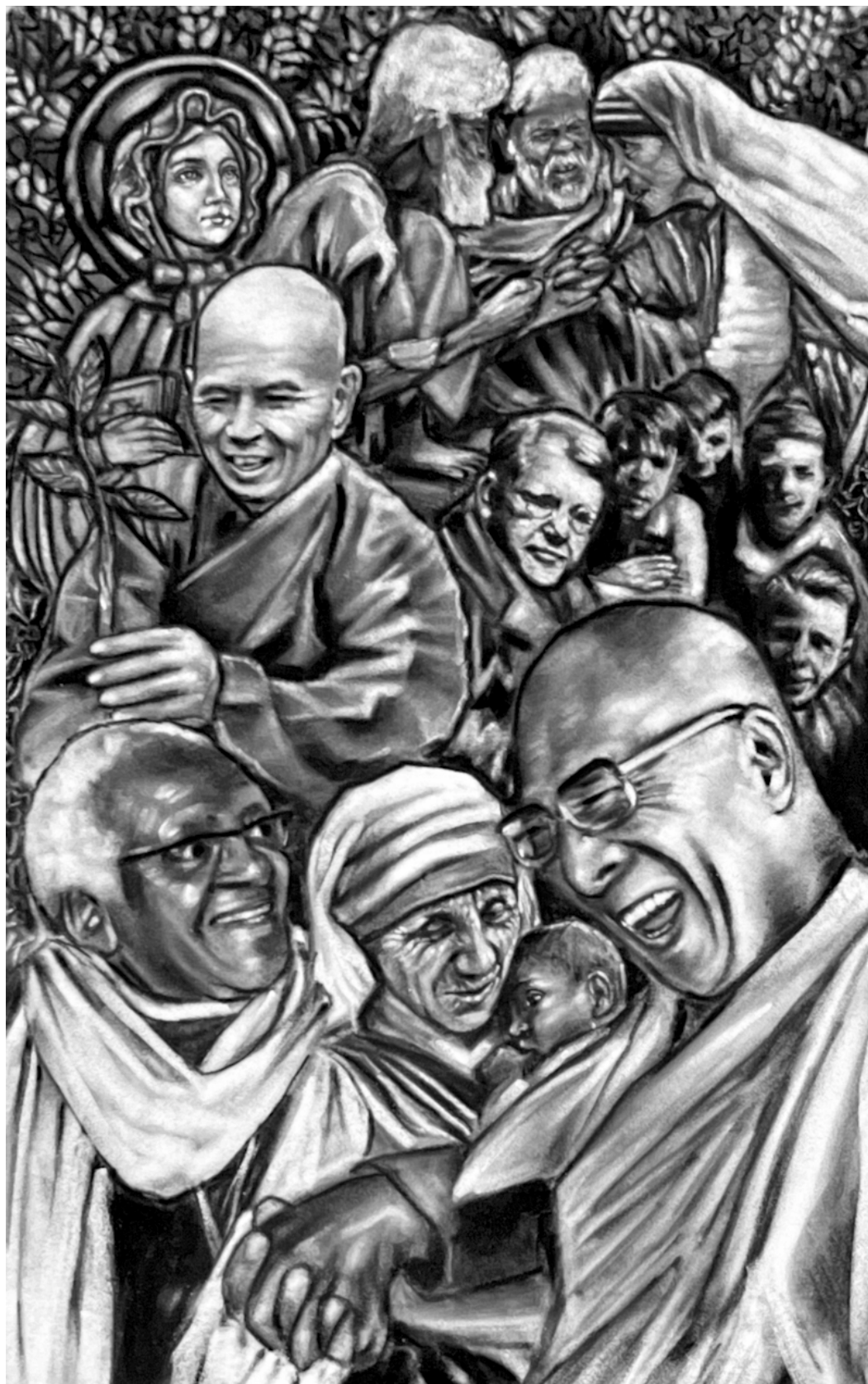


**THE JOURNAL OF DIALOGIC ETHICS:
Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives**



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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.

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THE JOURNAL OF DIALOGIC ETHICS:

Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives

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Editorial Introduction

Honoring: A Retirement Celebration of Ronald C. Arnett through a Meeting of Scholarship and Friendship

Annette M. Holba

Ronald C. Arnett, Professor Emeritus at Duquesne University, was the first editor of this journal and is responsible for leading its creation and vision. In this issue of the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives*, we hear from multiple voices honoring the work, influence, and contribution of Arnett. It is with this intention that we devote this issue to the communication discipline as well as across, intersecting with, and converging with other disciplines, such as philosophy, linguistics, theology, and leadership studies. The collection of essays in this issue is uniquely curated, as contributors approach the celebration of Arnett's influence and impact on their work or professional life through different metaphors and varying experiences. Contributors to this issue include Janie M. Harden Fritz; Michael J. Hyde; Morgan C. Getchell, Timothy L. Sellnow, and Deanna D. Sellnow; Evgeniya Pyatovskaya and Patrice M. Buzzanell; Calvin L. Troup; and Richard H. Thames. They offer unique insights into application of Arnett's scholarship. The following are brief snapshots of their essays.

This issue is bookended with interviews of two of Arnett's colleagues, Janie M. Harden Fritz and Richard H. Thames, conducted by two of Arnett's former graduate assistants, Michael R. Kearney and Natalia E. Tapsak. We provide the transcripts of these interviews so that you can read, in Fritz's and Thames's own words, how Arnett impacted their professional and personal lives.

Janie M. Harden Fritz's interview opens this issue with her perspective and experience of working with Arnett. She offers some history from his first days after coming to chair the (then named) Department of Communication at Duquesne University. She provides discussion around the rise and rigor of faculty publications and the department's focus on constructive hermeneutics. Fritz weaves a tapestry comprised of theoretical coordinates, the significance of *Dialogic Education* (a book Arnett wrote in 1992 before joining the faculty at Duquesne

University), and stories about her professional friendship with Arnett, which developed organically over time.

Michael J. Hyde's essay acknowledges Arnett's 2017 book, *Levinas's Rhetorical Demand: The Unending Obligation of Communication Ethics*, and his focus on *home*. Hyde's essay unpacks the nature of home and provides a phenomenological understanding of it primarily through the works of Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas. Hyde offers a case study that demonstrates the significance of home to human existence.

Morgan C. Getchell, Timothy L. Sellnow, and Deanna D. Sellnow provide a rich discussion of imaginative crisis planning based upon civil dialogue. Their essay uses Arnett's work pertaining to problems and solutions identified in the convergence of civil dialogue and crisis communication. They acknowledge Arnett's metaphor of holy sparks of truth to situate their argument for employing imaginative crisis communication through principles of civil dialogue.

Evgeniya Pyatovskaya and Patrice M. Buzzanell collaborate in their essay discussing feminist ethical dilemmas in communication scholarship. They employ Arnett's metaphor of *tenacious hope*, integrating it with the processes associated with feminist theorizing to reveal how dilemmas around gender justice emerge and evolve. They argue that tenacious hope, integrated with feminisms, can provide ethical positioning from which feminist ethical dilemmas and practices can be analyzed and used to impact and shape communication scholarship.

Calvin L. Troup, a former colleague of Arnett at Duquesne University, considers praxis implications of Augustine's leadership communication and employs Arnett's explication of Martin Buber's discussion of *community* and humility to advocate the practice of "leading from the middle." Augustine's leadership approach suggests that one cannot impose one's will upon another. Rather, leaders demonstrate service from the middle, alongside those they serve. This requires a liberation of sorts from the sentiment of control and is guided instead by a sentiment of community and togetherness. This is a testimony to Arnett's leadership style, which is paradigmatic of what Troup describes as leading from the middle.

Richard H. Thames's interview closes these contributions. His interview is full of stories about work, friendship, and life unfolding. Focusing on Arnett's leadership in the department and for the doctoral program, Thames provides insight into the various changes in the department over time and how Arnett's leadership was skilled and focused. Thames describes how Arnett modeled scholarship and publication, which cultivated and increased the scholarly reputation of the department, especially once the doctoral program started. Thames tells wonderful stories of the differences and commonalities between him and Arnett, often sharing deeply philosophical discussions driven by ideas, curiosities, and their individual passions. Thames tells the story of an unending friendship.

A final note: Ronald C. Arnett amassed a significant amount of scholarship over the course of his career. He also touched the lives of his colleagues, students, and many people in the discipline and around the world. He often referred to himself as a builder. I see him as a builder of ideas and practices, of refuges and

journeys. This is the mark of an impactful teacher—one who focuses on the other, teaches them, learns from them, and gives time freely and fully.

I recall a time early in my career when Arnett provided perspective and a voice of reason when I reached out to him in much distress about my decision to choose to work at my current institution. I recall very clearly that I was not sure that I made the best decision. Consistent with his understanding of the metaphor of existential homelessness and his turning toward the other with care and empathy, he gave me profound advice in the spirit of Martin Buber's (1991) *Tales of the Hasidim*. Yes, he wrote me an original Hasidic tale that sustained me and ultimately enabled me to flourish at my institution. While I promised never to share the tale, I have always kept it on my desk to remind me of Buber's communication ethic of walking the narrow path and experiencing mutuality and reciprocity. This year, as I am seriously considering when my own retirement will come (it is near) and contemplating this stage of my life, I gaze toward the tale that he wrote for me with great appreciation and admiration. I must acknowledge the significant impact that his words and his presence have had on me, both in my career (at work) and in my personal life (at home), especially when my parents died. He taught me to meet the other where they are, reminding me that they may be situated on differing grounds of the good and that these goods may be in contention—in fact, they often are—but we can choose to rise above the contention and competitiveness of those goods by navigating between I-It and I-Thou, between being functional and dialogical. Though not always easy to put into practice, the Hasidic tale spoke to me in a way that enabled me to see this space of engagement as a meeting ground, and it sustained me as I waded through the mud.

