not for a quarter or semester but for a lifetime. When I went to Ron's office to pick up my graded paper, he said simply, "I enjoyed reading this. The extra time was worth it." Ron lives what he taught.

Fromm made clear to me that love of our brothers and sisters is much more than an altruistic ideal. Brotherly and sisterly love reflects the fact that we are all one. Only in the love of those who do not serve a worldly purpose does the art of loving unfold. Such love is a spark of hope—a holy spark—inspiring civility and dialogue in a world obsessed with defeating and dominating others.

This conceptualization of brotherly love is consistently expressed in Ron's masterful analysis of Emmanuel Levinas's work. As Levinas repeatedly asserted, "I am my brother's keeper." Ron argues unwaveringly that this realization is the foundation for civility and dialogue. As he explains, "Without openness to the Other, hospitality fails to greet the unexpected—accidental dialogues cannot be forced, only appreciated. Such a dialogue is akin to a communicative spirit of 'holy sparks'" (Arnett 2017, 6). These are the sparks that give us hope for the future.

Before moving on to Act II, there is one additional matter I am compelled to mention. After completing Ron's class and my study of Fromm's work, I met and started dating a music major at St. Cloud State. That relationship has continued through today. My wife, Deanna Sellnow, and I have now been married for more than four decades. I sincerely believe I am a better husband and partner because of the deep thinking and inspired learning from Ron's classes. Deanna and I both remain close friends and colleagues of Ron and consider ourselves better people for having known him.

Act II: Sparks of Imagination in the Darkness of Fantasy

The holy sparks Ron sees consistently in the works of Arendt and Levinas are essential for responding to the dark times we see in our country and our world today. Reflecting on Immanuel Kant's work, Ron sees fantasy as the dark side of imagination. Simply stated, a world without civility relies on fantasy to perpetuate self-serving myths. Conversely, imagination is the source of solutions. Rather than mindlessly charging into the darkness, imagination empowers us to ponder what is ahead with both mindful caution and inspired optimism.

An initial step in engaging the imagination is the realization that the world's population is not conveniently divided into two populations: those with whom one agrees and the opposition, or bluntly stated, those who are reasonable and those who are wrong. More accurately, the world is as John Dewey ([1938] 2012) saw it: composed of not one, not two, but many publics. Imagination is essential to finding the common ground among many publics—a sacred place Ron tirelessly pursued. Civil discourse is the means through which common ground is imagined and enacted.

Regrettably, much social discourse is now and has often been imperiled by fantasies of absolute division to a point where groups identify themselves as much or more by antithesis (Cheney 1983)—what and whom they oppose—as by whom

they support or what they advocate. Such polarized thinking often inspires hatred and fear where neither is warranted. As such, groups create a structure of reality where fierce opposition is the only reasonable alternative. Keepers of such fantasies run full speed into a darkness of their own making, trapped in a self-imposed reality befitting Fyodor Dostoevsky's lament: "The best way to keep a prisoner from escaping is to make sure he never knows he's in prison" (Goodreads n.d.).

As Ron and colleagues Sarah M. DeIuliis and Matthew Corr (2017) establish in their book, *Corporate Communication Crisis Leadership: Advocacy and Ethics*, fantasies, though expedient, result in poor decision making. They offer the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe as an exemplar in failed planning and management. British Petroleum's unprecedented drilling went on, buoyed by a crisis response plan that real-world experience would expose as a complete fantasy. The company charged into the darkness motivated by profit and void of essential precautions.

Risk denial like that exercised by British Petroleum contributes in large part to an increasing frequency and intensity of crises (Biggs et al. 2011). My current research identifies three persistent types of risk denial based on fantasy: outright denial, "natural evolution" as fatalism, and issue re-orientation. I describe each of these forms of denial briefly.

Outright denial is perhaps the most egregious form of fantasy. In this case, assertions are made, and evidence is fabricated to refute what is commonly known or accepted as true. For instance, claims that the COVID-19 pandemic was a hoax are an outright denial of a known risk. Alex Jones, for years, drew listeners to his online programming by claiming that the horrific Sandy Hook school shooting was a hoax perpetrated by crisis actors and promoted through fake news. The absurdity of his remarks drew a large following until he was removed from social media and found guilty of defamation (Williamson 2022).

Others deny risk through fatalistic claims that the danger is a natural part of evolution. Such claims are common in response to efforts intended to address climate change. Climate change deniers insist the world has naturally warmed and cooled in the past and that plants and animals naturally evolve in response. While it is true that the climate has varied in millennia past, such skepticism fails to acknowledge the drastic changes and extinction of many plants and animals Earth has experienced as a result (Rainforest Alliance 2021).

Issue reorientation focuses on the simplistic assumptions that there are only two sides to an issue, that compromise is defeat, and that anyone not with me on this issue is against me. Supporting information for such divisive thinking is, unfortunately, plentiful on social media platforms taking the form of misinformation and disinformation (Sellnow, Parrish, and Semenas 2019).

Reviewing the frequency and form of fantasy in crisis denial can be depressing. Yet, as Ron so eloquently argued, there is reason for tenacious hope. I'll discuss these opportunities next in Act III.

Act III: Sparks of Tenacious Hope in Times of Peril

By its nature, risk is fraught with uncertainty (Sellnow and Sellnow 2023). If we knew with certainty when and how all dangers would manifest, they would remain crises, but the element of risk would be gone. If uncertainty is central to risk, how then can we recognize with confidence the sparks of tenacious hope? The answer is found in the pursuit of what Henri J. M. Nouwen (1994) described as being articulate in our uncertainty. This concept may seem contradictory. How can one be articulate in a world of uncertainty? The answer is found in the sparks of light that give vision in the darkness of our times.

America L. Edwards, Rebecca Freihaut, Timothy L. Sellnow, Deanna D. Sellnow, and Morgan C. Getchell (2023) characterize the pursuit of such sparks of light in times of darkness as engaged learning. They see civil dialogue, so often espoused by Ron, as the means for constant learning while engaged in risk and crisis management. A practitioner of risk and crisis communication will never have all the answers, but engaged learning creates an atmosphere of transparency, suspended judgment, compassion for others, and a sincere desire to mitigate suffering.

When enacting engaged learning, we are part of something bigger than ourselves. We are seeking the sparks of light that inform us through affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning (Edwards et al. 2023). Affective learning acknowledges the relevance of personal fears and losses pertaining to the emotions of those at risk. Behavioral learning emphasizes the capacity of those in danger to take protective action. Cognitive learning challenges all communicators to translate their technical information into practical comprehensible knowledge for those at risk.

Many examples of successful engaged learning in response to risk and crisis exist. For example, Rebecca Freihaut (2023) spent two years assessing the efforts of a community in Mayfield, Kentucky, to recover from a tornado that decimated the small town. She observed a level of unity and emergent leadership previously unknown to the community. Rather than further dividing the community, the recovery process sparked new forms of unity in the shared visualization of their community revitalized.

Agencies such as the World Health Organization (2005) are engaged in the discovery of best practices for communicating via social media during crises. They seek recommendations that will assist in the accurate reporting of risk information. Although this objective is formidable, given the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation, there is reason for optimism. For example, Pauline Gidget Estella (2023) observed an interest and willingness of journalists to develop meta competencies better preparing them to perform their role in an increasingly digital society. In other words, there is interest in and dedication to engaged learning in global journalism.

Lucy Jones, a renowned seismologist in Los Angeles, California, successfully bridged political party lines to establish better building standards and enforcement of these standards for earthquake readiness (Alden 2014). The result,

put poignantly, is that people who may have died in a Los Angeles earthquake are now much more likely to live. Lucy Jones provides the kind of holy spark Ron seeks to cultivate.

These are only a few examples of how a pursuit of holy sparks through engaged learning, civil dialogue, and the recognition that we are our sisters' and brothers' keepers can give us an articulacy in our dark times of uncertainty.

Epilogue

We are long from seeing a final act from Ron. He remains a vibrant communicator and servant to a world in need. He is a cherished friend and colleague to many. We can, however, reflect momentarily on Ron's vast accomplishments. He has always created holy sparks of light in a world darkened by conflict, greed, and hypocrisy.

From *Dwell in Peace* (1986) to *Communication and Tenacious Hope* (2022), Ron Arnett has articulated a way forward, sharing his own insight and introducing many of us to the works of other giants of humane scholarship. Through his tireless efforts, he has energized generations to seek common ground, listen with compassion and tolerance, and improve the world around them at every corner possible. In doing so, I genuinely believe, thanks to the influence of Ron Arnett's work, that there are those who would have died in the violence or emotional turmoil of conflict arising from the darkness of this world but have instead lived, and perhaps even thrived, in peace. And that is the definition of a career well-spent and a well-lived life.

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Beyond Dialogue: Communication Ethics between Interpersonal and Impersonal

Amit Pinchevski

Abstract: This paper seeks to rethink communication ethics beyond dialogue by advancing the notion of thirdness as its basis. Taking Ronald C. Arnett's idea of dialogic civility as a starting point, the discussion proceeds to reveal the inseparability and interconnectedness of the interpersonal and the impersonal, the particular and the universal. It then considers Emmanuel Levinas's ethics as triadic rather than dialogic, as exposed to the call of the immediate Other while always haunted by the calls of the third party, of other Others. From this, a new understating of mediation arises—ethical mediation—one that does not culminate in transcending its elements but in attending, each time again, to their difference.

Keywords: dialogue; ethics; thirdness; Levinas, Emmanuel; Arnett, Ronald C.; civility; mediation

Communication ethics seems to be poised between opposing poles: particular and universal, interpersonal and impersonal, immediate and distant, dialogic and systematic, private and public.[1] Such dualities both inform and haunt our thinking of communication ethics. What does the persistence of such dualities mean? For one thing, however we conceive of communication ethics, this persistence pushes us from one focal point to the other, from here to there to everywhere, from this time to any time, from this case to every case, and in reverse. It is as if one has to decide where to start the trajectory, and is then compelled to venture towards the other pole, whereupon the trajectory will finally find justification in the point where it began. What I would like to suggest to you today are some preliminary thoughts about this framing and its problems, and offer a different way of going about it. I suggest that such dual thinking is misguided and propose the notion of thirdness as a possible alternative.

[1] This essay was first delivered as a keynote address for the 17th Biennial Communication Ethics Conference.

1.

I would like to begin with dialogue and specifically with the idea of dialogic civility, which Ron Arnett develops so insightfully in his work (1999, 2001). I bring this idea and the compound of dialogic civility as emblematic to the problem I have started to describe. Let's first linger a bit on the compound itself. Dialogue, of course, suggests interpersonal discourse, whether literally or metaphorically, whether between two sides or between changing parties. The interpersonal model implies the mutual recognition and willingness of the dialoging partners; indeed, they must already consider themselves on some level as partners before dialogue can commence. To be in dialogue requires that I already acknowledge you as interlocutor, as an Other with whom I am dialoging.

Now civility suggests something different. It derives from the Latin *civilis*, which denotes public life and social order, and is also related to *civis*, "townsman," which is the origin of *civitatem*—citizenship. So civility stands for something quite different from the situation typically associated with dialogue. Civility implies impersonal fraternity, equal measure to all regardless of who they are. It is not about a specific Other, but about all others as others. In fact, civility presupposes certain arrangements that do not require—indeed preclude—interpersonal recognition or familiarity. Civility demands anonymity. It is for me as much as for you as much as for her and for them.

With dialogic civility Arnett attempts to square the circle, an attempt that I find inspiring. My intervention very much follows this motivation; however, I will suggest the notion of thirdness to do so and in fact will try to show that Arnett's discussion contains, even if inadvertently, tendencies toward thirdness. Like him, I am indebted in my thinking to Levinas, but in my reading, Levinas is not ultimately a dialogic thinker but, critically, a thinker of thirdness. But before proceeding, I would like to stay a bit more with Arnett's discussion, which, as said, is indispensable in unpacking the problematic.

Dialogic civility is proposed as a "public interpersonal metaphor" (Arnett 2001, 315), which is said to fit a postmodern communicative context. The use of metaphor here is instructive, for it works like an enthymeme, calling the audience to make sense of what is said. Note that this address is already dialogic in that it invites a plural "you" to partake in the address. Once others respond, they effectively make themselves into an audience, becoming part of the dialogic situation. Such public dialogue summons whoever is willing to respond each time, reaching out to all, provided the structure of response is dialogical—or more precisely, *as if* dialogical, for metaphor always works by a leap of the imagination, requiring the transfer of an idea from one context to another while carrying the original meaning.

The main motivation of dialogic civility is providing an alternative to self-centric discourse, which is tantamount not only to morally indifferent discourse but to a privatized, commercial public domain. At its core is acknowledging alterity and difference and their multiplicity. Right from the beginning it is clear that there is no one framework, basis or narrative according to which dialogic

civility could operate. Indeed, it requires a constant shifting of ground, a constant movement towards a blurry horizon while keeping the conversation going. Sustained by respect and responsibility, it is carried across multiple beginnings, interruptions, and resumptions.

Perhaps what is most striking about this idea is the humility it teaches, the kind of humility possible only in embodied situatedness. Note again the duality that inheres here: the concreteness of embodied situatedness but the demand for universal respect, dialogue being the operative metaphor for making this work. But dialogue owes its logic to the interpersonal, which is then sought metaphorically in the public domain. This transfer (literally: metaphor) relies on the precedence of the interpersonal in conferring its virtues onto the public. It is the ethical import of the interpersonal that informs civil—that is, impersonal—exchange.

Is it possible to conceive of an ethically informed public discourse without the precedence of the interpersonal? Or rather, why even try to do so? What's wrong with dialogue? Well, nothing is wrong, except that by subscribing to it we rehearse the dualism mentioned before, making the public derivative of or secondary to the dialogic. I would like to propose the concept of thirdness as an alternative and demonstrate its value for the discussion.

2.

What do I mean by thirdness? That which is outside the two, external to the I and Thou, beyond the here and now. It might seem that just as dualism is a retort to monism, so thirdness is to dualism. This is not my intention, and I would actually want to argue that secondness and thirdness, while distinct, are inseparable. But first some conceptual clarifications are in order.