I celebrate the work and contribution of Ronald C. Arnett to the discipline and those with whom he encountered and worked, but I still have difficulty finding the words to express my admiration and appreciation for him. Therefore, I thought I would end my introduction to this issue with two of Buber's (1991) Hasidic tales, which reflect Arnett's attributes as a builder and a teacher. The first one is from Book Two: The Later Masters:

The Zaddikim That Build

Rabbi Yitzhak was asked: "How are we to understand the saying: 'Every zaddik in whose days the Temple is not built is no zaddik at all.' That would mean that all the zaddikim who have lived since the destruction of the Temple were not zaddikim." He explained: "The zaddikim are always building the upper sanctuary. The zaddik who does not do his share in the building is no zaddik at all." (295)

The second one, which is similar to Psalm 92, is from Book One: The Early Masters:

Palm and Cedar

"The righteous [zaddik] shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Concerning this verse in the psalm, the maggid of Mezritch

said: "There are two kinds of zaddikim. Some spend their time on mankind. They teach them and take trouble about them. Others concern themselves only with the teachings themselves. The first bear nourishing fruit, like the date-palm; the second are like the cedar: lofty and unfruitful." (101)

It is my hope that this issue captures the impact that Arnett's scholarship, friendship, and practices have had throughout his many years of service in the academy. Selfishly, I was not ready for him to retire, but I recognize the importance of retiring when one is healthy and at the top of one's game. This is the mark of his retirement. I wish him many wonderful years of retirement to engage in leisure and play with his grandchildren.

We, of this journal, recognize and celebrate the contribution of Ronald C. Arnett's work to the scholarly community and beyond.

Onward.

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Hope and Help: Interview with Janie M. Harden Fritz

Janie M. Harden Fritz

The following offers an interview with Janie M. Harden Fritz, Full Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University, conducted by graduate assistants Michael R. Kearney and Natalia E. Tapsak on September 1, 2023. Dr. Fritz reflects on her professional association with Ronald C. Arnett and the ways that Arnett's scholarship, teaching, and service influenced the department and the discipline.

How would you begin to describe your professional connection to Ronald C. Arnett?

I would start by saying that the Duquesne University Department of Communication hired Ronald C. Arnett to be our chair. He started in the fall semester of 1993. Richard Thames and I, along with several other people, were on the committee. We hired him. I believe he may have come across our radar screen before, but he ended up not joining us at that time. We were convinced he would be a very good chair for us, although we didn't know what a remarkable journey it would be. We had no doctoral program, but we had a master's program. Our department was not held in high esteem, although I will say that the graduates of our program apparently did have good experiences, and they have returned to speak to students in our program as recipients of the Anthony L. Bucci Award for Excellence in Communication Ethics. People learned and grew, but the program was of a very different caliber at the time.

When Arnett came in to lead the department, he looked first at mission. He said, "If I were at Brandeis, for example, I would have a focus on things related to Judaism. But this is a Catholic institution." For context, his first job was at Saint Cloud State University. Then he had gone to Marquette University, a Catholic institution. He was the chair there for three years. He had been a provost at Manchester College, which is where he had gotten his undergraduate degree along with several other figures in our field, like Stanley Deetz. He eventually stepped down as provost there, but stayed as a faculty member, and he came to

Duquesne after that point. He had written the book *Dialogic Education* in 1992 because he was thinking about higher education and some of the challenges associated with that historical moment. After careful thought, he decided he would come to Duquesne. He was forty years old at the time.

He started by helping us to frame our curriculum within the mission of the university. So, communication ethics was huge. Fortunately, this was one of his areas of expertise, as we know. When we had an opportunity to hire another faculty member, we interviewed Calvin Troup, and at the time, Ron had said to him, "We're never going to have a PhD program here." Well, within the next two to three years, that changed.

The turning point for the department—well, there were two turning points. One was John Murray and the other was Michael P. Weber. When Ron came in to consider serving as chair of the department, he talked to Murray, Duquesne's president at the time, and asked him, "Do you want me to manage, or do you want me to lead?" Murray said, "I want you to lead, and I'll support you." That's what gave him the authority and the power to do what he needed to do with the department. He had the support of upper-level administrators. Weber, the provost at the time, was also there and supported. At some point, Weber had said, "Hey! How would you like a brand new building in the middle of campus?" And Arnett said, "Please don't do that. We're not as healthy as we need to be. If we're in the center of campus, we will draw scrutiny, and we're just not in a position for that."

There came a time when the English department was going through some difficulties. Their numbers were down, and they were trying to find a chair for the English department. They couldn't agree on a candidate, and President Murray asked Ron to lead the search. So, Ron came in, worked with them, and helped find candidates. They found agreement on three candidates to present to the president. As I recall the story, President Murray called him into his office and said, "I think we have a fourth candidate—you. What if you ran English and communication? What if we merged the departments?" Ron said, "Please don't merge them. They are different disciplines. But if you want them to be affiliated, I will be the chair of both." That happened in 1997. And I remember that because I was going up for tenure that year. We were down in Des Places, which is now a living and learning center. Anthony Bucci, who ran an integrated marketing communication firm, had been recruited by Ron as a supporter and friend of the department. Bucci built an office complex for us—the MARC Center for Excellence. We're sitting in it now.

I believe that happened as a response to the affiliation between departments because we needed to move communication up here to house the units in the same space. They built this center, and the departments were affiliated. It was like, "Pack up and go!" And I was like, "I'm trying to put my tenure packet together!" But we left and came here. And Ron had an undergraduate director and a graduate director for each department. That was back in the day when I was trying to wear suits, and I realized I couldn't because I kept tearing the pockets on the doorknobs when I would exit a room. So, I said I was done with that.

We had this really nice complex. It was all one unit before. There wasn't a wall there; it was one big thing. We had two administrative assistants at the time. We had a nice space out here, and we would have weekly meetings with the grad

and undergrad directors. President Murray had said to Ron, “What do you want in exchange for this work?” Ron said, “Give us a doctoral program.” We could build one by fitting it within the currently existing English PhD, and he saw the opportunity. At the time we created the Rhetoric PhD program, we offered two core courses from English, with the other core courses grounded in the communication field. Two members of the English department, one of our graduate students, and two members of the communication department formed the committee that created the rhetoric PhD program. I believe our first rhetoric PhD student graduated in 2004.

About five years after the affiliation was created, English got healthy, and, as Ron knew they would, they wanted to separate. They didn’t want to be affiliated with communication—oh, the horrors! So, they divided the departments, and as things worked out, we kept the rhetoric doctoral program. We ended up with this complex here, and English was around the corner. And that was the start of everything.

Calvin Troup was the first director of the doctoral program. We eventually hired Pat Arneson, who later became a co-director of the PhD program. We tried to publish and recruit. At one time, journalism folk were a part of us. It became clear they had a different mission in mind, writing for much more popular audiences, which makes sense. So, eventually they separated, too. We ended up with the MA programs in communication and, of course, the doctoral program.

The biggest area of dispute rested with the very popular areas of advertising and public relations. The question was “Who’s going to own this very popular major?” We had worked with Bucci, who recommended an integrated marketing communication approach to advertising and PR. One representative from each department met to negotiate this curricular issue. We framed our approach to ad and PR as integrated marketing communication working from a rhetoric and philosophy perspective, and the journalism department did it from a journalism perspective. The representatives eventually agreed that the communication department would offer a series of courses under the umbrella of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Functions and Strategies, which comprised IMC Functions I: PR; IMC Functions II: Advertising; IMC Strategies I: PR; and IMC Strategies II: Advertising. We also offered Professional Communication in IMC as an introductory IMC course

Our IMC perspective and its grounding in rhetoric and philosophy made it distinctive. After the separation of communication and journalism, we changed our name to the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies and ended up with four undergraduate majors: integrated marketing communication, corporate communication, rhetoric, and communication studies.

Having two distinctive but related programs actually worked out very well because students wanted both. They wanted to study everything. So, you’d learn how to do a press release in both, and in our program, you might read Plato as a rhetorical foundation, and in theirs, you might read something else. So, the framing of the practices came from very different theoretical ground. People used to say, “Oh, students are confused!” They were not confused! They were benefiting

from both. So, we just said “hush” to people who would say that, and we moved on.

Over the years it has turned out that IMC is a very strong major that has continued to grow in popularity. IMC came out of Northwestern University with a quantitative focus. We adapted it to fit the mission of Duquesne University by giving it a humanities focus. And it was around that time that we formed our two pillars: walking the humanities into the marketplace and the ethical difference.

It’s interesting: One of the reasons we focus so much on historical understanding is that one of the members of the English department—a former poet laureate of Pennsylvania—was very distressed because he didn’t think people in communication had a good understanding of history. So, we said, “We’ll put history of communication in our curriculum. We’ll have courses that look at historical periods, such as the rhetoric of the humanities and the rhetoric of the marketplace—in fact, we’ll cover historical periods in all of our PhD classes.” That’s where we got the historical periods and required every PhD student to learn the historical periods.

And here I am, from the social sciences, and Ron decided I needed a place in the program, even though I had a quantitative orientation. Now that’s another important thing: When he came into the program, many of us were quantitative scholars. Actually, most folks were not scholars at all. But the sense was that scholarship has to matter in a PhD program, no matter what type it may be. Although our PhD students were going to work from an interpretive perspective, they needed to know something about other methodologies. He always supported my quantitative work and even published a quantitative article with me. (There’s a great story behind that, too. One person who read the article wrote to us about how she really loved the quantitative part and invited us to write a book chapter. But when we finally met her, it turned out that she was impressed with the philosophical orientation. It was pretty fun.) Ron’s undergrad degree was in experimental psychology, by the way.

So, we turned to the humanities. When the doctoral program was being designed and formed, we got people from the University of Pittsburgh to sit at the table with us, and we said, “We are not going to compete with you or any other program.” We just wanted to have people who could teach and who could learn to do research. And we wanted to focus on communication ethics. We have tried to help our doctoral students become very good teachers who could serve at small, regional campuses or community colleges where the need is greatest. I think at that time that was not exactly what was said, but that was our orientation, and that orientation remains. I think that’s always been part of the Spiritan mission. Though I don’t remember it being stated as explicitly, that has been the sense: We’re people who serve. We have a mission-sensitive spirit. We teach people to love students, to help them learn.