There is nothing new in the idea of the third and of thirdness. Plato and Aristotle were preoccupied with what has since been called "the third-person argument," which concerns the problem of regression (if there is one form of person, there must be another, and still another, and so infinitely). This, of course, contradicts Plato's understanding of knowledge, which is based on the precedence of pure forms. In essence, this gets to the dualism of the idea versus particulars, of which Aristotle said there will always be a third, setting off an infinite regression. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle speaks of the law of noncontradiction, according to which a substance cannot be of opposite qualities simultaneously (both be and not be, etc.). This law was known later in Latin as *tertium non datur*: no third (option) exists, or the law of the excluded third. It is curios that in another book, *On the Soul*, Aristotle is actually of the opinion of *tertium datur*—that the third very much exists. This in his discussion on the intermediate, that which is in-between, the Greek *metaxy*, which is the origin for the word *medium*.

If all this seems a bit anecdotal, this is because it is. A much more comprehensive account is in order to get a handle of the ways in which thirdness plays out in classical texts. But despite the obvious shortcomings, it is possible to glean from this brief note three (how else!) types of thirdness: (1) multiplication

and plurality—the many rather than the binary; (2) that which is excluded, indeed has to be excluded, for the existing state of affairs to take place; (3) that which is in-between, intermediate, between one and another. These three types do not necessarily coincide, although they might. What warrants placing them under the same category is that all three have to do with an externality that has to remain outside for the comings and goings between the participating parties to transpire. The condition of the two entails the functional exclusion of the third.

It is possible to review the entire history of philosophy, from ancient to modern to postmodern, in terms of thirdness. Of course, I am not going to do that here. I do, however, want to give a shout out to a couple thinkers—first, to Hegel, who is perhaps the thinker most invested in thirdness, whose version of it was famously developed in his form of dialectics. According to Hegel, once there is one, there are already two: the condition for consciousness and thought is opposition. One is one by virtue of not being the other. What takes the place of thirdness in Hegel is the process of mediation, as he writes in the *Science of Logic* (2015): "For mediation means to make a beginning and then to have proceeded to a second item, such that the second item is the way it is only insofar as one has arrived at it by starting with something that is an other over against it" (40). The movement from one to the other is third with respect to the two, and is what allows the differentiation as well the relation between the two. There is no immediacy other than mediated immediacy. Mediation is progressive, from negation to elevation, and is what spirit or thought is all about. Thirdness is therefore concomitant with the first and the second yet, at the same time, also carries them forward, away and beyond.

The thinker who probably contributed most to conceptualizing thirdness is C. S. Peirce. This forms part of his triadic thinking of firstness, secondness, and thirdness (in fact, all his philosophy is triadic, but that's for another discussion). The three categories are not independent designations but interdependent aspects of phenomena. Firstness is the category of monadic qualia: the feeling or consciousness of things as such, prior to analysis. Secondness is relation, encounter with the outside, another something—hence contact, resistance, interruption. Thirdness is about making sense, knowledge, learning, habit, and as such, involves representation and mediation. "Thirdness is nothing but the character of an object which embodies Betweenness or Mediation in its simplest and most rudimentary form; and I use it as the name of that element of the phenomenon which is predominant wherever Mediation is predominant, and which reaches its fullness in Representation" (Peirce 1998, 183). Peirce was clearly influenced by Hegel, and his idea of mediation also names the linking of first and second. Yet, unlike Hegel's notion, Peirce's mediation does not call forth first and second while subsuming both; rather, all three categories remain coexistent in phenomena (cf. 164–77). What I find useful here for an ethical account is the different modalities of attending to alterity in terms of secondness (that is, encounter and relation) and thirdness (that is, meaning and discourse).

Ethics is coextensive with the social, however broadly we want to define it. It is not surprising, therefore, that thirdness has been a foundational question in thinking the social itself. Georg Simmel, one of the fathers of sociology, keenly

observed that society begins with the appearance of the third. While dyadic relations are unquestionably social, they become part of society only once they partake in something beyond the dyad. As Simmel puts it, "The sociological structure of the dyad is characterized by two phenomena that are absent from it. One is the intensification of relation by a third element, or by a social network that transcends both members of the dyad. The other is any disturbance and distraction of pure and immediate reciprocity" (1950 136). We may therefore say that the third both transcends and unsettles the two, both gives them meaning and upsets their unity. A key example for Simmel is marriage, but the same logic works for every socially contextualized dyad we can think of.

Clearly, with the appearance of the third, things get complicated: two is company, three is a crowd. Simmel goes on to detail various configurations of triadic relations, all of which involve some kind of imbalance and tension. There is the situation Simmel calls *tertius gaudens*, "the third who enjoys," in which the third draws advantage from the conflict between the two, as in "divide and rule." The opposite is *tertius miserabilis*, where the third suffers from the two being in cahoots against it. Simmel gives much attention to the third as mediator, a go-between, which might work out in its favor or at its expense. At any rate, being in between is a precarious position. Such is the situation, for instance, of the translator as exemplified in the saying *traduttore, traditore*: "translator is traitor." Since both sides depend on the intermediate, there is always suspicion as to its allegence. The third might also be taken as what prevents the two from uniting, from becoming one, and as such, is doomed to expulsion—the third as the scapegoat, "everyone's 'other'" of which René Girard (1986, 86) wrote much. Alternatively, the third may be summoned to adjudicate or consecrate the relation between and over the two, as a judge or as a priest (see Kramer 2015).

3.

We can now sketch more generally the different figurations of the third: "standing over" (as in presiding); "standing between" (medium); "standing outside" (exteriority). (I leave for now the figuration of "standing under" as in underlying, like infrastructure, which could also be included but really exceeds the framework I'd like to develop here). We can also situate different models of communication ethics in terms of where they stand with respect to thirdness. Take Buber, for example: his idea of dialogue is fully committed to secondness (even his notion of *Zwischen*, the in-between), and when considering the social it is always under the privilege of the relation with the Thou. Conversely, Habermas conceives of communicative action purely in terms of thirdness, that is, as impersonal discourse, while nevertheless basing this discourse in the interpersonal. Still another example is Gadamer, whose idea of dialogue is of continuous progression towards fusion of horizons, which is emblematic of a transcending thirdness.

This brings me to Levinas, who offers what I find a compelling approach to thirdness and the third party. To be sure, Levinas's scattered thoughts on this issue are few and far between. They sometimes seem like afterthoughts, addenda to the

main discussion, conveying roughly the same point: the third party is not a later addition to the relation with the Other; rather, the third is already there from the start. As he puts it in *Totality and Infinity*, "the third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other" (1969, 213). How can the responsibility to and for the Other, the relation with the face, already involve relation with the third, with other Others? Levinas is admittedly sketchy on this question. But I think that when reading his work with this particular question in mind, it becomes clear that not only is thirdness implied throughout, but it is also in fact a key motivation in his entire philosophical enterprise.

Levinas's critique of Buber's idea of dialogue is instructive here. It concerns three problems: symmetry, reciprocity, and exclusivity. The relation with the Other, Levinas argues, is not symmetrical: the Other is met not on the same plane but comes from on high, a *Vous* rather than *Tu*. The relation is also nonreciprocal: I am responsible for the Other regardless of whether the Other responds in kind or responds at all. Ethics is not about mutuality. Finally, the problem of exclusivity: The I–Thou relation is content within itself, secluded from the world; it excludes all other Thous in favor one particular Thou. This relation cannot support multiplicity: it can handle only one Thou at a time. I leave aside the question whether this is a fair assessment of Buber, but what is evident here is Levinas's discontent with the dialogical structure, not least because of what he deemed as its forgetfulness of the outside. It what lies beyond dialogue that concerns Levinas.

Indeed, it is possible to identify thirdness in how Levinas conceives of the encounter with the Other. For Levinas, one encounters the Other as a He rather than a Thou, as a third person rather than a second, and the term he uses for this is *Illeity*, "he-ness." The Other is never fully present in the present but rather withdraws from presence, escaping grasp and representation. There is an absence typical to the third person, indirectness of relation already in the face-to-face. That absence, according to Levinas, is actually an-archical in the sense that it predates presence, approaching from an absolute past, a past that was never a present. The Other as encountered in the face is anarchically removed, which does not mean the elimination of proximity—to the contrary: remoteness is the condition of proximity. There is still more unpacking to do as to how this form of thirdness, already in the face of the Other, relates to thirdness in the sense of the relation with other Others. Yet here I want to emphasize one crucial point: Levinas argues that representation, reason, knowledge, justice—all that he includes under the category of the Said—are called upon only once the third party appears. If there were only the immediate Other, there would be no need for reason, comparison, or justice.

I will add in passing that Levinas's ambiguity as to the relation between the Other and other Others, between alterity as second and alterity as third, might actually be read literally, as bleeding into each other. He warns against faceless discourse, a discourse that reduces the Saying to the Said, and insists that all others be heard as if each were a particular Other. There is a slippage here that might actually be instructive: alterity always escapes itself. Rather than being a weak point, this might be seen as opening a new avenue for thinking about non-bipolar ethics, always more than two but also always somehow less than three: the bi-regnum (double rule) of second and third.

Two conclusions here: First, the third predates the Said; indeed, the Said is summoned to address the problem of the third. Second, the discourse of the Said, the discourse of reason and judgment, is fundamentally rooted in an ethical conundrum: what to do with the third? Ontology and epistemology, let alone politics and economics, are all progenies of ethics. Ethics, in the sense of relation with alterity, is the bedrock of sociality, but that relation already bears a vector of thirdness, a vector that sends it from the absolute pastness of *illeity* towards the coexistence of social life. As one form of thirdness recedes, another form of thirdness emerges while carrying within it the trace of the first. As Levians puts it, "There is betrayal with my anarchic relation of *illeity*, but also a new relationship with it" (1998, 158). This idea of thirdness is clearly different from Simmel's. While Simmel marks the beginning of society with the appearance of the third, for Levinas the pre-societal, as it were, is already social, poised towards sociality by virtue of the ethical relation through which all others look at me in the face of the Other. For both Hegel and Peirce, thirdness means a mediation process, putting together and making sense, relating between second and third. This is also the case with how Levinas sees the discourse of the Said—the discourse of representation and reason, which is the basis for justice. Yet the mediation intended by Levinas (although he would never use this term) might be described as nontranscendent mediation, mediation that contains within itself the traces of the very process of mediation, an imperfect mediation, always open to remediation.

Hence, mediation that forgets its roots in the face of the Other is unjust, even if carried out in the name of justice. Only mediation that is prone to the interruption of the original responsibility is a justified mediation. Attending to the third is to be informed by the face of the Other, yet at the same time, the face of the Other bespeaks the call for global justice. Therefore, the particular is universal and the universal is particular—not in the sense of equivalence or overlap but rather of irreconcilability. The two are necessarily linked but in constant tension, disrupting each other (cf. Pinchevski 2005). To use Arnett's terms, dialogue informs as it interrupts civility, and civility informs as it interrupts dialogue.

4.

What shape might this thirdness-inspired communication ethics take? A far more extended discussion would be needed to answer this question, but it is nevertheless possible to glimpse an example in the form of Levinas's own writing—that is, his actual style of writing, particularly in his later work. The reason why Levinas's writing is important is because, in his case, writing is not, and cannot be, simply a means of communication. The gist of his thought concerns the irreducibility of the Other to any idea or representation. While being addressed through language, the Other nevertheless escapes thematization by language. The relation expressed through language—the Saying—precedes and exceeds what is conceptualized and delivered by language—the Said. If this is Levinas's message, then the way he communicates this message must adhere to what it says. In other words, making the argument for the ungraspability of alterity must itself perform

what it argues, otherwise it would reduce itself to mere thematization, to the discourse of the Said. To be sure, the Said is indispensable, else there can be no sense or meaning, but if divorced from the Saying that animated it, representation takes precedence over relation, and ontology over ethics.

To recapitulate the entanglement so far: the teaching of ethics—of the irreducibility of alterity—must somehow enact that irreducibility so not to turn into the discourse it criticizes. This teaching must deliver what it teaches while undoing itself in order to be faithful to itself (Pinchevski 2014). A strange philosophy, really: it seeks to problematize what philosophy does best—namely, conceptualize—in the name of what escapes grasp—namely, alterity—and does so in a philosophical discourse, albeit otherwise realized. Arguably, this is why Levinas turns to philosophy in the first place: to rearticulate it as subjected to ethics, to found reason on the question of what to do with the third.

In his early essay on Levinas, Jacques Derrida likened Levinas's writing to "the infinite insistence of waves on a beach: return and repetition, always, of the same wave against the same shore, in which, however, as each return recapitulates itself, it also infinitely renews and enriches itself" (1978, 312). In a later essay, Derrida (1991) likens Levinas's later writing to a fabric or texture that contains its own threads and tears, as well the knots of broken threads, the resumption of weaving and rupturing. In his final essay on Levinas, Derrida (1999) focuses on the call of hospitality encapsulated in Levinas's use of *Adieu*, "to God," specifically the turning implied therein towards infinity. At the same time, he does not fail to notice the hyphen Levinas inserts between *A* and *dieu*, between "to" and "God," a hyphen that connects as it separates this call and its addressee. All three metaphors—the incessant waves, the tears and weaves, and turning towards the infinite despite and because of separation—attempt to describe gestures towards the beyond, which are nevertheless sought in the text, while repeatedly avoiding circumscription. This continuous movement, forward and back, towards and away, is inherently linked with the entanglement already mentioned, an entanglement of unrelenting restlessness.

Granted, metaphors provide little help in specific situations, and it is beyond this talk to provide rules for operation. Indeed, "beyond" for essential reasons: there will always be a beyond, for no model or solution will ever be definite. This might be a somewhat disappointing note to end with—no crescendo, rather a diminuendo. Yet I believe there is an important lesson here nevertheless. The problem is not how to connect second and third, nor how to render dialogue public, nor how to render impersonal discourse interpersonal. The problem is rather in regarding second and third, interpersonal and impersonal, as separate to begin with. Communication ethics is already in the midst of things, in medias res, in mediation. It is not a question whether mediation is in order; it is already at work. The question is what shape mediation should take.

Ethical mediation would serve no masters other than those it already finds itself involved with, and because it is so involved, it cannot simply follow existing rules and precedents. This is not to say that rules and precedents are expendable; rather, observing them should always be within earshot of the Other's address, which reminds us of the originary responsibility. To follow Derrida's cues on

Levinas's metaphors, mediation is never decisive but proceeds through return and repetition, constantly renewing itself through revisions and reiterations. In doing so, it does not seek to obliterate its doings but rather retains its own undoing, the weaves and ruptures that make and break its operation. Mediation connects while separating, connects because of separating. As such, it is indeterminable, attending to the beyond within, always turning towards the alterity both close-by inasmuch as far-off. "Peace, peace to the neighbor and the one far-off," Levinas cites the prophet Isaiah, and adds, "we now understand the point of this apparent rhetoric" (1998, 157). We can now also understand the point in Levinas's own rhetoric: peace, peace to the near and to the far through the repetition and repeatedly—the same peace again and again, yet every time differently.