But at the same time, the PhD is a research degree. I believe we continued to understand the “unity of contraries” that Ron often discussed, citing Martin Buber: There’s not an opposition between teaching and scholarship, and along with teaching and scholarship, there’s service. They all count and matter. The service you do is a matter of course; you don’t do it for the recognition, and people don’t

get tenure based on service. But over the years, things would emerge that helped us to realize that we needed to maintain the focus on scholarship. If you have people in the program who don't believe in scholarship—graduate students who don't believe it's important—then, you won't have a PhD program. You've got to do research; you've got to write. Even if your intention is to teach—especially if your goal is to teach!—you better be able to do that research and give students the very best that you've got.

When you get your work out there for publication, it doesn't matter where you publish. Just find a place that needs your work. It might not be the top journal in the field, but we don't care about that. Not to say you wouldn't be happy to have it; we'd be happy to publish in whatever journal it may be. We made sure, too, as we developed our tenure requirements, that people had to publish a scholarly book with a university press. That was not always the case, but it became more and more important. (When I was going up for tenure, it was a very different world. By the time I went up for full professor, I did need to write a book, and I had a number of other publications by that point.)

The biggest contribution Ron made was to help us situate ourselves as a program within Duquesne University's Catholic mission through history, the humanities, and, more and more, religious communication. That had been implicit in the program, especially with Calvin Troup, when he led the program. It was always there, there was always a sense, but now it's more explicit because we have courses in religious communication: Rhetoric and Philosophy of Religious Communication; Rhetoric, Race, and Religion; and, at the undergraduate level, Approaches to Rhetoric, Religion, and Society. The program has developed over time to have an emphasis on these areas.

Also, we were, and still are, very careful to think about the notion of a constructive hermeneutic. We don't want to blow things up. A constructive hermeneutic is about having an appreciation for what's there. Certainly, the world is broken, but how do we heal it? And as we think more and more explicitly about the Catholic intellectual tradition, we understand people like Dorothy Day, who had a heart for the poor and who wanted to change the world—the kind of change that we would advocate. But as I would say, and as Dr. Arnett might very well say, you want to think along the lines of Edmund Burke: Be careful. Change, but change slowly. Don't blow things up. Don't chop off the head of the old grandfather. And, of course, Kenneth Burke's permanence and change. Richard Thames could talk about that. (Thames has been here the longest.)

That's another thing Ron always did! Ronald C. Arnett always made sure that faculty members would not be picked on. He protected people's intellectual and academic freedom, but he also would try to find good fits for people. Richard Thames would be the first to say that Arnett taught him to be a learner again, and Richard began to publish.

In your view, what are the most important scholarly theoretical coordinates that Dr. Arnett contributed?

Dialogue, communication ethics, and philosophy of communication from a constructive hermeneutic perspective are, from my perspective, the most important scholarly theoretical coordinates that Dr. Arnett contributed. There are strands of all these areas throughout our curriculum. A heavy emphasis on cultural studies and critique has emerged in the field over the last few decades, whereas in earlier years, rhetoric and the social sciences were what many considered the two major divisions. Dialogue and philosophy of communication came into view as alternative perspectives, along with critical theory, as the field developed and grew. Of course, there are many understandings of philosophy of communication in this moment.

So, I would say philosophy of communication from a constructive hermeneutic perspective is what Ron contributed.

Phenomenology! That's another reason we turned to the humanities here in this department. Phenomenology matters so much. The psychology department at Duquesne University studies phenomenology, as well, as a philosophical understanding of psychology. We focus on phenomenology that is constructive, along with dialogue, communication ethics, and interpersonal communication from a dialogic perspective.

So, that's the nutshell. He was always sensitive to institutions, their missions, and the historical moment. And *Dialogic Education*—read that! It was written before he came here, but that was kind of his agenda. He was always concerned about people. The institution has to be first, but the people who are part of the institution matter very much, too, and you can't forget the people, but work matters. Don't talk about what you've done, talk about what's next.

Was Duquesne already known for phenomenological research by that point? Was the Phenomenological Center already operating?

Yes! My husband got a master's in multimedia arts, and one of the projects was to create a virtual tour of the library, and one of the places was the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center. The center has become more important over time. I know Duquesne has always had a phenomenological impulse.

What do you think about Dr. Arnett's approach to resolving conflict? Was there a significant change from the way the

department had functioned before, and what were some of the most unusual things about it?

He had a gift for helping people keep working. Keep the conversation going. Let people be responsible for their spheres of influence rather than interfering with other people. That was the main point, I think. There was a public nature to the way he would work. Before Arnett, there wasn't really a sense of leadership. It was almost as though there were kids in the playground, and nobody was in charge. But Arnett had the support of the administration, and that support was made public. He worked to focus not on personalities but on what we are doing—functional, functionality—on what we are doing, on what people could do. "All right, you're troubled about this. Well, you're in charge of it. Let's see what you can do." And the work would happen, or the work wouldn't happen.

The authority he had he put to constructive use. In *Communication and Community*, Arnett talks about Rollo May's notion of nutrient power. For people who wanted to get work done, who wanted to be able to have a sense of security and not be stabbed in the back, to work within a mission, this was a very freeing place and a very protective place, a very safe place. If you had your own agenda, and you didn't like what someone else was doing, and you weren't doing much yourself, and you wanted to hide your lack of productivity, it was a very *unhappy* place. He protected and promoted work.

He was put in place by the administration, but there is a difference between the legitimate power of a formal role and the referent power that comes from being accepted and appreciated by the people you are leading. I remember one conversation he reported with a member of the English faculty during the shift to his leadership of the affiliated departments, who said to him, "I don't like this at all." So, he gave the faculty member a slip of paper with a phone number on it and said, "Call my wife. She doesn't like it either." That person became one of his strongest supporters. He led in an almost Japanese style, where he would go to people, talk with them, get their sense of things, and ask for their support. He gave people authority over specific areas and asked them to work creatively to make things better.

The support from the administration was vital. If you don't have that, you don't really have any leverage. He was careful with people. He protected people. He gave them every opportunity to do constructive, productive things.

Thinking about your professional friendship with Dr. Arnett, is there anything you want to share about how he affected your own life?

He helped me to be productive. He would suggest things for me to do. Sometimes I didn't appreciate it, but they always turned out to be good things. For example, I was the kind of kid in high school that if you wanted an organization to die, make me president because I wouldn't do anything. I didn't know what to do. But he

convinced me to run for the presidency of the Pennsylvania Communication Association (PCA). I was not very happy about that. But he found a way to give me the support I needed. He was very good at providing scaffolding for people, teaching people how to do things. And he did this not for me—he did it for the institution. He did want to support me, but it was not about me. It was about “Here’s somebody who needs to be a productive part of an organization, and here’s an organization that needs help.” I wasn’t involved in PCA when he first came. He got involved, and he essentially saved it. But I got involved much later. He asked one of our doctoral students at the time to assist me, and she ended up essentially planning the entire conference for me during my time as vice president. But by the time I got to be the Eastern Communication Association (ECA) vice president/convention planner, I was able to fulfill my role without difficulty. I knew how to do it; I could figure it out. I had help, of course—like the second VP, Leeanne Bell (now Leeanne Bell McManus), the interest group planners, and the entire planning team. I was in a very different place by then. He helped me to do things I didn’t think I could do and didn’t think I wanted to do. He modeled the work. I was very inspired. In fact, he supported my quantitative work. He didn’t say, “You have to do something different.” He wanted to support what I could do. So, that was very encouraging.

Encouragement! He was responsive to the needs of the department at varied moments in its developmental life. There were times when he would say, “Stay home if you’re not teaching. Stay home, and do your scholarship.” Then there was a time when we needed to be here with students and recruit. “Come in,” he would say, “Come in as much as you can and do your scholarship here. Learn to work through the interruptions, and hide occasionally, if you need to.” I remember one year I was on sabbatical, and I did manage to publish something from it, but I ended up coming back to the office. I was like, “What am I going to do at home? Eh, there’s nobody there. All right, I’ll work in the office.”

Opportunity after opportunity—that’s what I remember. He would provide opportunities up to the last year he was here, too. I remember receiving an invitation from a scholar to write a chapter in an edited collection. I said to myself, “Okay, I know who suggested that this person invite me. That was Ron. Fine! I’ll do it. I’ll do it.” (I later came and asked Ron, “Did you get this scholar to ask me to write a chapter?” And he said, “Oh, well, I just talked about your work.”) So, he was always encouraging, always helpful. He operated through Buber’s notion of the unity of contraries: he knew what our limits were, and he honored and respected those limits, but he also helped us go beyond them. He often talked about the difference between Kant’s notions of fantasy and imagination, where imagination is pushing off the real.¹ He worked through imagination.

And the modeling, the role modeling! I didn’t work nearly as hard as he did, and that was okay. He worked much more than I did. I worked as I could, and I worked probably more than I ever would have worked because of him.

¹ See Arnett (2020).

He helped me to love institutions. I didn't care about institutions; I didn't know what an institution was. I was very individualistic; I never understood, really, the importance of groups and communities and the importance of working with other people. Before working with Ron, and before taking the full-time position here, I had begun to learn this principle implicitly from my fellow graduate students, but through Ron's leadership I learned it more explicitly. He was always there, giving me a sense of how we get things done. In Ronald C. Arnett, there was a spirit of care for the community, not just for yourself but for others, too. He understood how people could flourish.

Are there any notable scholars that you both studied or some that Dr. Arnett introduced to you and vice versa?

Charles Taylor! I still to this day insist that I introduced him to Charles Taylor because I was reading *First Things* and had read a book review of *Sources of the Self*. I knew Ron had a deeply religious soul. He had a seminary degree and his faith was very important to him, but he didn't wear it on his sleeve. When I first met him, I was probably trying to encourage him to make those commitments more explicit. I remember how, when we were interviewing him for the chair position, he said something, and I responded, "That's like in the Book of James!" And he said, "Well, I wouldn't cite that in my scholarship." And I was like, "Well, well." But I understand where he was coming from now. But Charles Taylor.

MacIntyre! All these scholars who have a concern for tradition. Hannah Arendt! I had heard about her back before I met him, and he was very interested in her, too. There were so many scholars and voices—like Christopher Lasch!

From my perspective, Ron had a traditional yet open understanding of the world, a concern for both stability and change. I always saw him embracing different perspectives. The kinds of people he would read resonated with that approach to the world. He manifested a very open, ecumenical, and invitational sense of helping people find their way and not imposing a particular path or position on them.

And Levinas! He liked Levinas, but I had not read Levinas. I learned about Levinas from Ron.

How has Dr. Arnett's work influenced the content of your scholarship?

I recently wrote about Flannery O'Connor and existential leadership.² I think Ronald C. Arnett is the quintessential existentialist. And I don't know if he's ever talked about himself as an existentialist, but I think he appreciated Christian existentialists—like Kierkegaard, who said that we have ground to stand on, but

² See Fritz (2023).

we're not God. We don't know what the next day is going to bring. So, we have to trust, have faith. It's not groundless faith; it's faith that recognizes we don't know what's going to happen next. We can think of Job! "Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him!" (Job 13:15, KJV). There is a kind of trust even in the face of the unknown of the next day.

In the future, I would probably write about themes representing the unity of contraries, a commitment to a sense of the world as both good and flawed—in need of grace. The world is broken, but not irredeemably so.

And I think that the *Communication Ethics Literacy* book is one of my favorites.³ I'm so glad I could be a part of that.

I'm reminded of a sense of hope in people. He always had hope in people. He was a hopeful person. And he always wanted to help. Hope and help. Those were his coordinates.

How did Dr. Arnett handle conflict with people who did not appreciate this orientation toward the world?

In the very beginning, there were some people who disagreed with the way that others in the department were teaching particular courses. Dr. Arnett recognized that there are multiple ways to approach a given content area. His approach administratively was to permit all voices to come out. He wasn't going to restrict any voices, as long as they fit within the horizon of the departmental and university mission. When it came to mission, there's got to be a framework that guides. So, the doctoral program wasn't a free-for-all endeavor. It wasn't both quantitative and philosophical. We had to fit our approach to the framework of the university. We honored the humanities, which pushed us toward philosophical and humanities-grounded understandings of communication. As time went on, people interested in joining the department understood our perspective. And so, there was a self-selection process, in some ways. Since I was already there, Dr. Arnett wanted to use my strengths, and he knew that people needed to understand a quantitative perspective, even if that was not going to be the method used for a dissertation. There were limits. Also, someone working primarily with a critical approach wouldn't have functioned very well, and they wouldn't have been hired in the first place. Everything has its place, and we need to know about all approaches, but the framework we have chosen to work from as a department is a constructive hermeneutic. At some point, it's like, "Okay, we need to hear that, too. But this is the approach we're going to take in our projects and in our classes. You can certainly teach this approach; it's your choice, and you have academic freedom. You can certainly appreciate it, if you want, but if you're going to move into positions of leadership, then we need a constructive approach."

³ The first edition of *Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue and Difference*, co-authored by Ronald C. Arnett, Janie M. Harden Fritz, and LeeAnne M. Bell, appeared in 2009. The book is now in its third edition (Fritz, McManus, and Kearney 2023).

He was also careful with people who it was clear might not publish at the level that might have been needed for tenure. His position was to help people recognize whether they would make it early on so they could choose whether to stay or to find a place more suited for their scholarly abilities. That's difficult. And if there was ever any question, he had a way of working with people to help them see and know that there's nothing wrong with functioning in another place that might be better suited for them. You have to keep the standards of scholarship high, because if you don't, the program won't survive.

I think there was a time when there might have been a group of folks who were thinking that scholarship wasn't good or important and that we really ought to be more attentive to students and just put scholarship to the side. But he corrected that understanding.

He moved people out of positions of influence who were promulgating problematic messages. Administratively, it's a matter of choosing which people will be in charge of areas and units and curriculum and who might be in positions of influence at the university, who's going to be on promotion and tenure committees. You can't control these things, but you can encourage them. He used his influence and authority in an appropriate, mission-sensitive way—always invitational, but firm, as well. He would not put people in charge of something if they couldn't do the work or were going to move in a way that was contrary to the mission of the university. Sometimes you don't know if that's going to happen or not. You can watch and you can see, and you can do a lot structurally, but you have to have the support of the administration. If you don't have administrative support, give it up. He was always closely connected to administration, sometimes more and sometimes less depending on who was in charge and how they thought of the program.

How did Dr. Arnett show his care for students?

He showed his care by working with content. He would talk to students. If students had a problem, he would talk with them like he was at a small liberal arts college. It was always an invitation and always if it seemed appropriate at the time. He would talk to undergraduate students—for example, an alum of the program is now sending us notes that he took when he was in Arnett's class back in the last millennium. Dr. Arnett took this student under his wing. He said, "You're going to be my TA." Ron knew that he couldn't work with everybody; he had to make choices. But the connection with students was always around ideas, and that's what it meant to be a TA for him. He wouldn't go eat French fries with students; he would work with them. But he would counsel people, talk to people.

There are probably so many things I still don't know because he took care about keeping things confidential. Who knows how many lives he has affected over time?

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The Home of All Other Homes: A Phenomenological Inquiry⁴

Michael J. Hyde

Abstract: This essay focuses on a phenomenon that warranted the attention of Ronald C. Arnett (2017) in his book *Levinas's Rhetorical Demand: The Unending Obligation of Communication Ethics* and is essential to the wellbeing of human beings: the home. My discussion emphasizes a phenomenological understanding of this dwelling place. Insights are drawn primarily from the philosophies of Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas. I turn to these two phenomenologists after offering some general comments about the home that are intended to complicate the all too easy and idealistic way of conceiving this habitat. The essay concludes with a case that allows me to relate in a positive way the thinking of Heidegger, Levinas, and Arnett: G-d's announcing its name to Moses on Mount Sinai. With this case, we learn, among other things, that communication ethics is grounded in what I term the "home of all other homes." Without this home, communication ethics would not exist—nor would we.

Keywords: home; phenomenology; Heidegger, Martin; Levinas, Emmanuel; communication ethics

In this essay, I focus on a phenomenon that has received little consideration in the literature of communication studies, though warranting the attention of Ronald C. Arnett in his award-winning book *Levinas's Rhetorical Demand: The Unending Obligation of Communication Ethics* and most importantly being essential to the well-being of human beings: the home. Gaston Bachelard (1969) affirms the status of this dwelling place when he notes that home "is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life" (6–7). Interpreting home with such glorious terms is a perfect way to describe what is commonly considered the perfect way of being, what this habitat is supposed to be as a source for living the good life in one's

⁴ I am honored to be a contributor to the present celebration of the work of Dr. Ron Arnett: a trusted friend, inspiring teacher, researcher, and interlocutor who is always willing to share the life-giving gift of acknowledgment. Where art thou? Here I am!

everyday existence: a place that is well situated and decorated, a place of security, convenience, cordiality, relaxation, happiness, and love; a place that encourages the development of personal relationships and strong family ties; a place where one need not worry about “being oneself”; in short, a place of genuine care and comfort.⁵ Hence, the well-known sayings “Home sweet home,” “Home is where the heart is,” and “There is no place like home”: home is a place where you can feel at home with yourself, others, and the immediate surroundings. Not feeling at home when one is at home is, for most people, an unhealthy way of being in the world. Indeed, it is depressing.

My discussion of home emphasizes a phenomenological understanding of this dwelling place. Insights are drawn primarily from the philosophies of Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas. I turn to these two phenomenologists after offering some general comments about the home that are intended to complicate the all-too-easy and idealistic way of conceiving this habitat, as noted above. The home does not have to be perfect to be a home. The following claim by Heidegger (1977) is key for my purposes:

Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship [ethical responsibility] accomplishes the manifestation [truth] of being insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying [communication]. (193)⁶

The act of manifesting the truth requires rhetorical competence so as to increase the effectiveness of the language being employed. Levinas advances what this claim entails by emphasizing how the Otherness (alterity) of other people plays a fundamental role in establishing the ethical nature of the home environment. Here I also draw insights from Arnett’s book on Levinas, which includes significant insights that clarify Levinas’s conception of the relationship between home, ethics, and rhetoric. I conclude my discussion with a case that allows me to relate in a positive way the thinking of Heidegger, Levinas, and Arnett on the phenomenon of the home. Up until that point, controversy characterizes the relationship between the three thinkers. The case I offer cites one of the most important moments in Jewish history: G–d announcing his name to Moses on Mount Sinai. This case belongs in the literature of communication ethics.⁷ With this case we learn, among other things, that communication ethics is grounded in what I term the “home of all other homes.” Without this home communication ethics would not exist. Nor would we.

⁵ For example, scan the pictures and articles in such popular magazines as *House Beautiful*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Good Housekeeping*.

⁶ The bracketed terms—ethical responsibility, truth, communication—receive further clarification as the essay progresses.

⁷ For a noteworthy introduction to this literature, see Ronald C. Arnett, Janie M. Harden Fritz, and Leeanne M. Bell’s (2009) *Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue and Difference*.

Being and Feeling at Home

According to Agnes Heller (1984), “integral to the average everyday life is awareness of a fixed point in space, a firm position from which we ‘proceed’ (whether every day or over larger periods of time) and to which we return in due. This firm position is what we call ‘home’” (239). Indeed, one’s home is both a place of origin and a destination that is longed for after a busy day, a weary journey, or even an enjoyable vacation. It is satisfying to be able to say and really mean that “it’s good to be back home,” even if the home needs repair. A nomad would object to Heller’s way of thinking because for this lived body the simultaneous nature of the home as a “place of origin” and “destination” does not fit into the nomad’s way of being in the world; a nomad’s home is mobile, forever changing with every move.