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Situating the Self in the Mud of Everyday Life: A Call Reminding of the Practical Philosophy behind the Doing of Theory

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Abstract: This essay examines the importance of a situated understanding of the self from a communication ethics perspective in relationship to the works of Seyla Benhabib and Ronald C. Arnett. Using the metaphor of "the mud of everyday life" as a frame, this essay delves into the significance of Benhabib's work for a philosophy of communication ethics that remains attuned to the ever-changing nature of the dialogic spaces of our postmodern world. An understanding of a situated self in an age of difference dwells in the tradition of practical philosophy. Therefore, Arnett's insistence on using the metaphor of "the mud of everyday life" within the contexts of doing philosophy of communication and communication ethics reminds us of the practicality-oriented mode of consciousness and insight in these realms.

Keywords: situating the self; mud of everyday life; Benhabib, Seyla; communication ethics; practical philosophy; identity formation

> "Dialogue is not meant for the ethereal, but for those willing to walk with others through the mud of everyday life."
> –Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson (1999, 32)

This essay examines the importance of a situated understanding of the self from a communication ethics perspective in relationship to the works of Seyla Benhabib and Ronald C. Arnett. Using the metaphor of "the mud of everyday life"—discussed by Arnett (1986, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2017)—as a frame, this essay delves into the significance of Benhabib's work for a philosophy of communication ethics that remains attuned to the ever-changing nature of the dialogic spaces of our postmodern world. Benhabib (1992) argues that "postisms" convey a recognition that certain aspects of our social, symbolic, and political phenomenal worlds have undergone profound and likely irreversible transformations. Situating herself as an engaged scholar within this historical moment of significant change, she explains how it can feel as if one is "staring through the glass darkly" with a dim understanding of the vast panorama and yet

unwilling to contribute to the prevailing mood of skepticism. Within this context, Benhabib asserts her scholarly approach and mission as a constructive lifelong project that brings together competing perspectives into dialogue with the hope of a light that may sparkle by breaking through the superficially shallow but fundamentally high-dimensional nature of our zeitgeist.

In fact, Arnett's depiction of our current historical moment, often referred to as "postmodernity," provides a broader perspective in understanding why Benhabib's scholarship should be read as a resistance to the deconstructive tendencies of critique, as well as a response to the fractured spirit of our times. Arnett (2017) writes, "Postmodernity as hypertextuality announces the existential fact of all historical eras being co-present; competing valences of signification of and about *the good* compete, proclaiming in action a contemporary existential fact—that no one perspective has undisputed credence" (81). Arnett provides insight in making sense of the historical complexity of our everyday encounters. It is not only the entanglement of living in a time without common public agreement on what is good but also the loss of metanarratives that confronts us; we are left struggling to operate within the coordinates of these old maps which still demand our attentiveness. Arnett, Fritz, and Bell McManus (2018) recognize the current atmosphere as an era of narrative and virtue contention that requires communication ethics of *learning*. It is a call for a walk in the mud of everyday life with humility and confidence, necessitating the presence of a situated self.

In the Mud and Confusion of Everyday Life

Arnett referred often to the metaphor of "the mud of everyday life" in his teaching, mentorship, and scholarship, particularly when he wanted to remind his audience of the significance of working conscientiously with what is in front of them. Communication ethics in dark times, according to Arnett (2013), requires attentiveness to what is real rather than what is ideal— "meeting darkness and rejecting artificial light" (261). He emphasizes the importance of "ethical discernment," which can be defined as a reflective communicative action that involves both humility and confidence (Arnett 2017). Humility, arising from the acknowledgement of not possessing all the answers, simply inspires people to attend to whatever information is before them. Confidence, on the other hand, emanates from acknowledging one's role and responsibility that repeats, "I am my brother's keeper." Arnett (2013) affirms, "Existence matters, but our meeting and response to existence are central in our responsibility for shaping the human condition" (222). These communicative dwellings that emerge in the meeting of an existential burden or an Other put ground or, in Arnett's words, "mud" under our feet, reminding us of our humanness and thus situatedness.

The metaphor of "the mud of everyday life" is a Buberian phrase. Martin Buber used this phrase in *Between Man and Man* ([1947] 2002) and *I and Thou* ([1937] 1958) to refer to the everyday creaturely life of man that does not separate existence from its world or isolate the self into a freely moving *I*. According to Arnett (2011), the mud of everyday life as a frame in communication ethics reminds us that we

must go beyond objectivity and subjectivity to an understanding of ethics that "lives within existence, not above the demands of life or in the self-assurance of a given communicator" (46). For Arnett, the problem with modernity is that it took the ground from under people's feet and gave the illusion of walking above the ground without getting any mud on one's feet, legs, and hands. In *Communication Ethics in Dark Times*, a significant interpretive project analyzing Hannah Arendt's perspective on modernity and its catastrophic consequences for the human condition, Arnett (2013) emphasizes the close relevance of her scholarship to communication studies. While analyzing the rhetorical warning of Arendt, Arnett also makes sure to keep the tone hopeful, offering a glimpse of a better future, on one condition: that we meet existence on its own terms. He writes, "[M]odernity fails as it attempts to escape burden, rejecting the very soil upon which a meaningful life is built—the meeting of toil and mud of everyday life" (262). On the other hand, exemplars like Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas, and Victor Frankl remind us that a state of serenity and contentment is possible even in the midst of burden, "not by escaping it but my meeting darkness on its own terms and somehow founding joy in toil" (Arnett 2013, 262). Metaphors such as soil, earth, dirt, ground, mud, and existence situate communicative practices and a philosophy of communication ethics in Arnett's works. He regards these concepts as an invitation to recognize hard and, at times, unpleasant work that will be done over a long period.

Situating Communication Ethics

Before moving on to the concept of self and our discussion of the communicative model of autonomy that Benhabib develops to situate the self in today's contextually sensitive realms of everyday existence, it is important to elucidate the philosophy of communication in which this essay grounds communication ethics. Arnett and Arneson (2014) argue that because there is a multiplicity of communication ethics within the social spheres of our lives—including public and private spaces—understanding the philosophy behind a given communication ethics is of vital importance: "[I]f one cannot think philosophically, once cannot question taken-for-granted assumptions. In the case of communication ethics, to fail to think philosophically is to miss the bias, prejudice, and assumptions that constitute a given communication ethic" (ix). Without a reflective communicative engagement with the other in the mud of everyday life, we cannot discern what goods need to be protected and promoted. Within this context, the mud refers to the sticky, wet earth that two or more communicators bring from their respective narrative grounds. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge our biases in order to meet and learn from the Other in an era defined by difference.

Plurality and diversity matter. They are the essential elements of the human condition and moral imperatives for its flourishing. Attentiveness to differences followed by thoughtful action requires a philosophy of communication, "framing a theoretical 'why' behind the 'how' of practicality" (Arnett and Holba 2012, 3). Narratives give meaning to our practices. However,

they are overlooked or taken for granted until we meet the Other. Difference is an interruption and, more importantly, an invitation to pause and reflect on the story-centered meaning behind our actions. Arnett and Annette Holba (2012) define philosophy of communication as "story-centered meaning" that is beyond information: "Philosophy of communication attentive to human meaning is a form of music that offers insight even when the pitch varies" (225). In the face of repeated incidents underscoring the impracticality of achieving a consensus on narrative and virtue structures and thus a flawless response, thinking philosophically about our communicative practices reminds us that the pursuit should be oriented toward a "relative pitch" instead of a perfect one (225). This involves attentiveness to others and the environment, aiming to attain a nuanced understanding of what could be deemed as good in each encounter.

Communication ethics, according to Arnett (2012), necessitates a Janus-like quality within this historical moment to respond to postmodernity and the normativity of crisis. Arnett explains "the normativity of crisis" (161) by referring to Alasdair Macintyre's (1981) proclamation in *After Virtue*: the default mode of our historical moment is moral crisis as a result of the legacies of modernity, namely individualism and "emotivism"—making decisions and taking actions from one's individual perspective without calling them into question (MacIntyre [1981] 2010, 11). Arnett asserts a communication ethics that adopts "a gate-keeping function that defies both the emotivism of modernity (with the locus of ethics inside the person) and unreflective traditional culture (with the locus of ethics in taken-for-granted mores of the people)" and adds that this gate-keeping responsibility demands "Janus at the gates" (162). Gate is the "metaphorical fulcrum point" where we are called into action and ethical decision making (175). The rhetorical implications of the Roman god of Janus within the context of communication ethics awakens the self to the outcomes and corresponding responsibilities linked to making ethical choices and decisions.

The dialectical nature of the acknowledgement of being the gatekeeper in an age of narrative and virtue contention has its own demands and terms. Arnett's essay, "Communication Ethics as Janus at The Gates" (2012), situates communication ethics in the mud of everyday life, reminding us that "we cannot wash our hands of the consequences of our doing of responsibility in ethical decision making" (165). Arnett's rhetorical warnings can be summarized as follows:

> 1. Acknowledging the biased and tainted ground upon which one stands.
>
> 2. Making one's peace with walking with confidence and uncertainty simultaneously.
>
> 3. Apprehending the fact that an ethical choice is always challenged with its opposite that is present right in front of one's face. Turning to one side or one person means turning one's back to the other side or person. Something or someone will elude our attention, no matter how hard we try.

> 4. Lastly, reiterating to ourselves the actuality of the consequences of our ethical decisions and thereby stepping into the pragmatic act of constructing ethical dwellings with careful and thoughtful action to meet what is before us.

Arnett (2012) concludes his essay by restating, "Communication ethics is the doing of theory in the mud of everyday life . . . not pristine . . . not pure . . . not predetermined . . . [It] is the phronesis of everyday life . . . the communicative act of Janus, reminding us that there is no one right answer but that each path has consequences, some that we can see and others far beyond the range and depth of our vision and imagination." At the same time, he stresses that "this is a wonderful time to be studying communication ethics" (177). It is a time to celebrate having our feet back on earth and to heed the call to *learn* rather than tell within the context of communication ethics (Arnett, Fritz, and McManus 2018). A situated understanding of communication ethics reminds us of our humanness and limits, particularly the need for the other. Benhabib (1986), paraphrasing Aristotle's *Politics*, states, "[O]nly a god or a beast has no need of the perspective of others to constitute its own" (141). Furthermore, she underscores in the introduction to *Situating the Self* (1992) that her approach involves a reflective engagement in dialogue with feminism, communitarianism, and postmodernism, while also *learning* from them (2). She is thinking with but also against her contemporary feminist, communitarian, and postmodern philosophers. In short, Benhabib's work shows us that situating the self is a communicative act that can only be done in the presence of others by reflectively attending to multiple grounds.

Situating the Self

In her project *Situating the Self: Gender Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (1992), Benhabib adopts a constructive hermeneutic approach to develop a communicative model of autonomy within the context of the problem of moral and political universalism. David DeIuliis defines the philosophy of constructive communication: "As opposed to a deconstructive hermeneutic, which calls for substitutive change, a constructive hermeneutic engages and learns from difference through additive insight" (DeIuliis, 2015, 2). The fractured spirit of our times, according to Benhabib, has created a cynical attitude toward the legacies of modernity. While critiques by communitarians, feminists, and postmodernists call for a fundamental change of all the norms and values of modernity, Benhabib advocates reconstruction, "not wholesale dismantling" (2). For her, some ideals of modernity, like the moral autonomy of the individual, are worthy of protecting and promoting. The guiding question of her work *Situating the Self* (1992) is, "*What is living and what is dead* in universalist moral and political theories of the present, after their criticism in the hands of communitarians, feminists, and postmodernists?" (2, emphasis added). The wording of her question demonstrates her conscientious work with what is in front of her. Benhabib is a scholar who proceeds with caution and due consideration, thinking through the issues of the current historical moment. She offers the metaphor of "interactive universalism" as a framework to protect the modern self from "the metaphysical

illusions of the Enlightenment"—"the illusion of a self-transparent and self-grounding reason, the illusion of disembedded and disembodied subject, and the illusion of having an Archimedean standpoint positioned beyond historical and cultural contingency" (Benhabib 1992, 4).

Arnett (2013) also warns us about the dangers of modernity, as well as the universal, which "takes us from embeddedness, the messiness of everyday life" (258). He is much more critical than Benhabib in his analysis of modernity. He asserts, "Modernity is an ethical and moral *cul de sac* that tried to escape the earth, the tainted soil from which we do and must make our ethical decisions" (Arnett 2012, 172). On the other hand, Benhabib does work from a modernist position, while simultaneously working from a critical position as well. Therefore, the intersection of these two scholars' work, particularly Arnett's praise for Benhabib's scholarship, is worth exploring. This essay argues that Benhabib situates the self in a way that is simultaneously attentive to the universal and the particular within communicative praxis, aligning with Arnett's critique of modernity. Her scholarship can be interpreted as a constructive response to Arnett's warning against falling prey to the pitfalls of individualism. In brief, Benhabib situates the self in the mud of everyday life and human relationships by rejecting the possibility of standing above history and the historical moment.

Sustaining and Nourishing the Web of Narratives: Radical Intersubjectivity and Plurality

Benhabib (1992) writes, "As Hannah Arendt has emphasized, from the time of our birth we are immersed in 'a web of narratives,' of which we are both the author and the object. The self is both the teller of tales and that about whom tales are told. The individual with a coherent sense of self-identity is the one who succeeds in integrating these tales and perspectives into a meaningful life history" (198). Additionally, Arnett and Holba (2012), who argue that philosophy of communication is a "story in action," claim that the self who discovers identity within a story is a "great character" (13–14). Referring to Buber's *Between Man and Man* ([1947] 2002) and his conceptualization of what creates a great character, Arnett and Holba (2012) provide a definition of the concept from a philosophy of communication perspective: "a person *situated* within a great story that requires practices and commitment to an ongoing drama" (14, emphasis added). Situatedness, being the author and actor in a great story, demands consistent communicative practices and resilience in dealing with the ongoing dramas of everyday life.