The conception of a home as “origin and destination” is confirmed by religion. As part of a related research project, I am permitted to join a devout Christian family of three sisters and a brother when they visit their dying mother in a hospice facility. The children are singing hymns. The mother opens her eyes and assures her children, “Don’t worry my loves. I am going home to my Maker.” I wanted to ask what this home looked like and how it functioned. Given the situation, the question would have been quite inappropriate: the wrong words spoken in the wrong way and wrong time, thus risking the chance of having the whole family not feel at home with my interruption. I imagined later what the family could have said in response with sharp-witted rhetoric. First, their annoyance: “Please sir, have a heart.” Then, the biting humor: “For remember, home is where the heart is.” And if the American clergyman and social reformer Charles Henry Parkhurst was in the room, then he could have added a bit of rhetoric of his own: “Home interprets heaven. Home is heaven for beginners” (Quarantine Memories NOTES 2020, 1).

Parkhurst also brings to mind the importance of the educational environment of home. The home promotes our well-being by providing a refuge wherein one can feel more confident when learning how to cope with the difficulties of everyday life. The home is a place where youth learn to crawl, walk, talk, eat, play, converse, be good and bad, and to care for others who are busy caring for them as they teach their loved ones all kinds of things. As one inhabits a home, it in turn begins and continues to inhabit oneself. Hence, for example, the possibility of becoming upset with a guest’s table manners and wondering if he “was raised in a pig sty.” Our bodies are home to our home’s ways of being a social, political, moral, and, like it or not, unforgettable environment. Do you know people who were raised in a “loving” home only to become disgusting creatures that do not “give a damn”? I was raised to appreciate rhetorical questions.

This is not to say, however, that a dwelling place no longer qualifies as being a home if it lacks any of the qualities of perfection mentioned earlier. The perfect home will be different for each person, depending on his or her needs and personality. Liz Arnold (2012) makes the point this way when commenting on the values of a “perfectly imperfect” home: Some people

dislike homes that look too perfect and unlived-in. But embracing imperfection does not mean anything goes—it means realizing that a house needs signs of life. When I was growing up, my home was neat and attractive, but it had no soul: no memento was ever brought back from holiday, no flowers ever stuck in a vase. (10)

Despite its loss of soul, the house still displayed signs of life with loving parents. Or consider this: A student of mine, an anorexic, once told me that she did not feel at home when she went home because her parents were always giving her grief about her weight and physical appearance. She remedied the problem when she retreated to her bedroom, where she could feel at home as she spent hours late into the night on her computer, hooking up with other anorexics who reinforced her lifestyle while remaining silent about how this lifestyle eventually leads to death. Homes can make people not feel at home with themselves and others. A home within a home can solve the problem, even if it fosters unhealthy behavior.

However, sometimes the discovery of a home proves impossible and the consequences are horrendous—hence, the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the home confinement of families and their members suffering emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression (Rodríguez-Fernández 2021). The pandemic taught us a lesson: a home loses something of its character, its ethos, when its comfort becomes confinement. As was the case with my anorexic student, home computers and social media did allow for an outlet, but confinement still held its ground and proved deadly.

We need homes, a dwelling place, where at the very least some degree of comfort can be found and one can thereby feel at home in the environment at hand. Walking in a forest, attending a concert, hanging out in a neighborhood with your “homies.” The examples are many. One that typically is not referenced in discussions of the scope and function of the home is how a home can form in the hearts and minds of people at a funeral as they listen to a eulogy of epideictic grandeur that remains memorable in the lives of the attendees, is always there on the right occasion to stir others to speech or to action. By way of our minds and hearts we provide accommodations that enable the dearly departed to come back to life, to be there with us, and to guide us as we carry on their teachings. Here on earth, our lived bodies offer a home for the dead. As the speaker offers unqualified praise to family members and friends, she constructs a home where personal relationships and strong family ties can flourish and where people can know together the truth of whatever calls for concerned thought and thoughtful behavior. Feeling at home with the truth and others is an honorable way to live.

In his recent book *On Truth*, Harry G. Frankfurt (2017) emphasizes the relationship between truth and home:

To the extent that we grasp the truths that we need to know, we can develop sensible judgments concerning what we would like to happen, and concerning the outcomes to which various possible courses of action will probably lead. This is because we are then more or less fully aware of what we are dealing with, and because we know how the objects and events that would be implicated in our following one course of action or another will respond to

what we do. In a certain part of the world, we are therefore able to move about feeling somewhat more relaxed and secure. We know what the important constituents of our environment are, we know where to find them, and we can maneuver freely without bumping into things. In that region of the world, we can begin—so to speak—to feel ourselves at home. (56–57)

Frankfurt notes, however, that the home in which we find ourselves may not be a very attractive or inviting locale. Rather, “it may be riddled with terrifying pitfalls and traps. . . . Far from our being *fully confident* in facing what awaits us, we may have no confidence whatever that we will succeed in negotiating it effectively, or even that we will be able to get through it alive” (56–57). Still, Frankfurt maintains that

it is nearly always more advantageous to *face* the facts with which we must deal than to remain ignorant of them. After all, hiding our eyes from reality will not cause any reduction of its dangers and threats; plus, our chances of dealing successfully with the hazards that it presents will surely be greater if we can bring ourselves to see things straight. (56–57, italics in the original)

In short, for Frankfurt, knowing the truth is more important than feeling at home with it, though it is nice to have both the truth and the feeling of being at home. And sometimes we will tell lies designed to have others believe we are telling the truth so that they can feel at home with us and themselves, no matter the disgusting consequences.

We need homes. This need is rooted in how we exist as metaphysical creatures, who, in having to deal with the uncertainty of our temporal existence and the anxiety that such uncertainty inspires, have developed a passionate longing for some degree of meaning, order, and completeness or perfection in our lives. This metaphysical urge is at work, for example, as religious souls pray to God, scientists formulate mathematical equations in an attempt to identify the ultimate laws of the universe, and philosophers try to determine the meaning of being. Such endeavors display what William Earle (1976) describes as “a nostalgia for something final and absolute” (157). This description is especially appropriate in that the feeling identified here—“nostalgia,” from the Greek *nostos*, meaning “to return home”—speaks of that state of being wherein one is “homesick.” Such sickness threatens the health of human beings. Concerned with the seriousness of this threat, Akiko Busch (1999) writes, “There are times when the very idea of home seems an impossible proposition. There are other times when our homes express infinite possibilities, when they reflect exactly who we are and what we might be” (11). Busch elaborates on this expressive function when she notes that a home has

a language of its own, one that includes not only the slight sounds, hums, and vibrations of all the electrical appliances that keep it going, but a host of other interior systems, a network of social and cultural currents, those habits, beliefs, and values that also make it function. (14)

Busch contends “that by being attuned to all these systems . . . we might arrive at some genuine understanding of what it is that gives power to the places we live” (161).

The existential philosopher William Barrett argues that what gives power to all the homes referred to so far is another home, one that makes possible the existence of our everyday homes, be they perfect or hellish or anywhere in between. Barrett (1990) writes:

We may chatter about alienation as a cultural or social phenomenon, but all such talk falls short of the deepest dimension in which man is a stranger in his universe. And yet this dimension of strangeness is the peculiar home where he is drawn closest to all that is. (154)

This home is not a human creation but comes to us as the spatial and temporal function of our existence—that function that we measure with our clocks, calendars, maps, and computers but is always other than what these measures report. Besides what astrophysicists can tell us about what happened 13.7 billion years ago when the big bang occurred, the origins of the dimension remain a mystery. Nevertheless, the presence of the dimension, its otherness, is an empirical phenomenon that we are fated to face on a daily basis and, as Barrett puts it, deal with the “burden” posed by its constant presence. Barrett continues:

Is it too great, amid our other anxieties, for us to carry? It makes us feel more homeless within the world than any animal can be. Yet is it altogether a burden? Is it not rather a gift too? It is given to us and to no other animal to stand with the mystery. It claims us as its own and we are at home there where no other animal can be. Tonight the stars shine overhead like old and reliable friends. This cosmos is ours to the degree that we are still able to be enthralled by its stupendous presence. (154)

To be enthralled is to be called by and emotionally attuned to the showing (the call for attention) and saying (how the showing speaks to who, how, and why we are) of the presence of some object of consciousness, the way it is disclosing its being, its truth. I now turn to Heidegger, Levinas, and Arnett to clarify and elaborate on this point and its significance.

Heidegger, Levinas, and Arnett

The home heralded by Barrett is what Heidegger, in his ontological analysis of the meaning and truth of Being, describes as the fundamental dwelling place (*ethos*) of human being, which as briefly noted above is fundamentally a process of becoming, grounded in the otherness of our spatial and temporal existence, and whose trajectory opens us to the objective uncertainty of the future. We are this openness, which is forever presenting us with the possibility of change, of things being otherwise than usual, of how what is yet to come in our lives may require us, for *truth*'s sake, to rethink and revise what we currently hold to be correct about our ongoing commitments, involvements, and interpretive practices. Owing to the

objective uncertainty of the future, our self-assured beliefs regarding what we claim to know about ourselves, others, and the world in general are always being called into question, whereby the security, stability, and comfort of our feeling at home with ourselves and others is disrupted. What can happen tomorrow? Who can say for sure?

The call of the spatial and temporal fabric of human being discloses itself “in silence” to the self living it. This nonverbal act of communication and revelation is what is “talked about” with the happening of the call: “the givenness” (Hyde 2001, 41), the “bare ‘that-it-is’” of the self’s existence (Heidegger 1962, 321). This primal happening marks the original instance of language. And so, Heidegger (1977) will say, as noted earlier, “Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell.” We dwell in the spatial and temporal fabric of a primal state of otherness.

The presence of any object of existence also sounds a call for attention, for this presence, like the call of the spatial and temporal fabric of human being, is a *showing*, a disclosing and revealing of the givenness of the object’s actually being present here and now. The Pulitzer prize-winning author Annie Dillard (1988) emphasizes the importance of our being ready and willing to witness this disclosure in the search for truth:

If we were not here, material events like the passage of seasons would lack even the meager meanings we are able to muster for them. The show would play [not to a home but] to an empty house, as do all those falling stars which fall in the daytime. (90–91)

Hearing the happening here enhances one’s ability to be attuned to the truth disclosed in the silent showing and nonverbal saying of objects of consciousness. This showing and saying is the primal being of language at work in the spatial and temporal fabric of human being, the home of all other homes.