Benhabib encourages us to think about how we are communicatively situated in the contexts of our communities. She is against the philosophies that conceptualize the self as a disembodied cogito or a component of abstract unities that have reduced the role and responsibility of the self. Even before *Situating the Self* (1992), in *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (1986), Benhabib clearly states her scholarly mission and goal: "I want to pursue the perspective of radical intersubjectivity and plurality, and argue against the characteristic 'flight of philosophy'—in Merleau-Ponty's words—away from our

situatedness and embodiedness" (55). To create a communicative model of autonomy, it is crucial to recognize the limits of being human, as we are shaped by our time and society. Our experiences differ based on the narratives of which we are part. Benhabib explains:

> I assume that the subject of reason is a human infant whose body can only be kept alive, whose needs can only be satisfied, and whose self can only develop within the human community into which it is born. The human infant becomes a "self," a being capable of speech and action, only by learning to interact in a human community. The self becomes an individual in that it becomes a "social" being capable of language, interaction and cognition. The identity of the self is constituted by a narrative unity, which integrates what "I" can do, have done, and will accomplish with what you expect of "me," interpret my acts and intentions to mean, wish for me in the future, etc. The Enlightenment conception of the disembodied cogito no less than the empiricist illusion of a substance-like self cannot do justice to those contingent processes of socialization through which an infant becomes a person, acquires language and reason, develops a sense of justice and autonomy, and becomes capable of protecting a narrative into the world of which she is not only the author but the actor as well. (1992, 5)

Stressing human beings' capacity for communicative understanding and reasoning within the context of the communities and narratives they are situated, Benhabib argues against the Enlightenment tradition that has argued for an original position, an ideal speech situation, and a universalist moral point of view for the self, denying the plurality of the human condition.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt ([1958] 1998) defines plurality as "the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live" (8). Benhabib (2003), rethinking Arendt's metaphors in *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, reframes plurality as "a condition of equality and difference, or a condition of equality-in-difference" (196). Acknowledging equality with the framework of difference requires communicative labor, which reminds us of Arnett's metaphor of "doing communication ethics in the mud of everyday life" (2012, 177); becoming capable of protecting a narrative requires a practical philosophy, a practical understanding, and practical action as an everyday-being-in-the-world to discern what is good in the multiplicity and complexity of contexts. Arendt "resuscitates everyday-being-in-the-world with others as the basic condition of being human" (Benhabib 2003, 107). Comparing Arendt's understanding of situatedness to Heidegger's thrownness, Benhabib (2003) argues that Arendt introduces a communicative space in which we situate ourselves not because we were born into, but because we responded. It is a "'space of appearance' into which we are inserted as acting and speaking beings and within which we reveal who we are and what we are capable of" (107). Contrary to the isolated Dasein of Heidegger, the form of being is continuously shaped within the network of relationships in compliance with how we respond.

A "responsive ethical I" is what Arnett (2004) suggests as an answer to this dialogic space and the historical moment we live in. In an era of difference and contention, he argues that we have to turn to lamp holders, and Levinas is whom he mostly refers to when approaching the concept of self. In an interview on communication ethics, Arnett (2007) articulates the significance of Levinas's scholarship: "His understanding of agency is derivative, not originative. He offers a responsive 'I' rather than the agency of an 'I' that imposes willfulness upon the world" (56). As an influential communication ethics scholar, Arnett does not deny the significance of autonomy; what he protests is an "I" that stands above any ground and walks with the presumption of having all the answers. The guiding question of his scholarship when studying human agency is, "What might a communication ethic look like that does not begin with a sense of will?" (Arnett 2004, 76–7). In his essay titled "A Dialogic Ethic 'Between' Buber and Levinas: A Responsive Ethical 'I,'" he articulates a capable self that is "shaped in response, not in agency" that "moves [us] from individualism to responsible attentiveness to the Other and the historical situation" (76). A responsive ethical I listens attentively, engages in dialogue reflectively, and responds actively by contributing to a continuing worldbuilding act. It is a rough walk done in the mud of everyday human relationships with the acknowledgement of the temporality of our responses that, in fact, shape who we are.

The distinctness of one person from another appears and discloses itself in communicative praxis. Calvin O. Schrag ([1986] 2003) defines communicative praxis as the holistic space of subjectivity that includes both discourse and intentional action. Schrag argues that "[p]raxis displays a different sense of knowing" (19) and articulates the three-dimensionality of this communicative space by explaining how speech and intentional action is "for" someone, "by" someone, and "about" something. Consciousness of participating in this in-between space allows, as Benhabib (1992) claims, "the emergence of a differentiated subjectivity in the inner life of the self" (126). She further explains how speech differentiates action from mere behavior: "The one who speaks is also the one who thinks, feels and experiences in a certain way. The individuation of the human self is simultaneously the process whereby this self becomes capable of action and of expressing the subjectivity of the doer" (126). Our understanding and expression of the reason behind the "how" of our actions is what constitutes the self.

Shifting from a substantialist to a communicative understanding of reason, which Benhabib (1992) asserts as the first step of her post-Enlightenment project of conceptualizing "interactive universalism" (5), leads to a formulation of a communicative model of autonomy. First of all, communicative reason, by its very nature, is embedded. Therefore, an understanding of autonomy from a communicative perspective requires a bigger story than one's own. In other words, it is important to call attention to the fact that embeddedness does not initiate from the person itself. The story of a life does not unfold depending merely on one's own sense of will. Benhabib (1992) stresses that "[i]dentity does not refer to my potential for choice alone" but "how I, as a finite, concrete, embodied individual, shape and fashion the circumstances of my birth and family, linguistic,

cultural and gender identity into a coherent narrative that stands as my life's story" (161–62). Constitution of identity necessitates an immersion in a web of narrativities. Benhabib defines narrativity as "the immersion of action in a web of human relationships" (127) and "interpretations" (126). By engaging in a web of narratives, we become active contributors to a larger story while also claiming our role as the protagonists of our life history. Nevertheless, it is essential for the self to recognize that being the protagonist does not grant full authority or complete authorship over one's life story. Benhabib (1992) asserts that the story of a life is "a coherent narrative of which we are always the protagonist, *but not always the author or the producer*" (127, emphasis added). Benhabib professes the end of the reign of the autonomous "I" of the Enlightenment and modernity. The current historical moment requires a responsive "I," not a delusional tyrant. In the multiplicity of narratives, our stories are shaped according to how we respond. The coherent narrative of the self is a byproduct of a communicative labor done in the mud of everyday life with others.

Unavoidability of Moral Judgment: What We "Always Already" Exercise

The discussion of a coherent sense of self and meaningful life history brings us to the questions of judgment and action, particularly moral action. Consciousness of one's situatedness takes the self out of a false perception that is ahistorical and autonomous; we are no longer condemned to remain atomistic individuals, isolated and wretched. The situated self is the one who finds meaning and purpose in a life story embedded in a web of narratives. The awareness of the narrative unity of one's life constitutes self-knowledge—knowing one's own ground. From a communication studies and rhetorical perspective, this perspective suggests a self with a philosophy of communication brought to the task of navigating the earth. Arnett and Holba (2012) state that "philosophy of communication is a form of story-centered meaning that contours understanding, framing the public domain and propelling us into human communities of communicative engagement" (16). Every day we encounter countless occasions that require us to make judgments, whether they are significant or not, but always necessary to move forward. The situated self engages reflectively with those moments with the consciousness of one's bias.

Benhabib (1992) asserts that "*[m]oral judgment is what we 'always already' exercise in virtue of being immersed in a network of human relationships that constitute our life together*" (125, emphasis in text). She insists on the inappropriate nature of asking a person to have neutral judgments. For Benhabib, there can be "no value-neutral" theories of political, legal, aesthetic, therapeutic, military, or medical judgment, because in each domain a theory or a philosophy implies a vision for the most preferred, desirable, or optimal outcome. On the other hand, moral judgment diverges from all these other domains of judgment in its inevitability: "the exercise of moral judgement is pervasive and unavoidable; in fact, this exercise is coextensive with relations of social interaction in the lifeworld in general" (Benhabib 1992, 125). For example, human beings can choose the option of not exercising their political rights. However, the realm of morality is intricately

intertwined with the human condition, such that refraining from moral judgment is just as impossible as abstaining from being part of a human community or being born of a mother.

Moral judgment and action are hidden in the most mundane moments of our lives with others; one does not have to be in charge of a life-and-death decision or struggle to exercise one's moral judgment. Hans-Georg Gadamer ([1975] 2019), who has provided a positive and yet inescapable perception of bias in philosophy, describes bias as prejudgment that is a consequence of our hermeneutical situatedness, which becomes apparent in our everyday interactions and encounters as ordinary human beings. He argues that moral decisions and judgments are "not only a matter of logical but of aesthetic judgment" (36)—it is important to note that his understanding of taste is "no way limited to what is beautiful in nature and art" (35). He elaborates further:

> Every judgment about something intended in its concrete individuality (e.g., the judgment required in a situation that calls for action) is—strictly speaking—a judgment about a special case. . . . all moral decisions require taste—which does not mean that this most individual balancing of decision is the only thing that governs them, but it is an indispensable element. It is truly an achievement of undemonstrable tact to hit the target and to discipline the application of the universal, the moral law (Kant), in a way that reason itself cannot. Thus, taste is not the ground but the supreme consummation of moral judgment. The man who finds what is bad goes against his taste has the greatest certainty in accepting the good and rejecting the bad—as great as the certainty of that most vital of our senses, which chooses or rejects food. (37)

Gadamer's argument recognizes the particularity of moral judgments that arise from the dialogical nature of human meaning. Meaning is always grounded in an individual case of particular characters with life stories and thus "tastes," understandings of what is good and what is bad. Thus, moral discernment is an exercise of our "always already" present tastes "in virtue of being immersed in a network of human interactions" (Benhabib 1992, 126). That does not mean that we simply apply our value coordinates to any case we encounter; on the contrary, we usually co-determine, sometimes add and perhaps correct, but always bring our bias to the table. And although the goods we value have an immense influence on how we shape our world and impact others, we do not have a much better awareness of them than of the food which we find delightful.

Arnett and Holba (2012), reiterating the inescapability of bias and prejudice, argue that it is in fact the bias that we bring to life that gives us insight and a sense of character: "It is not our neutrality that shapes identity, but the uniqueness of the perspective that we bring to a given event" (98). Similarly, Benhabib (1992) draws our attention to why we should appreciate bias and thus its consciousness in the formation of a situated self-identity: "The conception of selves who can be individuated prior to their moral ends is incoherent. We could not know if such a being was a human self, an angel, or the Holy Spirit" (162). She eloquently emphasizes the importance of acknowledging our flaws, limits, and weaknesses, which are inherent in our human condition. These aspects not only

define our identity but also add depth and texture to who we are and provide a nuanced perspective to the moral conversations we engage in. Benhabib (1992) asserts that "individuals do not have to abstract from their everyday attachments and beliefs when they begin argumentation" (74). Neither neutrality nor objectivity are goals, nor are they sought after from a philosophy of communication ethics perspective. In her defense of universalism, Benhabib is not striving for a context-independent moral point of view that exists in the myth of "unencumbered" selves (73). On the contrary, she emphasizes the absurdity of denying bias in such conversations of moral justifications:

> In entering practical discourses individuals are not entering an "original position." They are not being asked to define themselves in ways which are radically counterfactual to their everyday identities. This model of moral argumentation does not predefine the set of issues which can be legitimately raised in the conversation and neither does it proceed from an unencumbered concept of the self. In communicative ethics, individuals do not stand behind any "veil of ignorance." (73)

The model of communicative ethics that Benhabib defends protects and promotes a dialogic space that enables continuous moral argumentation among people with different perspectives and tastes.

Likewise, Arnett, in his essay, "Situating a Dialogic Ethics: A Dialogic Confession" (2011), renounces the modern concept of holding an "original position" when engaging in dialogue. He claims that the recognition of one's bias necessitates a completely different approach to ethics:

> This approach to dialogic ethics begins with a confession that we live in *the mud of everyday life*; there is no way to escape such reality. The messiness of existence haunts us not only in time of war, death, loss of friendship, and in economic collapse, but in our engagement with the everyday. It is, however, the assertion of this author that this same existential reality gives us meaning and a place to stand. (54, emphasis added)

Confession, in Arnett's scholarship, translates to the acknowledgement of the bias we bring into the conversation and the "tainted ground" upon which we stand. For Arnett (2011), "ethics and dialogue begin with narrative ground, not the discourse itself" (55). The self who confesses the reality of their situatedness is ready to meet existence on its own terms because they now have a ground "upon which to pivot, to push off"—narrative ground "functions as a source of identity in decision making and action" (55). We gain moral autonomy by attending to the temporal ground in the unfolding drama of our lives with a recognition of and reflection on our situatedness.

Maintaining A Delicate Balance in the Mud: An Ongoing Oxymoron

The metaphor of situating the self in the mud of everyday life provides us with a real insight about why situatedness and drawing our attention back to the narrative ground are essential when achieving coherence in the stories we and

others tell about ourselves, particularly at a time defined by difference. However, Benhabib (1992) warns, "Not all difference is empowering" (198); coherent identities are what we need to keep ourselves grounded in an era of narrative and virtue contention. Situating the self and thus succeeding in attaining a coherent and meaningful life, according to Benhabib, is all about finding the right balance between autonomy and solidarity or justice and care. She writes, "Justice and autonomy alone cannot sustain and nourish the web of narratives in which human beings' sense of selfhood unfolds; but solidarity and care alone cannot raise the self to the level not only of being the subject but also the author of a coherent life-story" (1992, 198). This delicate balance in the formation of an identity echoes Buber's comments on his solid endeavor between solidarity and autonomy—"Books and Men":

> [T]he human creature! That creature means a mixture. Books are pure, men are mixed; books are spirit and word, pure spirit and purified word; men are made up of prattle and silence, and their silence is not that of animals but of men. Out of the human silence behind the prattle, the spirit whispers to you. . . . I do, indeed, close my door at times and surrender myself to a book, but only because I can open the door again and see a human being looking at me. (qtd. in Arnett 2005, 63)

Arnett considers Buber an exemplary scholar who understood the precarious and yet essential tension between the self and the community. He states, "Buber recognized that the call of life rests in the inevitability of walking in the mud of everyday life and human relationships" (Arnett 2005, 63). The hardship of meeting existence rests in lifelong communicative labor and action, not within the comfort of solitude, and yet it requires both solitude and union.