At a certain point you say to the woods, to the sea, to the mountains, to the world, “Now I am ready. Now I will stop and be wholly attentive.” You empty yourself and wait, listening. After a time, you hear it: there is nothing there. There is nothing but those things only, those created objects, discrete, growing or holding, or swaying, being rained on or raining, held, flooding, or ebbing, standing, or spreading. You feel the world’s word as a tension, a hum, a single chorused note everywhere the same. This is it: this hum is silence. Nature does utter a peep, just this one. (Dillard 1988, 90–91)

The philosopher Jean-Louis Chretien’s (2004) way of making this point is captivating: “Our eyes are able to watch over the call that rises from things and truly see things only because they have heard it” (83). Whatever we see and hear takes place in the openness of existence and the question it raises: Are you sure?

A question is an interruption. It follows, then, that along with its call for perfectibility, openness, and acknowledging the truth of otherness, the home of human being is fundamentally an interruption; it never stops putting us and our beliefs to the test; it never ceases bringing to mind the issue of contingency. The interruption that we are speaks to us of how existence is always completely incomplete, perfectly imperfect. The interruption that we are is a question always

being asked. And so again and again: Are you sure? The questioning function of our existence is a reality check: it calls us to perfect our capacity to be as receptive and open-minded as possible to the ways the world speaks and shows its truths and to think and act in accordance with these truths, at least for the time being. The call thus speaks to us of an ethical responsibility that becomes all the more apparent as we attempt to be true to our openness. Hence, in so doing, the call shows itself to be a perfective impulse at work in the presence of human existence. We are called to improve, better, and perfect ourselves (from the Latin *perficere*: *per*, “thoroughly,” and *facere*, “to make”). Endowed with this passion, we are fated to struggle with the ever-present challenge of being as “complete” as we can be as we grow, mature, and become wise with experience. Responding to this call is the original calling (vocation) of human being. Before we take on any other vocation, we are homemakers. The home of human being can be a brutal place to be, but its instructional directives warrant praise for their ethical and democratic function. Hence, we can agree with Barrett’s earlier noted claim that the home of all other homes is a “gift.”

The effort needed to deal with this ever-present state of being called involves people in the construction of dwelling places or worlds of meaning where a more stable and comfortable way of existence is created and maintained, at least for the time being, and where they can feel at home in their environmental surroundings and engagements. Heidegger, for example, looks to van Gogh’s painting of shoes to illustrate the function of the call. The painting provides a dwelling place where witnesses can be touched and moved by the showing of its presence and with this showing what it has to say to us. Heidegger sounds a call to others about the painting’s significance and thereby assists in maintaining the value of van Gogh’s own awe-inspiring response to a call that is now announced by the presence of shoes. All serious writers struggle with their involvement in the showing, saying, and recalling activity of communicating to others the truth of their concerns. The home of human being calls for development of rhetorical skills: discovering and using the right words, in the right way, and at the right time in order to be persuasive about whatever truth concerns you.

All that I am saying here is accounted for by Heidegger throughout his works as he develops an appreciation of the relationship between home and language. An earlier noted quotation deserves repeating: “Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of being insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying.” Heidegger wants us to hear the call and speak the truth (as he struggles to do with his philosophy). He is answering a call that lies at the heart of human being, which shows and says of itself to be a dwelling place, a primal home that we cannot live without.

Communication is called for by the educational directives of this home, a call that is associated with what Heidegger (1962) describes as a “call of conscience” (see Hyde 2001): a knowing (Latin, *scientia*) together with others (*con*). Heidegger gave a seminar on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in 1924 where he examined everyday communication behavior in private and public life and the practice of rhetoric that

enhances its effectiveness. The rhetorically informed activity of knowing together is not optional for a species that must engage in the activity in order to maintain and promote the well-being of its members. As I have noted elsewhere, this

rhetorical act defines its “architectural” function: how, for example, its practice grants such living room to our lives that we might feel more at home with others and our surroundings. The practice of rhetoric would have one appreciate how the premises and other materials of arguments are not only tools of logic but also mark out the boundaries and domains of thought that, depending on how their specific discourses are designed and arranged, may be particularly inviting and moving for some audience. (Hyde 2011, 37)

The practice of rhetoric makes use of our inventive and symbolic capacity to construct dwelling places that are stimulating and aesthetically, socially, and perhaps theologically instructive. We are creatures who are destined to be caught up in the process of providing the openings of these places where good (and bad) things can happen. These venues serve the purposes of those who would perfect the world, heal the nation, or care for others. The call that lies at the heart of human existence demands as much. We are homemakers, beings who, as noted above, need to develop the skill of discovering and using the right words, in the right way, and at the write time in order to be persuasive about whatever truth concerns us.

As homemakers instructed by the call of the primal home of our being, we are challenged to be true to our openness, to acknowledge the showing and saying of the truth, to be competent in our rhetorical and architectural use of discourse, to value our interruptive nature, to engage in the democratic struggle for perfection, and to be ethically responsible toward others. The call of the primal home of human being challenges us with instructional directives that serve our homemaking ability and that grant moral integrity to the practice of communication ethics. Heidegger uses the term “resoluteness” to characterize the self’s decision to respond to the call (Heidegger 1962, 344). Resoluteness does not isolate the self from others; rather it “pushes [the self] into solicitous Being-with Others” (344). Elaborating on this point, Heidegger offers the following important observation: A human being’s

resoluteness towards itself is what first makes it possible to let Others who are with it “be” in their own potentiality-for-Being, and to co-disclose this potentiality in the solicitude which leaps forth and liberates. When [a human being] is resolute, it can become the “conscience” of Others. Only by authentically Being-their-selves in resoluteness can people authentically be with one another—not by ambiguous and jealous stipulations and talkative fraternizing in the “they” and in what “they” want to undertake. (344–45)

Heidegger uses the term “the ‘they’” to describe the others that are involved in this way of being. The term is typically employed in a demeaning way, associated with the world of “publicness” and its “mass”-like (Plato), “crowd”-like (Kierkegaard), and “herd”-like (Nietzsche) propensity to bring about a mindless

conformism amongst its adherents. For example, Heidegger notes that in our publicness

the real dictatorship of the “they” is unfolded. We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* . . . take pleasure; we read, see and judge about literature and are as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the “great mass” as *they* shrink back; we find “shocking” what *they* find shocking. . . . In this averageness with which [the “they”] prescribes what can and may be ventured, it keeps watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore. Every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed. Overnight, everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known. Everything gained by a struggle becomes just something to be manipulated. (Heidegger 1962, 164–65)

For the most part, Heidegger displays much phenomenological talent when disclosing the ontological workings of the primordial home of Being. Where he falls short in this task is developing an in-depth analysis of how resoluteness promotes the self’s interpersonal and ethical relationship with others. What would be especially helpful is a case-based assessment of how the practice of rhetoric called for by the primal home of human being as described above can be an antidote for the disease of mindless conformism.

This lack of attention of the interpersonal, an ethical relationship between the self and the Other, serves as a major impetus for the philosophy of Levinas, who would have us understand that it is the otherness of the Other, not the otherness of the spatial and temporal fabric of human being, that defines the dwelling place of our primal home in existence and where the original showing and saying of truth occurs. The presence of the Other, or what Levinas terms the “face of the Other,” is for him the origin of the earlier noted instructional directives informing our homemaking ability. Levinas interprets the otherness of the Other as an existential phenomenon of transcendence that he maintains is an indication of G-d’s presence in our lives. Responding (“Here I am!”) to the call (“Where art thou?”) of the Other, we dwell in a relationship that defines the original ethically informed home. As Arnett (2017) puts it, “The face of the Other functions as an original dwelling, a primal home for the possibility of transcendence” (73). Moreover, the ethics that is central to Levinas’s philosophy “dwells in a home composed of unending responsibility for the Other” (Arnett 2017, 173).

In his reading of Levinas, Arnett grants home a status that is true to the philosopher’s words, although Levinas’s analysis of the matter is more comprehensive. For example, in his most celebrated book *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas (1969) tells us that “The home . . . serve[s] for habitation as the hammer for the driving in a nail or the pen for writing. For it does belong to the gear consisting of things necessary for the life of man. It serves to shelter him from the inclemencies of the weather, to hide him from enemies or the importunate. And yet, within the system of finalities in which human life maintains itself the home occupies a privileged place” (152). The home defines a realm of “interiority” where “the primary hospitable welcome” and “intimacy” are offered to the Other (155). The home thus warrants acknowledgment as being a dwelling place of genuine

openness for the practice of acknowledgment and where it can be said, as Levinas (1991) does elsewhere, “‘Thanks to God’ I am another for the others” (158).

Be it at home or elsewhere, the face of the Other, in its mere presence before it subscribes to the socially circumscribed rituals of self-presentation, is its own good showing—a showing that is good first and foremost because it speaks of the miracle of the meaning and mystery of life and, in so doing, grants the self a dwelling place where ethical behavior and moral integrity can be practiced and developed. Levinas (1989) would have us keep in mind that

The proximity of the other is the face’s meaning, and it means from the very start in a way that goes beyond those [media created] plastic forms which forever try to cover the face like a mask of their presence to perception. But always the face shows through these forms. Prior to any particular expression and beneath all particular expressions, which cover over and protect with an immediately adopted face or countenance, there is the nakedness and destitution of the expression as such, that is to say extreme exposure, defenselessness, vulnerability itself . . . The Other becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me [with its interrupting call of conscience], and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question. (82–83)

And the more we learn to respect this call the more we can feel at home with its presence, with what it shows and says of its truth.