Arnett and Holba (2012) define Benhabib's work as "an ongoing oxymoron, 'a unity of contraries,'" and argue that *Situating the Self* "is a dialectical effort to reformulate the universal within communities, historicality, and temporality" (227). Similarly, Benhabib's discussion of a communicative model of autonomy is also cognizant of the dialectical character of forming a situated sense of self. She calls the tensions along the path of being a finite and embodied creature episodes—"episodes of choice and limitation, agency and suffering, initiative and dependence" (1992, 162). These are the moments in the midst of which a call for the self into pragmatic action and construction are hidden. The situated self is the one who figures out the coherence in these juxtaposing moments of one's life story through communicative labor. Benhabib (1992) considers communicative labor as a commitment to "a continuous process of conversation in which understanding and misunderstanding, agreement as well as disagreement are intertwined and always at work" (197–98). She hopes that reflective engagement with this continuous conversation can result in an "enlarged mentality." The metaphor of an enlarged mentality, which was first used by Kant and later popularized by Arendt, appears prominently in Benhabib's scholarship, particularly when elaborating on the notion of equality-in-difference. Benhabib (2018) defines the process of cultivating an "enlarged mentality," stressing the communicative labor done in the mud of everyday life; it is "never an act of passive contemplation but

demands the unsettling encounter with the other, whose otherness compels us to turn inward and to reflect upon the stranger in ourselves" (32). Such an enlarged mentality allows moral reflection and transformation.

In *Situating the Self* (1992), Benhabib defends a model of communicative ethics that protects an understanding of moral autonomy having developed through an interconnected web of interdependencies as well as an ability of the self to distance itself from any meanings that come out of the web of narratives. She calls this latter position "reflexive role-distance" (73). In fact, Benhabib wants to preserve the "*modern* achievement" of the ordinary person's right to criticize and question (74, emphasis original). She explains that questioning and reflection, which was once a privilege and virtue of heroes, prophets, and moral sages, is now available as an everyday practice to protect the person from an uncritical recognition of any roles and duties imposed on them. In other words, "communicative ethics develops a view of the person which makes the insight central and attributes to individuals the *ability* and *willingness* to assume reflexive role-distance and the *ability* and *willingness* to take and reason from their point of view" (Benhabib 1992, 74). Benhabib depicts a situated self who is capable of navigating dialectical tension by virtue of being attentive to one's ground and simultaneously reflective about it. It is appropriate to end the discussion of moral judgment and autonomy with Arnett and Holba's (2012) concluding remark on Benhabib's philosophy of communication: "Benhabib seeks to liberate the human being within contexts responsive to people, environments, multiple generations, institutions, and ideas that situate us within embedded contexts, within an unending conversation alert to shifting historical demands" (237).

Implications of the "Mud" within the Context of Identity Formation

While approaching the questions of our current historical moment of rationality, agency, and ethics, Benhabib engages in a thoughtful dialogue with modernity and competing intellectual discourses of the present and measures their claims against each other. Arnett would usually refer to Benhabib as a scholar who works incrementally for change, stressing the significance of her respectful contention with modernity.[2] Benhabib is an engaged scholar working conscientiously with what is in front of her. She attends to the current historical moment and its questions with ethical discernment and due diligence, being mindful not to strengthen the already dominant tendencies and discourses of our era that are divisive, cynical, and relativistic. Her prominent and well-known work *Situating the Self* (1992) puts forward a communicative understanding of the process of identity formation that acknowledges the narrative grounds, inescapability of bias, and lastly the intimate relation between opposing elements of being an

[2] From the lecture notes of Ronald C. Arnett's course COMM 659: Philosophy of Communication, Spring 2020.

embedded and embodied human being. This communicative model of autonomy contrasts with the Enlightenment conceptions of an autonomous, atomistic, ahistorical, and originative self, integrating practical philosophy and ethics with the discourse surrounding the notion of agency. What Benhabib essentially asserts about the situated self in her book can be summarized best in her own words: "[T]he moral self is not a moral geometrician but an embodied, finite, suffering and emotive being. We are not born rational but we acquire rationality through contingent processes of socialization and identity formation" (50). The communicatively capable self is shaped in response, not in its autonomy.

Reading Benhabib's *Situating the Self* (1992) from the framework of an Arnett metaphor, "the mud of everyday life," offers us significant insights into doing philosophy of communication and communication ethics in era of narrative and virtue contention. An understanding of a situated self in an age of difference dwells in the tradition of practical philosophy. Therefore, Arnett's insistence on using the metaphor of "the mud of everyday life" within the contexts of doing philosophy of communication and communication ethics reminds us of the practicality-oriented mode of consciousness and insight in these realms. Practical wisdom, *phronesis*, has no predefinitions of what a wise act shall be in a given encounter. The discernment of what is good is always oriented to a particular situation. Even situatedness does not offer the moon, but the earth reminding the self of the walk in the mud of everyday life. A philosophy of communication ethics that guides the situated self, Arnett suggests, rests within these coordinates:

> 1. the appreciation of engaging in a conversation that is well underway, as a first step;
>
> 2. the acknowledgement of the bias we all bring into the conversation, as a first lesson;
>
> 3. the humbleness of listening attentively to learning, not to tell, as a first philosophy;
>
> 4. the unavoidability of unities of contraries on this path, as a first norm;
>
> 5. the necessity of continuous reflection on one's situatedness, thus solitude and contemplation, as a first principle;
>
> 6. the temporality of clarity and answers, as a first teaching; and
>
> 7. the responsibility of keeping the conversation going, as a first and yet unending task of the situated self.

The discussion of situating the self in the mud of everyday life within the context of communication ethics moves us from the question of "how" to "why," opening new and various philosophies of communication. For Arnett, this a celebratory moment that invites learning; the same holds true for Benhabib. This essay ends with Benhabib's (1992) rhetorical call that misses neither the catastrophe nor the hope:

> I regard neither the plurality and variety of goodnesses with which we have to live in a disenchanted universe nor the loss of certainty in moral theory to be a cause of distress. Under conditions of value differentiation, we have to conceive of the unity of reason not in the image of a homogeneous, transparent glass sphere into which we can fit all our cognitive and value commitments, but more as bits and pieces of dispersed crystals whose contours shine out from under the rubble. (75–76)

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Leading with the Good: The Role of Rhetorical Commonplaces in Communication Ethics

Justin N. Bonanno

Abstract: This article investigates the relationship between classical rhetoric, dialectic, and communication ethics. In particular, I argue that the commonplace tradition provides us with viable resources for keeping the conversation going in postmodernity. I relate Walter J. Ong's analytic, cumulative, and special commonplaces to the work of Ronald C. Arnett. Ultimately, commonplaces can serve as rhetorical and dialectical means for contending with the cult of expertise, which tends to drown out other voices in contemporary discourse. Commonplaces can be utilized to sort through the relative goodness of competing goods. I conclude the article by gesturing at the significance of Plato's and Aristotle's work for contemporary communication ethics scholarship.

Keywords: communication ethics; Arnett, Ronald C.; commonplaces; rhetoric; dialectic

Let us begin with a reflection on the problem of the *tertium quid*. I use the term *tertium quid* here to refer to that third thing which adjudicates between competing goods in any given dispute. You can think of the *tertium quid* as a faculty of judgment. In the opening of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (1984) explains how rhetoric is the "faculty" for observing the available means of persuasion (1355b25–30). The word "faculty" in this context comes from the Greek *dunamis*, which also translates to "power" or "might" (Perseus Digital Library n.d.). Whenever you decide to pursue *this good* instead of *that one*, you utilize the *tertium quid*, which is a faculty other than whatever is under consideration.

You can think of "reason" as the *tertium quid* that allows you to decide between competing goods. However, modernity has individualized "reason," obscuring its relational ties to larger communities of meaning. For the Counter-Enlightenment rhetorician Giambattista Vico (1968), common sense was the unreflective judgment that influenced your choice between competing goods (63). Indeed, Vico's "common sense," or *sensus communis*, was the *tertium quid*, a communal faculty as opposed to a psychological one. The genius of Vico's (1990)

work is that it emphasized the significance of the rhetorical tradition over and above the isolated Cartesian individual coming to conclusions outside of any given community. At bottom, the question is whether the *tertium quid*, the faculty of judgment in the case of competing goods, is individual, communal, or both. Ronald C. Arnett, proponent of the "both/and," would probably say that the faculty is both individual and communal in nature.

Now let's bracket this question of the *tertium quid* and focus on its objects, those things that the *tertium quid* relates to when trying to decide between competing goods. Where can the *tertium quid* go to resolve the question of competing goods? Commonplaces. In the ancient rhetorical tradition, a commonplace was where you went to find arguments. Commonplaces have *copia*, or copiousness, as their end goal (Ong 1967, 62–63). A good communicator can speak copiously in any given circumstance. Importantly, commonplaces link rhetoric with hermeneutics. Commonplaces provide templates for interpreting situations and for sorting through a stock of material. Having sorted through the material, these commonplaces can help generate things to say. The *tertium quid*, whatever it is (psychological "reason," communal "common sense," or a mixture of both), can have recourse to these commonplaces to perceive the possibilities of persuasion and action in any given situation.

Modernity has a particularly adversarial relationship toward commonplaces, and it does two things that frustrate people across the political spectrum. First, modernity emphasizes argument by authority. The expert reigns supreme. The most we can do as lay spectators in the contemporary sport of politics is to quibble with one another like fans of their favorite teams. Today, we consume politics, and we let others, the experts, play the game for us. If we participate at all, it is vicariously, through our favorite politicians, political parties, or corporations. We pick our favorite experts and then watch them duke it out. Second, modernity exalts the special commonplaces at the expense of the other cumulative and analytic commonplaces, about which I will have more to say in a moment.

By failing to appreciate the full range of the commonplace tradition, modernity robs lay individuals of valuable tools for critiquing experts and for holding them accountable. As tools for sorting the wheat from the chaff, commonplaces play an indispensable role in the constructive critique of any narrative, institution, or individual in postmodernity. Submerged in a sea of information and robbed of the time to sort through it all, we need the commonplaces, the original algorithms and sorting devices for the citizen orator.

In this article, I review some types of commonplaces and then consider how they relate to and extend Ronald C. Arnett's work. Arnett offered rhetorical commonplaces for enduring problematic situations in which different people want different things, perhaps for an indefinite amount of time. Commonplaces help us to "keep the conversation going" (Rorty 1979), an ideal that Arnett would frequently praise (Arnett 1986, 126; Arnett 2016, 5; Arnett and Arneson 1999, 54). The speaker who has mastered the commonplaces can speak copiously and therefore attain this ideal. The true postmodernist goes forward, beyond

modernity, by going back to the rhetorical tradition to retrieve the significance of the commonplaces.

Commonplaces and Narratives: The Good as Publicly Available

In *The Presence of the Word*, Father Walter J. Ong differentiates analytic, special, and cumulative (or synthetic) commonplaces. The analytic breaks something down into parts, whereas the synthetic constructs parts into a larger whole (Merriam-Webster n.d.-a; Merriam-Webster n.d.-b). I want to briefly define these three types of commonplaces and then relate each to Arnett's work.

To begin, the analytic commonplaces are "analytic" because they "analyze a subject in terms of various headings" (Ong 1967, 81). Some examples of analytic commonplaces include "causes, effects, contraries, comparable things, related things, and so on" (81). Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and his *Topics* both contain a number of analytic commonplaces useful in rhetoric and dialectic. In "Language is Sermonic," Richard Weaver ([1963] 2001) considers the analytic commonplaces of definition, comparison/contrast, consequence, and authority. Arnett frequently argued by consequence (what he called "implications" [see Arnett, Fritz, and Bell 2010, 116]). He also liked to argue by contrast; if you knew him, you also knew "this is not that."

Special commonplaces concern specific subjects (Ong 1967, 82). Law or medicine, for example, each have their own special branches of study and lines of argument unique to the subject matter. Medicine studies the etiology of a disease, cell metabolism, the effects of pharmacological substances, and so on. Cinematography includes special topics such as camera angles, continuity, editing, composition, and close-ups (Mascelli 1965). These special commonplaces pertain to the subject matter itself, which dictates the topics under consideration. According to Aristotle (1984), the closer you get to a special commonplace, the further you get away from rhetoric and dialectic (1358a5–10). Experts can claim privileged dominion over special topics, and thus these topics frequently exclude lay participation or discovery.

Ong (1967) refers to cumulative commonplaces as "an accumulated store of readied material" (82). In ages past, individuals carried around a commonplace book with quotes, proverbs, anecdotes, and so on that they could return to when speaking. Such cumulative commonplaces consist of prefabricated examples that can be readily adapted to new circumstances. One example of a cumulative commonplace is the "we live in a degenerate age" spiel, which was operative even in Cicero's time (Ong 1967, 56–57, 81). Ong explains how cumulative commonplaces made heavy use of virtue and vice schemes (83). Undoubtedly, cumulative commonplaces relate to Arnett's concept of narrative, which shapes our sense of right and wrong, virtue and vice.

A narrative consists of shared yet tacit background meaning that gives human action significance and foregrounds the importance of certain goods (Arnett and Arneson 1999, 52–61; Arnett, Fritz, and Bell 2009, 37–41). The

significance of narrative is that it places the notion of the good into a public domain. For Plato (2005), the Forms went beyond the individual mind (247a). In like manner, Arnett's narratives exist linguistically and discursively as well as in embodied practices beyond individual selves. The key with the Arnettian approach is to dislodge the good from an inaccessible realm hidden in an individual's psyche; the goal is to make the good somehow communicable and therefore shared. Both narratives and commonplaces draw upon publicly accessible sources of the good in order to continue the conversation outside of expert control. That the good can exist outside the individual mind, especially that of the individual expert mind, is essential to the critique of modernity. That goods should exist in public narratives is crucial to combating absolute relativism and subjectivism.

We can understand modernity in terms of the commonplaces that it utilizes most often: the analytic commonplace of authority as well as the special commonplaces. The medical doctor stands as an exemplar of these two totalizing ways of resolving disputes. The doctor as expert insists that you take this or that drug. As a doctor, she has acquired a legitimacy capable of being challenged only by other doctors, and her capacity to draw upon special lines of argument (e.g., pathology, neurology, psychiatry) has the ability to stop lay criticism dead in its tracks (cf. Aristotle 1984, 1358a10–1358a35). Expertise crowds out lay participation from the public sphere. Arguably, expertise annihilates the public sphere. Arnett would likely suggest that sometimes it is better to have multiple goods in dynamic tension rather than arbitrary resolution by bureaucratic experts.

Arnett's work aligns with the commonplace tradition insofar as he stressed the importance of communal and public sources of meaning from which we can draw arguments. Whether we like it or not, these public sources of meaning inform how we speak and act. In particular, Arnett was more of a proponent of the cumulative than the analytic or special commonplaces. Insofar as modernity takes the full range of commonplaces off the table, it discourages the practice of rhetoric and dialectic. By considering the significance of the commonplace tradition, we can continue to build upon Arnett's work, which invites a constructive critique of modernity.

Protecting and Promoting Goodness

As someone sympathetic to postmodernity, Arnett may have shied away from the word "truth," but he never neglected the significance of competing goods. He would have likely insisted upon there being multiple goods instead of *the* good. Nevertheless, for multiple things to be good, there must logically be something that these multiple things share in common that makes them good: in other words, *goodness* as such. All of the options Arnett offers for sorting through issues between different narratives have the notion of *goodness* at the root of them. Indeed, one way of thinking about communication ethics is by considering it as the study of *good* commonplaces. Conceived of in this light, communication ethics becomes the protection and promotion of *goodness* as such. Like deliberative rhetoric,

communication ethics takes the relative goodness of goods into consideration (Aristotle 1984, 1362a15–1365b20). The more communication ethics takes rhetoric and dialectic into consideration, the more communication ethics can utilize what the commonplaces have to offer for this historical moment.

The primary postmodern problem is that of authority. Prior to modernity, traditional authority might otherwise have helped to adjudicate between competing goods (e.g., the church or the state). But what happens when the legitimacy of this authority wanes? We must then have recourse to various psychological traits (e.g., individualized reason or sympathy). The problem with unduly focusing on the psychological is that it can obscure us from seeing how the good *qua* the good transcends the individual self. Arnett's emphasis on the importance of narrative attempted to do precisely this: to get people to think outside of themselves and to recognize the sources of goodness in larger reservoirs of meaning.

Both Plato and Aristotle understood how the good transcends the individual person. In his *Republic*, Plato reflects not only upon justice but also upon goodness. Adeimantus demands that Socrates praise justice as something that is good in itself (Plato 1997, 368d–e). Socrates eventually argues that the good is like the sun. With vision, you have the faculty of sight and the thing seen. But you cannot see without some third thing, the sun (think here of the *tertium quid* mentioned above), which allows you see things. Socrates likens the sun to the good, for it is by the good that we know all things. Indeed, for Socrates even the truth takes its being from the good. Socrates says:

> So that what gives truth to the things known and the power to know to the knower is the form of the good. And though it is the cause of knowledge and truth, it is also an object of knowledge. Both knowledge and truth are beautiful things, but the good is other and more beautiful than they. In the visible realm, light and sight are rightly considered sunlike, but it is wrong to think that they are the sun, so here it is right to think of knowledge and truth as goodlike but wrong to think that either of them is the good—for the good is yet more prized. (Plato 1997, 508d–509a)

Here, Socrates advances the idea that the good is higher than the true. Goodness turns out to be the *tertium quid*, the third thing by which we can consider all others. By reflecting first upon goodness as such, we can then go on to consider the significance of "competing goods."

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle enumerates a number of "good things" like fame, happiness, health of body, and so on, each of which may serve as a "source" of persuasion (Aristotle 1984, 1362a15–1365b20). Further, the good itself can serve as a source of persuasion. Once we know what a good thing is, we can deliberate based upon the relative goodness of things (1363b5–1363b15). Consider, for example, the trivial example of a steak. Steak is good. But Aristotle teaches us what we already know: that the best part of a good thing is better than the lesser part of a good thing (1365a30–35). Filet mignon is a greater good than flank steak. With his analytic commonplaces, Aristotle provides us with a way of thinking through the relative goodness of goods. By reflecting upon how Plato and Aristotle

conceived of the good and the relative goodness of goods, we can further see how the ancient rhetorical tradition can augment postmodern communication ethics.

From a rhetorical perspective, we would do well to emphasize the significance of goodness—not at the expense of the truth—but perhaps as a more relatable commonplace and source of commonplaces that those we disagree with can more readily perceive. Focusing more on the good than on the true gives us more leverage to balance out the excesses of modernity and postmodernity. One reason for emphasizing goodness is that people often conflate the "true" with the scientific, and they take for granted that the scientific is the positivistic and strictly empirical; people often confuse science with scientism. The expert, authoritative master of the special topics, drowns out other voices in the sea of competing narratives. I would not deny that the truth is absolutely essential and cannot be eschewed at the expense of the good. I am presupposing here that what I am telling you about the importance of the good itself is true. I mean only to suggest that, the art of rhetoric being the art of emphasis, we ought to emphasize the good and underline the significance of goodness wherever it appears (Weaver [1963] 2001, 1355).

Above all, the *tertium quid*, the faculty of judgment (whether individual or communal), must itself be good. It is good because it allows us to discern the relative goodness of goods. How could something that both allows us to perceive *the* good as well as the relative goodness of goods not itself be good? By beginning with goodness and practicing charity, we can build, in the words of Dan Burke (2023), "a bridge that Truth can pass over." Communication ethics can continue to stress the significance of competing goods. However, without recovering the significance of *the* good, we cannot hope to aspire to the common good, which any appeals to justice and communication ethics must presuppose.

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Catholics and Latter-day Saints: A History and a Coming Together

Ellen Paul
Jon Radwan

Abstract: In comparison with many areas of Christian ecumenism, communication between Catholics and Latter-day Saints is rare. This essay examines the relational history of Catholics and Latter-day Saints in the United States to identify interaction barriers and challenges and advance dialogue. Each church's traditional stance on and historical approach to interfaith dialogue is explained, and principles facilitating ethical discussion are identified. This historical and theological knowledge is then applied in contemporary practice. A panel of six experts, three from each tradition, was convened to discuss their faith and its bearing on relationships between Catholics and Latter-day Saints. An analysis of the themes discussed points toward potential for improved inter-church relations. Within a context of genuine interest, mutual tolerance and appreciation, and openness to developing personal friendships, theological similarities and differences can be engaged together in faith.

Keywords: ecumenism; interchurch dialogue; interfaith ethics; Christian relating; religious communication

Invocation

If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a "Mormon," I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves. . . . It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race.

—Joseph Smith (2007, 345)

Introduction

Despite Joseph Smith's passionate argument, pledging his life to demonstrate each Christian's shared responsibility for universal religious liberty, today it can seem like the differences between the Catholic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are too numerous and daunting for the two groups to hold a successful dialogue (Anderson 2012).[1] Since 1847, when Brigham Young and the Latter-day Saint pioneers settled in the Salt Lake Valley, the two groups have held a relationship of one type or another—at some times negative and other times more friendly and ethical (Rodd and Thatcher 2016). Unfortunately, misunderstandings have made it difficult for official and mainstream dialogue between Catholics and Latter-day Saints to take place on a large scale.

In the following pages, this essay summarizes the history between Catholics and Latter-day Saints, identifies reasons that dialogue may have failed or succeeded in the past, brings forward both churches' stance on interfaith dialogue and how to approach it, and discusses how future ethical conversations can be facilitated. This research then informs a public conversation between Catholics and Latter-day Saints looking to come together and build community. A panel of six experts, three from each tradition, was convened to address their faith and interfaith experiences. Analysis of the event, in light of history, demonstrates potential for improved relationships, and conclusions identify ways to move forward and continue dialogue.

History: Catholics and Latter-day Saints in the US[2]

Understanding the history of communication between Latter-day Saints and Catholics is necessary to plan and create a successful dialogue. Gary Topping (2018) discusses the history of Latter-day Saint and Catholic relations in Utah from the second half of the nineteenth century to 2017, when Oscar A. Solis was installed as the bishop over the Diocese of Salt Lake City. Due to Utah being home to a large percentage of Latter-day Saints, including prominent church leaders, it is almost impossible to live in Utah and not have relations with the Latter-day Saints Church.

The "first permanent Catholic presence" in Utah was established by Father Edward Kelly (Topping 2018, 63). When Kelly ran into trouble gaining land to

[1] This research was conducted by Ellen Paul as her honors thesis project in communication at Seton Hall University. Jon Radwan, PhD, served as thesis director and Anthony Sciglitano, PhD, provided theological expertise. We thank Seton Hall's Institute for Communication and Religion for media production support.

[2] This account of the history between Catholics and Latter-day Saints focuses primarily on relations between the two churches in the United States. However, the Catholic Church already had a strong global presence when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was formed and began to send missionaries worldwide. Despite our focus on the United States, it should be noted that Catholic and Latter-day Saint interactions happen on an international scale and the potential for dialogue exists globally.

build a parish, he reached out directly to Young, who not only granted Kelly the land but also offered a $500 donation if he also built a school. This example of early, if not the first, direct interaction between Catholic and Latter-day Saint leadership shows the start of a positive friendship, with potential for growing together and fostering faith. While this occasion between Kelly and Young was an ethical start to Catholic and Latter-day Saint relations, Latter-day Saint perceptions of and rhetoric toward Catholics was not always positive and vice versa, especially throughout the nineteenth century.

Mainstream American Press: Catholics and Latter-day Saints in the Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century was an age of both political turmoil and widespread religious "awakening" in the US. To frame Catholic and Latter-day Saint dialogue, historical perceptions of both faiths need to be taken into consideration. In mainstream Protestant American media of the 1800s, both churches were seen as religious minorities that promoted "un-American values," as Matthew Grow (2004) explores in his essay "The Whore of Babylon and the Abomination of Abominations: Nineteenth Century Catholic and Mormon Mutual Perceptions and Religious Identity." Both faith groups were heavily critiqued for their strong hierarchal leadership and large immigrant populations. In addition to being compared to one another, Catholics and Latter-day Saints were also linked to "other unpopular ethnic or religious groups," such as African Americans, Chinese immigrants, and Native Americans (141). Political cartoons negatively depicting Catholic and Latter-day Saints indicate the nation's view. For example, Figure 1 captures common anti-Catholic and anti-Mormon sentiments. Illustrated by Thomas Nast, an influential nineteenth-century cartoonist who also popularized the image of Uncle Sam we now know, this image depicts both religions as "foreign reptiles," with a Catholic bishop turned on his side to portray an alligator and the Tabernacle building in Salt Lake City portrayed as a snapping turtle.

Figure 1. "Religious liberty is guaranteed—but can we allow foreign reptiles to crawl all over us?" (Nast n.d.)

Catholics on Latter-day Saints: Nineteenth Century

Knowing how both churches were portrayed by the mainstream protestant American public, often grouped together in a negative light, is important as we analyze their communication with one another. Due to the comparisons commonly made between Catholics and Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century, Catholic writers would often aim to separate themselves from the newly formed church in their criticisms of Mormonism and would claim that Latter-day Saints should be the targets for the attacks aimed at Catholics (Grow 2004). In the 1840s, an Italian cleric named Father Samuel Mazzuchelli visited Nauvoo, Illinois, and began writing on Mormonism. Grow (2004) describes Mazzuchelli's view of the Latter-day Saints Church as "Protestantism run amok, the extreme culmination of Protestant sectarianism," a view that set portrayed Catholicism as the way to "provide protection from such fanaticism" (149).

A second Catholic author who added to the rhetoric against Mormons was a Belgian Jesuit missionary, Pierre-Jean De Smet (Grow 2004). De Smet (1905) at times defended Mormonism and is said to have praised Latter-day Saints for settling in Utah and adding a "new star to the grand and beautiful American constellation" (1406). However, De Smet's view of Latter-day Saints shifted, and his praise turned to criticism. Using similar language to that used against Catholics at the time, De Smet argued that Latter-day Saints held a "political system that is inadmissible in a republic, and a religious system still less admissible, which is the 'abomination of abominations'" (1407–8). A third major Catholic critic of Mormonism was Orestes Brownson, a Congregationalist-turned-Catholic, whose brother, in turn, converted to Mormonism, both in the 1840s. Brownson (1854), in his autobiography, *The Spirit-Rapper: An Autobiography*, refers to Mormonism as Satan's supernatural work: "That there was a superhuman power employed in founding the Mormon church, cannot easily be doubted by any scientific and philosophic mind that has investigated the subject; and just as little can a sober man doubt that the power employed was not Divine, and that Mormonism is literally the Synagogue of Satan" (167).

Latter-day Saints on Catholics: 1830s–1960s

Many early Latter-day Saints were just as critical of the Catholic tradition as Catholics were toward them. Latter-day Saint rhetoric around Catholics was primarily negative, although interactions between individuals were typically more positive, as noted previously with Young and Kelly's new school. In Latter-day Saint doctrine, after Christ and the twelve apostles died, the proper "priesthood authority" that Christ had established on earth dissipated, and "error crept into Church teachings" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.). Grow (2004) expands on this teaching and explains that "the narrative of Mormon sacred history . . . reinforced the anti-Catholic tendencies of early Mormons" (143). Harsh language was often directed toward the Catholic Church in the early days of the Latter-day Saints Church. Grow (2004) cites two prominent early Latter-day Saints, Benjamin Winchester and Oliver Cowdery, who criticized

Catholics. In 1834, Cowdery identified the Catholic Church with the "Whore of Babylon," and in 1843, Wincherster reused the metaphor (Grow 2004, 144). Curiously, Cowdery also stood by the Catholic Church on occasion, calling the burning of a Catholic convent a "disgraceful, shameful religious persecution" (qtd. in Grow 2004, 153). Another prominent founding member of the church, Eliza R. Snow, referred to the Catholic Church as the "Mother of Harlots" in the 1870s when she doubted she would have any success converting Catholics to her own faith (G. Smith 1875).

While prominent in the early days of the Church, this strong negative rhetoric towards the Catholic Church began to dissipate and was even condemned by Latter-day Saint church leaders in the twentieth century. Likely one of the last times a prominent Latter-day Saint leader referred to the Catholic Church in this manner was in 1958, when Bruce R. McConkie, a Latter-day Saint General Authority, published his book *Mormon Doctrine* (Prince and Topping 2005). McConkie's book was "filled with erroneous statements," despite its title claiming the book to be doctrine, and was criticized strongly by McConkie's Latter-day Saint peers (Prince and Topping 2005, 160).