The saying of the face speaks of otherness; its call is the primal discourse that the face announces and that Levinas (1987b) describes as the original “event of communication” (125) that occurs between the Other and the self. The event is nonverbal communication in its most original form. Arnett (2017) thus claims that “Silence is the home of saying” (106); although, as indicated above, the claim is first made by Heidegger when describing the communication that comes from the interruption sounded by the otherness, the original homeland, of our spatial and temporal existence. The difference, however, is important. Levinas is talking about the self-Other relationship, not the self’s relationship with its own interruptive nature. The face speaks, and the self is made aware of an “exposure” (a showing) of otherness coming from the presence of the Other. Levinas (1969) refers to this evocative event as the “epiphany of the face” (199) from which emerges a “call of conscience” (a knowing together) (see Hyde 2001). The importance of this call and its educational value cannot be overemphasized in Levinas’s philosophy. The call defines an act of “teaching” that informs the self about the status of its existence and its obligation to serve the Other. Levinas (1984) offers what I take to be his most explicit description of this process when he notes:

I am defined as a subjectivity, a particular person, as an “I” [or self], precisely because I am exposed to the other. It is my inescapable and incontrovertible answerability to the other that makes me an individual “I.” So that I become a responsible or ethical “I” to the extent that I agree to depose or dethrone myself—to abdicate my position of centrality—in favor of the vulnerable other. . . . The ethical “I” is subjectivity precisely in so far as it kneels before the other, sacrificing its own liberty *to the more primordial call of the other*. . . . I

can never escape the fact that the other has demanded a response from me before I affirm my freedom not to respond to his demand. (62–63)

Levinas grants priority to the primal home of the otherness of the Other, not to the primal home of the otherness of the spatial and temporal fabric of the self's existence. But is it not the case that in listening to the face, to its voice, to the call of the Other, so as to come to terms with the question of ethics, Levinas is giving thought, albeit in a restricted way, to what Heidegger has to say about the primal home of human being? I have not forced the issue until now: Heidegger deciphers the scope and function of the home and its directives of saying, showing, truth, conscience, acknowledgment, openness, perfection, interruption, language, communication, and rhetoric. Levinas (1994) appropriates these directives in his analysis of the primal home of ethics, but listen to what he has to say about the "truth" of rhetoric:

Rhetoric brings into the meaning in which it culminates a certain beauty, a certain elevation, a certain nobility and an expressivity that imposes itself independently of its truth. Even more than verisimilitude, that beauty we call eloquence seduces the listener.

Clearly in our time the effects of eloquence are everywhere, dominating our entire lives . . . The media of information in all forms—written, spoken, visual—invade the home, keep people listening to an endless discourse, submit them to the seduction of a rhetoric that is only possible if it is eloquent and persuasive in portraying ideas and things too beautiful to be true. (138–39)

Levinas's understanding of rhetoric is sophomoric. Heidegger never spoke of rhetoric in this way, although it is not hard to imagine that he would associate such rhetoric with the world of the "they." But as should be clear by now, this is not the rhetoric that Heidegger favors and that is announced and called for by the primal home of human being. With Levinas's understanding of rhetoric in mind, one wonders how Arnett can speak so positively of Levinas's teachings about the "rhetorical demand" announced by the face of the Other. As best as I can tell it is possible, but only if this demand is understood to originate in the gift of the showing and the saying of the primal home of the spatial and temporal fabric of human being. Despite Arnett's (2017) praiseworthy reading of Levinas, a judgment on the matter is clear. Levinas's use of the right words, in the right way, and at the right time is far less original than he and Arnett would have us believe. Jacques Derrida's (1978) response to Levinas supports this claim: Any discussion of the otherness of the Other presupposes that the Other exists first and foremost in the primal home of the spatial and temporal fabric of human being. Put another way, Levinas could not argue his position unless he was already dwelling in this primal home and seeing and hearing what it has to show and say. Or think of it this way: For Levinas, the self's existence is dependent on the Other. But the Other has to be a self before it is the Other, otherwise there would be no Other to call the self into question.

Despite this critique of Levinas, however, I strongly believe that his philosophy warrants high praise for its commitment to appreciating the ethical nature and truth of the Other; I feel the same way about Arnett's book on Levinas. A commitment to securing the ethical and truthful treatment of others should be unending (see Hyde 2001, 2018; Smith and Hyde 2022). Along with Levinas, Arnett is a model for the commitment that is required to take on the task with all of one's heart. Heidegger neglected this commitment in his philosophy, which caused him much grief and shame given his brief association with National Socialism in the early 1930s. This neglect can be rather stunning whenever Levinas (1969) emphasizes the topic of "suffering" to illustrate the plight of others who are desperately in need of help (see Hyde 2001, 2006).

Where Art Thou? Here I Am!

In concluding this essay, I offer a case that allows me to relate in a positive way the thinking of Heidegger, Levinas, and Arnett. The case marks one of the most important moments in the history of Jewish thought: Moses' conversation with G-d on Mount Sinai. Heidegger, Levinas, and Arnett have an interest in religion.⁸

When Moses first stands in G-d's light, the burning bush, and is told that the Jewish people have a future, he asks for G-d's "Name" and is told, "*Ehyeh-asher-ehyeh*." English renders this reply in a static way: "I am who I am." In Hebrew, however, the dynamic of being open to the future is unequivocal: "I shall be who I shall be." G-d's name is ambiguous. So, what is the case? Is the Word a static, all-in-one, never-changing, complete and thus perfect presence, or is this presence rightly understood as a dynamic happening whereby "the whole truth and nothing but the truth" is yet to come? The static and the dynamic depiction of the Word need not oppose each other, for it is possible to hear the name calling for attention by saying "I am what I shall be." In this case, the dynamic takes priority. According to Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, "Here is a Name (and a God), who is neither completed nor finished. This God is literally not yet" (Kushner 1993, 28).

G-d needs acknowledgment and help in materializing the future; hence, G-d's reply to Moses, which admits as much. The perfection of G-d's being ("I am") is still in the process of becoming ("I shall be") whatever it is. We have a responsibility to answer the call for both G-d's sake and our own. G-d needs our assistance to achieve this goal. According to Rabbi Marc-Alain Quaknin, as human beings accept the responsibility of offering this assistance, their "ethic is no longer that of perfection but of perfectability" (Quaknin 2000, 200). Not being G-d, that is the best we can do for the One who, with an awesome interruption of nothingness—what was there before the big bang—acknowledged our existence in the beginning. We return the favor by heeding G-d's call for help. Rabbi Abraham Heschel's way of phrasing the last point is noteworthy: "All of human history as described in the Bible may be summarized in one phrase: *God is in search*

⁸ Arnett is the former editor of the *Journal of Communication and Religion*.

of man" (Heschel 1955, 136). Rhetoric plays an important role in achieving this result. G-d employs the rhetorical device of ambiguity to initiate the interruption that makes us wonder about all that perfection entails. A moment of communication ethics is unmistakable.

I think it is fair to say that what is going on here is a particular use of the perfectionist impulse of language. G-d warrants acknowledgment for demonstrating a high level of rhetorical competence. G-d is an orator of the first degree. G-d employs the right word (name), in the right way (ambiguity), and at the right time (given the trials and tribulations of Moses and his people) to call attention to what G-d's name names: the truth of its Presence and the concerned thought and behavior that it calls for in order to respect the most holy instance of otherness to be found in the cosmos. Following G-d's ways, we thus have an obligation to perfect our ability to be rhetorically competent—a mainstay of communication ethics. With G-d as our audience, not considering this matter is out of the question. The truth of perfection, of G-d, is on the line.

With G-d's name and what its saying entails, we have directives that were first introduced in Heidegger's analysis of the primal home of human existence: interruption, rhetorical competence, the call of conscience, acknowledgment, perfectibility, openness, language, and truth. It might thus be said that the ontological workings of our being are designed to have us think about and work in the ways of One who asks the question, "Where art thou?" The following remarks of Heidegger are relevant.

Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word "God" is to signify . . . How can man at the present stage of world history ask at all seriously and rigorously whether the god nears or withdraws, when he has above all neglected to think into the dimension in which alone that question can be asked? (Heidegger 1977, 230)

Although writing long before Heidegger, the radical Christian philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1999) saw the light: "The essential sermon is one's own existence" (263). And this existence is the primal home of human being. It might be said that G-d structured existence in such a way to have us consider G-d's presence whenever the truths that we hold so dear are interrupted and we are wise enough to ask: Are you sure? The question grants Levinas a chance to respond to Heidegger.

G-d is present in existence: "I shall be what I shall be." The primal home exists because G-d made it so. Otherness begets otherness. And it is the presence of others and their interruptive influence that, for Levinas, grants them special significance in the dwelling place of the primal home of human being. Recall Arnett's earlier cited reading of Levinas: "The face of the Other functions as an original dwelling, a primal home for the possibility of transcendence." And the original presence of ethics "dwells in a home composed of unending responsibility for the Other." To repeat part of an earlier noted claim by Levinas: "I am defined as a subjectivity, as a particular person, as an 'I,' precisely because I am exposed

to the other. It is my incontrovertible answerability to the other that makes me an individual 'I.' . . . I can never escape the fact that the other has demanded a response from me before I affirm my freedom not to respond to his demand."

For Levinas, the Other is a major interruptive and ethical force in the life of a self and a sign of G-d's presence in the spatial and temporal directives of the home of all homes. Levinas (1987a) thus assures us that "the other must be closer to God than I" (56; see also Hyde 2006, 134). Heidegger disclosed many of these directives, Levinas never admitted as much, Arnett followed suit, but both Levinas and Arnett confirmed and added additional directives: respect for the Other and the transcendence of G-d.

Being true to what I have argued here, the question must be asked: Are you sure? I believe so, at least for the time being. The conversation should continue. I have encouraged this conversation with the help of many case studies included in a number of my books. My endeavors abide by what Arnett describes as "the unending obligation of communication ethics."⁹ The task is forever at hand. I am what I shall be. I have grounded this obligation in the home of all other homes, which I believe is composed of the primal home of the otherness of the spatial and temporal workings of human being *and* the primal home of the otherness of the Other. The two go together, otherwise each harbors deficiencies that call into question their integrity. It is important to hear and answer the call for oneself and for the Other. Where art thou? Here I am! It's good to be home.

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⁹ See, for example, Hyde's *The Call of Conscience: Heidegger and Levinas, Rhetoric and the Euthanasia Debate* (2001, 119–263), *The Life-Giving Gift of Acknowledgment* (2006, 98–221), *Perfection: Coming to Terms with Being Human* (2010, 181–210), *The Interruption that We Are: The Health of the Lived Body, Narrative, and Public Moral Argument* (2018, 84–140), and Craig R. Smith and Michael J. Hyde's (2022) *The Call: Eloquence in the Service of Truth* (1–28, 203–26).