Mark E. Peterson, a senior apostle at the time, submitted a report on *Mormon Doctrine* describing over one thousand errors (Prince and Topping 2005, 161). Despite ethical failures, the book still went on to be published, including McConkie's (1958) reference to the Catholic Church as the "Church of the Devil" (108). McConkie specifically criticized several practices of the Catholic Church, including priestly celibacy and the doctrine of transubstantiation (730). When Duane Hunt, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City at the time, heard about the book and how his faith was illustrated, he went directly to President David O. McKay to voice his concerns. McKay instructed McConkie to change problematic lines and also requested that the book not put out a second edition a year later (Prince and Topping 2005, 162). The book was pulled from the market in 1960, two years after its publication, but contra McKay, a second edition was published in 1996 with "approximately 480 changes" (Adams 2012, 65). Likely due to its encyclopedic format, making it easy to access and reference, the book became very popular among Latter-day Saints and was quoted frequently by both lay members and church-published books and manuals, despite numerous errors (Adams 2012, 59–60). While *Mormon Doctrine* plays an important but difficult part in the history of Catholics and Latter-day Saints, there is a message to take from it as we move forward to create a positive dialogue: the personal relationship between Bishop Hunt and President McKay. Hunt had the foresight and felt comfortable enough to approach McKay directly about McConkie's book, McKay listened and responded quickly, and over time McKay and Hunt grew to be respected friends. At Bishop Hunt's passing, McKay published a formal statement in the local newspapers, writing, "We are deeply grieved at the sudden passing of this eminent and devoted leader" (qtd. in Prince and Topping 2005, 163).

Twenty-first-century Efforts

Relations between the two churches have started to improve in recent years. New York City's Cardinal Timothy Dolan has been a pioneer of Catholic and Latter-day Saint relations. In 2011, Dolan offered the benediction at Mitt Romney's acceptance of the Republican presidential nomination, after a Latter-day Saint offered the invocation (Kaleem 2012). In 2016, at an event focusing on religious freedom, Dolan was honored with the Visionary Leadership Award by the New York Latter-day Saint Professional Association (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2016).

Most significantly, in 2019, for the first time in history, pope and prophet met as Pope Francis and President Russell M. Nelson held a meeting to discuss religious rights and traditional family values. The two leaders exchanged gifts: Francis offered a copy of his exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, and Nelson gave Francis a statue of Christ and a copy of "Family: A Proclamation of the World," a Latter-day Saint Church statement canonized in 1995 (Boorstein 2019).

Challenges for Dialogue: One True Church?

One of the greatest challenges for Catholics and Latter-day Saints to overcome, and likely a reason that more dialogue has not been achieved, involves each church declaring itself the one true church on earth. The key foundational story to the formation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Smith's "First Vision," in which the personages of God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared before him after he prayed "to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join" (J. Smith 2013, 49). Smith's prayer was answered that he should join none and that all are "wrong" in the Lord's sight (49). More declarations of Latter-day Saint authority can be seen in descriptions of its priesthood. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' (2013a) standard work, *Doctrine and Covenants*, it is recorded that Smith and Cowdrey were visited by an apparition of John the Baptist, who "confer[ed] the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance" (Sec. 13).

This vision is significant. For Latter-day Saint doctrine it means that this Church alone, as the one with the true keys of the priesthood, holds the proper authority to perform baptisms in the name of Christ. The line of authority linking biblical times to the nineteenth century now also extends to the Prophet and other offices of the church. The modern-day Prophet of the church is defined as having the same leadership role as ancient prophets, such as Moses (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2013b). The Latter-day Saints' *Study Manual* chapter on prophets and their authority describes the power prophets hold as he same power that Peter was given by Christ when he said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19, KJV).

In a similar manner, the Catholic Church holds the view that it is Christ's one true church on earth today. The same biblical passage quoted by Latter-day Saints (Matthew 16:19) is referenced, and the pope is seen as the successor of Peter, holding the keys given to him by Christ. Pope Paul VI's (1964) *Lumen Gentium*, which translates to "Light of the Nations," explains that "the body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head" (sec. 22). Further, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1993) declares the Catholic Church as "the sole Church of Christ, which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic" (sec. 811). The word "catholic," here, is not to reference the common name of the church but is defined as "universal" or "in keeping with the whole" (sec. 830).

Formal Statements on Dialogue

It is important to note that both the Catholic Church and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have made recent statements encouraging interfaith dialogue and work with members of other traditions. Both traditions make dialogue central to their ethic. For Catholics, the Second Vatican Council produced two documents relevant to interfaith communication: the 1965 *Nostra Aetate*, Latin for "In Our Time," focuses on interreligious dialogue between the Catholic Church and non-Christian faiths, while the 1964 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, meaning "Restoration of Unity," focuses on ecumenical communication between the Catholic Church and other Christians. However, as Donald Westbrook (2012) aptly points out, Mormon–Catholic communication "is neither ecumenical nor interreligious" but "occupies a . . . liminal space between the two categories" (38). By *Unitatis Redintegratio*'s definition, ecumenical efforts focus on unity between trinitarian churches (Second Vatican Council 1964, sec. 1). However, the Latter-day Saints Church and other Christian sects, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, hold fundamentally different theological beliefs from the Catholic Church. *Unitatis Redintegratio* outlines differences only between Catholics and Orthodox and Protestant Christians. There are many more doctrinal differences between Latter-day Saints and Catholics than between Catholics and either of these groups, so Latter-day Saints should not be haphazardly lumped together with the Orthodox and Protestants. To some unfamiliar with the Latter-day Saints tradition, it may seem natural to group it with Protestantism, and as mentioned previously, nineteenth-century Catholics who spoke out against Latter-day Saints labeled them as fanatic Protestants. However, the Latter-day Saints tradition is explicitly not one of protest but of restoration and does not come from Martin Luther's critical tradition.

Alternatively, approaching relations between Catholics and Latter-day Saints from an interreligious standpoint does not fare well either: this now implies that Mormons are a non-Christian group, which ignores shared reverence for the Bible and belief in Jesus Christ as the savior of man. Dismissing Latter-day Saints' self-identification as fellow Christians is a clear dialogic error. This psuedo-binary of "ecumenical" and "interreligious" within inter-Christian relations makes it

more difficult to define communication between Catholics and Latter-day Saints but does not mean that dialogue should not be attempted.

Latter-day Saints do not fit squarely into the scope of either *Unitatis Redintegratio* or *Nostra Aetate*, but messages from both documents can aid in facilitating a conversation between the two churches. In *Unitatis Redintegratio*, when holding ecumenical dialogue, it is recommended for members of different Christian groups, or "communions," to explain "the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and bring[] out its distinctive features," which allows for gaining a "truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both Communions" (Second Vatican Council 1964, sec. 4). Listening and truly trying to learn about and understand other traditions is the best way to gain an appreciation and respect for those traditions and the people who practice them. In *Nostra Aetate*, inter-religious dialogue is to be approached with "prudence and love" as well as a recognition and preservation of the "good things, spiritual and moral" found among other faiths (Paul VI 1965, sec. 2). *Nostra Aetate* also advocates for active partnership between faiths, calling for faiths to grow together as one global human family.

Likewise, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has made positive statements encouraging interfaith communication and relationships. In 1978, under the direction of President Spencer Kimball, the First Presidency released a "Statement of the First Presidency Regarding God's Love for All Mankind." Parts of this statement read, "The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals" (1). Nelson (1993), while serving as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve prior to being appointed president of the Church, made a statement at the Parliament of the World's Religions. While part of his speech outlines the basic practices and beliefs of Latter-day Saints for those who might have been less familiar, he also made a call for joining with other faiths "in support of worthy causes and humanitarian projects" (108) and spoke to advance interfaith relationships that allowed for both "maintain[ing] the integrity of our religious institutions" and "preserv[ing] tolerance of each other's sacred beliefs" (103). In this way contemporary Latter-day Saint leaders teach that religious communication can and should be approached with tolerance and understanding.

Dialogue in Practice: Principles for Coming Together

Engaged scholarship connects research with practice. Bringing the challenging history of Catholic and Latter-day Saints toward a fruitful future requires careful attention to pro-dialogue ethical principles. In "Mormon/Catholic Dialogue: Thinking About Ways Forward," Matthew Schmalz (2016) presents three principles to keep in mind when practicing interfaith communication. The first principle he presents is "critical self-awareness," which he defines as "an awareness, simply, that we are similar to those we find different" (141). This principle is central for discussing and sharing faiths, focusing on similarities rather

than the differences that divide. Schmalz's second principle is that of "interpretative charity," which he explains as understanding that someone who disagrees with you has "good reason for believing what she or he believes, and that she or he believes it sincerely" (144). The final principle Schmalz offers is "a willingness to tarry" and be present with one another (145). As we go about creating new dialogue, the goals should go beyond merely presenting our own religion to others; a higher goal involves forging meaningful and lasting relationships as we learn about traditions that differ from our own.

Planning "Catholics and Latter-day Saints: A Dialogue"

With historical knowledge and sound relational principles in place, a key next step for planning this dialogue event was finding experts interested in interfaith dialogue between Catholics and Latter-day Saints. The first potential panelist contacted was Mathew Schmalz, a professor of religion at College of the Holy Cross and author of the article cited above, "Mormon/Catholic Dialogue: Thinking About Ways Forward." Schmalz confirmed his interest and desire to participate in the panel and recommended reaching out to both Father Daniel Dwyer, a professor of history at Siena College, and Mauro Properzi, a professor of religion at Brigham Young University (BYU).[3] Both Dwyer and Properzi were interested in the panel and joined the roster. Properzi then recommended Hanna Seariac, a graduate student at BYU who offered a unique perspective due to her upbringing in the Catholic church and conversion to the Latter-day Saint tradition as a young adult.[4] Next, Brother Corey Chivers, a member of the Scotch Plains Stake in New Jersey, had been a part of the Summit New Jersey Interfaith Council and quickly agreed to join the panel.[5] Monsignor John Radano was the final guest and third Catholic panelist secured, splitting the panel evenly between the two churches. Radano came highly recommended due to his extensive experience with ecumenical communication, including three decades of distinguished service with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Bolen, Jenson, and Geernaert 2017).

About a month before the virtual panel was held, with support from Seton Hall's public relations team and Institute for Communication and Religion, we began advance advertising the event to the public to gain an audience. Early steps included creating an event page for registration, including a field for registrants to propose questions; writing an article and introduction to the event; and distributing promotional posts across social media and internal communication channels, such as email lists and newsletters within the Seton Hall community (Rainbolt 2021).

While working with a team worked well overall and helped distribute the work, there were some hiccups and errors. For example, on the original event page

[3] For more on these scholars, see Dwyer (2006) and Properzi (2015).
[4] To learn more about Hannah Seariac, see https://www.deseret.com/authors/hanna-seariac/.
[5] To learn more about Corey Chivers, see https://www.weil.com/people/corey-chivers.

the time of the event was listed as 4:30, rather than the actual time of 4:00. Another error was a typo in a social media caption. Happily, both mistakes were caught quickly and able to be corrected.

Roughly a week before the panel the six panelists were emailed audience questions submitted through the registration portal, as well as the historical background from the first half of this essay. Sharing the history between the two churches ensured all panelists had base knowledge of the history, since the panelists came from a range of different backgrounds and experience with Catholic/Latter-day Saint relations. In total, seven questions were sent to the panel guests prior to the event. These questions were:

1. What drove your interest in communication between the two faiths?
2. How can Catholics and Latter-day Saints facilitate positive dialogues in their everyday lives?
3. Both the Catholic Church and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hold the core belief that they are Christ's one true church on the earth today. What is the best way to hold a dialogue with these clashing beliefs?
4. What national and international conditions suggest the need for more dialogue between Catholics and Latter-day Saints?
5. Both traditions have multiple sacraments/ordinances (beyond baptism and communion.) In your opinion, what does this suggest about God's grace and presence through your faith movement? Do more sacramental experiences equate greater awareness of God's movement?
6. What doctrine or practices do Latter-day Saints admire about Catholicism and vice versa?
7. What are some of the most important topics we should continue dialoguing about in order to build relationships?

In sending the panelists the questions beforehand, we had to consider how genuine dialogue and spontaneity might be sacrificed in the name of preparedness. As the event unfolded, the dialogue and conversation that emerged from the questions did not appear to diminish fresh and genuine interaction.

Praying, Meeting, Questioning, and Discussing

On November 17, 2021, all meeting technology worked well, and a full audio-video recording of the discussion including audience participation was produced (Seton Hall University 2021). Analyzing a dialogue event's flow and conversational dynamics is a key step in researching relational opportunities and challenges. We invited Radano, as our senior Catholic expert, to start the panel with an opening prayer, in which he quoted John 17:20–21: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father are in me and I am in you, may they

also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." He cited this scriptural passage on integral relating in and through faith as an "ecumenical classic in regard to the unity of Christians" (Seton Hall University 2021, 00:00:20).

After this prayer, Ellen Paul opened the event with some brief background information about the panel. Paul shared that the event was a part of her senior thesis and referenced her own conversion to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While joining the church, and also learning about Catholicism at a Catholic university, she explained that the two Christianities "were a lot more similar than a lot of people would think," and that this inspired a project on interactions between the two traditions (00:02:31). The panel was described as a "small step" in Latter-day Saint and Catholic relations, following the larger step taken when Pope Francis and President Nelson met in 2019 (00:02:44). This brief general event set-up was followed by an introduction to each of the six guests and their backgrounds as described above (00:03:17).

We then began with the first question about what sparked interest in Catholic and Latter-day Saint dialogue in the first place for each of the panelists (00:06:03). Dwyer answered first, explaining that his interest started when he found a Book of Mormon in his library, and later grew to making personal friends who were Latter-day Saints and would take him to the Hill Cumorah Pageant (00:06:24–00:08:04). This theme of personal connections as a driving force for dialogue became common throughout the discussion. Seariac also addressed this question, citing her background growing up Catholic and explaining how most of her family is still Catholic (00:10:20). She said that participating in dialogues was a way for her to "pay homage to the faith of [her] childhood while still respecting and honoring [her] own faith" (00:11:19). Similarly, Properzi tied his interest to his childhood: as a Latter-day Saint who grew up in Italy, connecting with Catholics created a way for him to stay connected with Italy after "experience[ing] some cultural distance with [his] home country" (00:12:16). Schmalz also cited a personal connection that drew him to have an interest in the dialogue, explaining his close friendship with a historian in the Latter-day Saint tradition (00:14:10). Radano addressed this question of interest in dialogue as well. He explained some of his prior ecumenical and interfaith work, remarking on how rare and exciting our conversation was. "One of the reasons I'm so happy to be part of this [current] group is so that I can learn something I've never had opportunities" to learn about before (00:09:40). Across more than three decades of professional Catholic ecumenism, this was his first opportunity to engage LDS colleagues in faith dialogue!

The next question presented to the guests was about how dialogue can be facilitated in the personal lives of both Latter-day Saints and Catholics (00:15:40). Seariac responded first, due to having lived as both a Catholic and a Latter-day Saint. Seariac explained that she felt "the most important thing is trying to understand each other and not making caricatures of the various beliefs" (00:16:00). She also spoke about realizing misconceptions she had about Latter-day Saints prior to her conversion were based on prejudices, and how to overcome that with humility and an openness to learning (00:16:41). Much like the first question, the panelists continued to make connections personal, describing the interfaith

relationships they have. Chivers spoke about a coworker in London and how he felt "the ability to relate to each other and in an everyday point of view terms of living your religion" (00:18:43). Similarly, Properzi spoke about his friendship with fellow panelist, Schmalz (00:19:17).

At this point, Radano suggested speaking on the question that concerns both churches declaring themselves as the "one true church" (00:20:40). Radano mentioned *Unitatis Redintegratio* (addressed above), a Vatican II document. The Catholic Church considers itself the "all-embracing means of salvation" but also affirms that "other Christians can be used by God for salvation" (00:20:56; 00:21:24). Radano also noted that as more dialogues occur, "how much we share with others" becomes more clear, and this mutuality is what we should focus on in interfaith dialogues (00:23:30). Dwyer also spoke on this topic, explaining that not recognizing another's ritual ordinances (such as baptism) did not mean that members of the other faith were seen as bad people. Rather, "we're saying we mean different things by the words" (00:24:38).

The panel was next presented with the question of the need for Catholic and Latter-day Saint dialogue on a national and international level (00:28:16). Radano spoke first, mentioning the charity work Latter-day Saints and Catholics have done together (00:28:47–00:30:51). Properzi spoke next on the LDS Church becoming an international church, noting that some members complain of church culture being "too American" (00:33:03). He cited attending a Catholic Mass in Japan and explained that there is "something to say about having been around for 2000 years . . . there's a historical experience there that can teach you a lot" about the Catholic Church's international reach (00:34:03). Dwyer responded that he has spoken with LDS friends about uniformity within a church and its tension with cultural differences (00:34:44). Similar to Radano's emphasis on charity work, Schmalz shared that he felt there are "a lot of . . . social issues that have yet to be explored." He cited King Benjamin's sermon on equity and fairness from the Book of Mormon, which can be found in Mosiah 2–4 (00:37:54). Seariac seconded Schmalz's thoughts and cited Matthew 25, in which Christ's parable of the five talents instructs Christians to give to the poor (00:40:22).

The next question addressed the sacramental nature of both traditions (00:42:52). In the discussion following this question, Radano asked for clarification on LDS ordinances and if they lined up with the seven Catholic sacraments (00:51:17). Chivers explained the sacraments and clarified that, while there is no concrete number attached to Latter-day Saint ordinances, many of them hold similarities to Catholic practices, such as communion, baptism, and confirmation. Both traditions emphasize the importance of marriage (00:51:5–53:30). Seariac then joined in and discussed temple ordinances in the Latter-day Saint tradition, specifically ordinances done in proxy for the dead (00:55:09–00:56:39). This prompted more sincere questions from Radano, as Seariac went on to explain the LDS vision of heaven, which differs from Catholics'. Heaven is seen on three different levels, and there is a spiritual waiting period before this life. A connection to Catholic ideas about purgatory was made (00:57:37–00:58:53; 01:04:48–01:05:40). During this question and discussion, the panel got into theological differences more than at any other point in the event, and these theological differences needed

clarification. Radano was very gracious and humble in his curiosity, while Seariac and Chivers were patient and thorough in their explanations of their faith.

After this, an audience member raised a question. While originally there was no plan to take audience questions, this audience member had raised a (virtual) hand to ask her question, and event host Ellen Paul chose to allow the guest to ask her question due to her patience in raising her hand. Although there was a chance her unscreened question could have taken the panel in the wrong direction, Paul judged it was more likely the question would be respectful and curious. This guest said she was previously a high school teacher and admired the youth programs within the LDS Church, asking the panelists to speak on that (01:00:22). Chivers spoke on the seminary class offered to Latter-day Saint youth in high school, which is commonly held early in the morning before school (01:00:54). Chivers explains the value found in this, as the teenagers learn about sacrifice by getting up early to devote their time to deepening their faith (01:02:03). Dwyer addressed this question, as well, mentioning that his Catholic colleagues greatly admire the LDS missionary program (01:02:23). This audience question segued well into the penultimate question: what practices were admired in the other faith (01:06:22)? Properzi addressed this question first, explaining that he held a "holy envy" for Holy Week and the Catholic practices around the holiday of Easter (01:06:43). Chivers echoed this and noted his childhood best friend's observance of Easter as a Catholic (01:07:36–01:09:11). Chivers also spoke on the communal aspects of Catholicism, specifically reciting prayer in unison, as something he admired. Likewise, Schmalz shared that he admired the community aspects of the LDS Church, remarking that Latter-day Saint theology is creating a "very interesting intellectual tradition" as far as "spirit and materiality" (01:10:15).

The closing question asked guests how ethical communication between Catholics and Latter-day Saints could continue in the future (01:13:54). Dwyer shared that while there may be a more formal dialogue to be had among theologians, there are also grassroots ways to come together as "common followers of Christ" (01:15:16). Seariac spoke on how there is a general decline in religiosity in the US and suggested finding ways "we can serve God and serve our neighbor together to break down . . . divisions and . . . polarization" (01:17:21). Radano mentioned again the charity and relief work both churches had been providing together and emphasized that this should continue (01:18:10).

Post-panel Follow-Up

After the panel, Ellen Paul and Emily Rainbolt, a graduate assistant working with Seton Hall's Institute for Communication and Religion, wrote an article on the panel for Seton Hall's internal news sources (Rainbolt 2021). Mary Richards, a reporter from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint's news site, *Church News*, reached out from Salt Lake City and published an article discussing the background of the panel and Seton Hall's interreligious dialogue efforts (Richards 2021).

Overall, the event was successful and hopefully will spark future dialogues between Catholics and Latter-day Saints. Primary themes discussed include shared charity and social work, living a life of religiosity in an ever-growing secularism and how close personal relationships and connections can shape and create interfaith dialogues. Ellen Paul submitted and presented an early draft of this paper to the Western States Communication Association's annual conference. Feedback was positive and audience encouragement lead to the development of this article in collaboration with the Institute for Communication Director Dr. Jon Radwan.

Limitations

Several limits come from having a panel of only six guests. With any public panel or discussion event, it is impossible to include all viewpoints within limited time. While the panel did have some diversity, such as a female perspective from Seariac and a European background from Properzi, other perspectives are missing that would add to the conversation of interfaith dialogue, such as racial minorities or a female Catholic perspective. Another limitation may be that some of the panelists had worked together before and were close friends. While their previous experience in Catholic and Latter-day Saint dialogue made them knowledgeable participants, existing relationships may have created an uneven dynamic between panelists.

Another limitation comes from panelists having different levels of knowledge. While this can also be seen as diversity and a strength, as it allows knowledge to be shared to those who are new to the conversation, it also can create roadblocks or delays in some situations; for example, explaining certain Latter-day Saint practices in response to Radano's questions created a pause in the conversation.

In accounting for limitations, it is important to recognize our own research biases. Professor Radwan directed the project, and while his research area is religious communication, all of his degrees are in communication, not religion. We attempted to control for disciplinary bias by inviting Dr. Anthony Sciglitano, an associate professor of religion, to assist with thesis project direction, a partnership that worked very well. On Paul's part, while being a Latter-day Saint at a Catholic university allowed her a unique position between the two traditions, her personal faith choice creates a bias. Even as we try to maintain awareness, it likely still affects historical research as well as panel moderation. For instance, researching the Latter-day Saint perspective went more quickly due to preexisting familiarity. Regularly checking assumptions with knowledgeable others, in this case Professors Radwan and Sciglitano, is essential in managing personal limits and potential blind spots.

Conclusion: Future Research and Dialogue

This research and panel took a broad approach to both the history and the discussion of Latter-day Saint and Catholic relations, so a deeper dive into some of the theological similarities and differences between the two faiths is a good place for future research to grow. For example, during the panel the ordinances and sacraments of both faiths were discussed, but only briefly. A follow-up study could make room to discuss the ordinances of both faiths in a comparative manner and in greater detail, looking at both how they are practiced and performed and the meanings behind them. The historical approach could also be taken to deeper analyze the shared history of the two faiths as minority religions in America in the 1800s, which has affected both churches and how they exist today. Another topic that deserves more in-depth research is church leadership structures: how the roles of the pope and prophet are accepted and exercised. For a more modern approach, one could look at the socio-political positions that Pope Francis and Prophet Nelson have taken and how members of both faiths have reacted to stances on social topics such as vaccines or Black Lives Matter.

Along with research, room for further dialogue and cooperation between Latter-day Saints and Catholics exists in many realms. After the panel, both Radano and Properzi expressed interest in further dialogue in collaboration with Seton Hall's Institute of Communication and Religion. As Radano emphasized, charity and social work will always be needed, and future projects involving both traditions are a promising way to create ethical and authentic dialogue focusing on communities and people, beyond just history and doctrine. As a final conclusion, this research project demonstrates that dialogue between Latter-day Saints and Catholics on an everyday scale, working in faith and humility to forge friendships, could be the most meaningful way to advance this form of intergroup communication.

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Open to New Light: Quakers and Other Faiths (Quaker Quicks series), Eleanor Nesbitt, Christian Alternative, 2023, 104 pages, ebook $6.99/paperback $12.95

Reviewed by Rhiannon Grant

This is an accessible overview of the relationships between Quakers and other religions, including their historical development and current positions. In fourteen short chapters, Nesbitt provides information about how Quakers have approached other faiths in the past and how they undertake this work in the present. She starts by exploring interfaith encounters in the early movement (from their origins in seventeenth century England, Quakers read, wrote, traveled, and sought out different groups at home, so the first generation of Quakers had contact with both Jewish and Muslim communities). She then intersperses chapters on Quaker relations with specific traditions (Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and Jains, Sikhs, Baha'is, indigenous religions, and humanists) with chapters on the development of Quaker approaches (history, representation in Quaker books of discipline, interfaith approaches and initiatives), and finishes with a chapter called "Looking Forward, Looking Back," which comments on the ways in which her branch of the Quaker movement, often known as the liberal branch, is changing and engaging more deeply in interfaith encounters. This is followed by a references section longer than some of the chapters, with many useful pointers for readers who want to explore further.

The greatest strength of this book is the way in which it weaves together multiple sources and time periods in order to build a clear narrative about the shape and development of Quaker relationships with other faiths. Accurate and well-resourced, it takes the reader through the sometimes complex changes in relationships with a deft hand. For example, the chapter on Jews begins in the seventeenth century and ends in the twenty-first, having taken in questions of supersessionism, work supporting refugees during the Holocaust, the experience of people who are both Quaker and Jewish, and responses to the situation in Israel and Palestine. Given that the chapter is only five pages long, and that each of these topics receives due attention, a plain and comprehensible explanation, and quotations from original sources when relevant, this book is a masterpiece of concise and straightforward writing. It also moves fluidly between understanding faiths as religious traditions (including a range of traditions well beyond those often called "world religions," and accepting that "faith" does not require a specific belief) and understanding faith as a personal experience, so that people who have experience of multiple religious belonging or spiritual fluidity of

various sorts are included in the consideration of interfaith work without getting caught up in technicalities or definitions.

The nature of the Quaker Quicks series is, as the name suggests, to give a quick introduction to a topic; authors inevitably find (as I have found in my own contributions to the series) that there is a good deal of interesting and useful material which has to be left out. In this specific case, readers should know in advance that Nesbitt does not cover anything about Quakers and other churches; although not all liberal Quakers today identify as Christian, the roots of the Quaker movement are in Christianity. This book therefore focuses on *other* traditions and does not look at the relationships between Quakers and other churches, leaving plenty for a future author to say on that subject.

There are also some specific chapters in which it would be possible, and perhaps useful, to say more. For example, although I applaud the decision to include humanists as a faith tradition in this context and find what Nesbitt has to say about the relationship between Quakers and the humanist movement helpful, this very short chapter also felt lacking in some of the historical context. In other places, Nesbitt makes good use of the Swarthmore Lectures, given annually at a time when British Quakers are meeting anyway, but she does not mention William H. Thorpe's 1968 lecture "Quakers & Humanists"; she discusses the founding of the Quaker Universalist Group, which embraces the practice of learning from all religions, in the chapter on Quaker interfaith approaches, but does not talk about the founding of the Nontheist Friends Network, a notable group with strong connections to humanist thought.

Readers who are actively involved in interfaith work may find that this book inspires them. There are certainly a number of cases where Nesbitt's historical consideration points to a gap in current work or areas where more could be done: for example, she identifies African indigenous traditions as a group of faiths with which liberal Quakers have had little engagement (61); this is a case where the book's focus on the liberal branch of Quakerism, and exclusion of the evangelical branch which is very active in East Africa, among other places, is visible. The holding of the World Gathering of Friends in South Africa in the summer of 2024 may lead to the need for an update on this. In the meantime, a reader looking for ideas might find that Nesbitt's work suggests productive future projects in several places. Another idea might relate to building ongoing connections with the Baha'i community despite the potential divergence in politics between this group and the liberal branch of the Quaker movement.

In general, this is a very helpful book. It provides, briefly and easily, a wide range of information which will help people to have meaningful and historically informed conversations between different religious traditions. It will provide a useful grounding for Quakers wanting to get their bearings in the complex field of interfaith work and enable them to connect with the work of previous generations. It will provide helpful insights for people not part of the Quaker tradition but perhaps wanting to understand the Quaker approach to other faiths or to work alongside Quakers in interfaith contexts, whether with specific goals about dialogue or with shared aims in social and climate justice. It will not necessarily satisfy all the questions of an academic reader, but it provides an orientation and

a starting point from which further research could be pursued. It would be helpful to an undergraduate wanting to write an essay on Quakers and other faiths; it is accurate, well-referenced, and beautifully clear about where it draws on textual sources or the author's own experience. Both short and reasonably priced, it would be a good purchase for many individuals and libraries.

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