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Avoiding Fantasy Documents in Pre-Crisis Planning through Imaginative Analysis and an Ethic of Inclusivity

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Abstract: Ronald C. Arnett’s robust work on civil dialogue identifies both the problems and solutions for achieving civil dialogue in crisis communication. Embracing fantasy over imaginative solutions to crisis planning and response heightens the risk of failure. Still, many government agencies are lured into embracing the false sense of security provided by fantasy documents. This essay highlights the holy sparks of truth, described by Arnett in his analysis of works by Arendt and Levinas, as they offer the means for eschewing fantasy and embracing imaginative crisis planning based on civil dialogue.

Keywords: crisis communication; risk communication; crisis planning; dialogue; pandemic

Introduction

“Some will say this discussion of the Avian Flu is an overreaction. Some may say, ‘Did we cry wolf?’ The reality is if the H5N1 virus does not trigger pandemic flu, there will be another virus that will” (Estes 2019, para. 1). This statement was made by Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt in November 2005 after fears that a new strain of influenza, known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H1N5), would begin spreading among humans and cause a global pandemic. This concern became the impetus for the National Infrastructure and Advisory Council (NIAC) to establish a task force formally titled the Prioritization of Critical Infrastructure for a Pandemic Outbreak in the United States Working Group. The final document produced by this group, titled *Final Reports and Recommendations by the Council*, was published on January 16, 2007, and represents the efforts of professionals from three key areas: healthcare, infrastructure, and food and agriculture. The three team co-chairs included

Rebecca Denlinger, a fire chief, Martha Marsh, a hospital CEO, and Bruce Rohde, the former CEO of ConAgra Foods, Inc.

As the world now knows, Secretary Leavitt was (mostly) correct. A global pandemic did come to fruition a decade later, though its cause, a novel coronavirus, differed from the working group's assumed source, influenza. Despite that difference, the document reads as if the working group members had a crystal ball. They correctly predicted many aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic including, for example, the need to stockpile and strategically disseminate personal protective equipment (PPE) and the extended time needed to develop and deploy a vaccine.

One major section of the plan that focused on the Food and Agriculture sector failed to predict the scope and impact a global pandemic would have on that sector's entities. Because of these shortcomings, this document could be considered what Clarke (1999) calls a "fantasy document"—a document underestimating the challenges and overestimating the response capacity of the agriculture industry to human pandemic. The industry's slow response to the rapid spread of COVID-19 among its workers forced processing plants to close and resulted in hundreds of thousands of animals being euthanized. This general disregard for worker safety is unambiguous evidence that the pre-crisis planning of the agriculture industry created more "security theatre" than meaningful protection (Schneier 2006, 38).

Although the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the global emergency over on May 5, 2023, learning from industry failures in responding to COVID-19 remains a high priority among the food and agriculture industry. For example, the reemergence and rapid spread of bird flu (H5N1) in the US, Europe, and Asia has health officials around the globe "on high alert" (Dekimpe 2023, para. 9). The H5N1 disease spreads quickly and is capable of destroying entire flocks in a matter of days. Although this pathogen has not yet easily spread to and among humans, the fundamental fear is that its increasing prevalence is creating ample opportunities for the virus to mutate into a highly transmissible and potentially life-threatening human disease (Penn 2023).

In this analysis, we first summarize how and why crisis planning can result in fantasy documents that increase rather than decrease potential risks and intensity crises that cause notable harm. We then characterize the creation and promotion of such documents as an ethical violation. Specifically, we turn to Ronald C. Arnett's (2013; 2017) distillation of the ethical standards voiced by Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas to articulate the ethical lapses inherent in fantastical pre-crisis plans. Next, we illustrate how the global pandemic working group plan functioned as a fantasy document that failed to provide an adequate reflection of best practices and ethical expectations for crisis communication. We end by proposing recommendations for crisis planners who aspire to meaningful and ethical pre-crisis plans grounded in imagination rather than fantasy. Thus, we honor Arnett's work by offering his wisdom as it informs effective pre-crisis planning and communication.

Fantasy Documents and Pre-Crisis Planning

Pre-crisis planning is identified specifically as a widely recognized best practice for risk and crisis communication (e.g., Seeger 2006; Seeger and Sellnow 2019). Doing so involves “identifying risk areas and corresponding risk reduction, pre-setting initial crisis responses so that decision making during a crisis is more efficient, and identifying necessary response resources” and is essential “for the management of risk and the prevention of crisis” (Seeger 2006, 237). Engaging in pre-crisis planning often produces physical products (e.g., risk plans and related documents). However, it is only effective when the process is continuous and the products are updated and revised regularly based on new insights (Seeger and Sellnow 2019).

The inevitable need to accept uncertainty and ambiguity in pre-crisis planning is also acknowledged in the best practices of crisis communication (Seeger 2006; Seeger and Sellnow 2019). Because crises, by their nature, are unpredictable and non-routine events, creating a plan that will adequately address all aspects of an unforeseen event is impossible. For this reason, Eriksson and McConnell (2011) caution against casting too much blame on crisis planners for the failures incurred during the acute phase of a crisis, while also acknowledging that “contingency planning for crisis is neither a simple recipe for success nor a crude political fantasy” (98). That said, however, failing to engage in pre-crisis planning is likely to contribute to far more dramatic failures during a crisis. Thus, pre-crisis planning is a risk and crisis communication best practice.

Our concern in this analysis, however, focuses on planning documents that are overly optimistic and, thus, unlikely to yield the results they claim, or on planning documents that are based on accurate content but, when enacted, are highly unlikely to protect those at risk. Eriksson and McConnell (2011) point to the Exxon Valdez oil disaster as a clear example of such unsuccessful pre-crisis planning. The authors conclude that Exxon’s failed crisis response was the result of a plan that read like “complete fiction” (93). Another compelling example is the pre-crisis plan in place prior to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill. When oil began gushing into the Gulf of Mexico, the company’s futile response revealed the inadequacy of their pre-crisis plan.

Clarke (1999) coined the term “fantasy documents” to refer to crisis plans that create a perception of crisis readiness; but are, in fact, unfeasible, insincere, or both. Clarke explains that fantasy documents function rhetorically to reduce fear by creating an appearance of control and safety where such control and safety are unattainable or by disingenuously implying their intention to fully implement the document’s recommendations if a crisis erupts. Thus, crisis plans based on fantasy documents make organizations less prepared for a crisis than those that realistically acknowledge limitations in both capacity and willingness to act. As Clarke explains, “the antithesis of a fantasy document is the forthright admission that risk and danger are being created . . . as well as an honest appraisal of the uncertainties our organizations create” (171). Clarke laments, however, that “we

don't have many leaders" who are willing to take "full responsibility for putting people at risk" (171).

Birkland (2009) expanded on Clarke's work by exposing the use of fantasy documents in the "lessons learned" reports often produced in the wake of a disaster. Disasters can be learning opportunities for organizations when they engage in close examinations about what happened in all phases of the event. Too often, however, these post-crisis investigations fail to stimulate meaningful actions based on lessons learned. Birkland (2009) identifies several examples of post-crisis lessons learned about process failures. First, post-crisis actions can be taken without or prior to conducting a "lessons learned" investigation. Thus, they are not necessarily based on a complete review of the evidence. Second, an investigation can be manipulated to justify policy changes made to serve the interests of those in control rather than to improve crisis planning and response. These post-crisis investigations can also fail to generate any meaningful policy changes at all, or the implemented changes can be ignored or forgotten over time. Each of these failures reveals how investigative "lessons learned" reports conducted in the aftermath of crises can easily digress into fantasy documents.

When crisis plans "provide the feeling of security *instead of* the reality, they are nothing more than *security theater*" (Schneier 2006, 38, italics in the original). Security theatre can function rhetorically as an enactment of fantasy documents intended to mask true threats. The woefully inadequate crisis plan implemented by BP in response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill (Arnett et al. 2017) is an example of security theatre. The company took action, but those actions did not meaningfully address the source of the crisis.

Security theatre, however, is not always intended to deceive. Security theatre plans can be appropriate, for instance, in conditions of overwhelming uncertainty and adversity as long as they do not increase potential threats or harm. Schneier (2006) argues some plans are designed primarily to provide reassurance to stakeholders and concerned publics that those with resources and responsibility are doing something, albeit imperfect, about a worrisome threat. For example, the temporary use of heavily armed military in boarding areas of airports in the weeks after 9/11 likely did more to create a sense of safety in the minds of American travelers than to prevent new attacks. Schneier (2006) asserts that this form of security theater is forthright in its intention to create "the feeling of security" (38). Ironically, security theater can be used to mask real threats and as a well-intended and innocuous reassurance in response to risk.

Thus, at their worst, fantasy documents are used by organizations to deceive and "assuage those who would challenge their construction of reality: citizen groups, social movements, and the occasional recalcitrant regulatory agency" (Perrow 1996, 375). They may be enacted in the form of security theatre that does not meaningfully address the threat at all. At their best, however, fantasy documents may be enacted in the form of security theater that is well-intentioned and assuring, but largely symbolic.

This conundrum leads to questions about the distinguishing factors in contentious and perplexing contexts of crisis planning. We argue that answers may be found in the ethic of inclusion as articulated by Arnett (2013; 2017). More

specifically, they appear in his explication of Arendt's vision of ethics in dark times and Levinas's rhetorical demand to consider the needs of those whose lives are impacted by risk, but who are not at the table where crisis plans are crafted.

Fantasy Documents and Crisis Communication Ethics

Arnett (2017) eschews fantasy as described by Clarke (1999), Birkland (2009), and Schneier (2006) by distinguishing fantasy from imagination. Inspired by Immanuel Kant's distinctions of fantasy and imagination, Arnett maintains that fantasy merely rouses a false sense of confidence, whereas imagination is the source through which solutions are conceived and tested in the inescapability of reality. Adopting the perspective of Levinas, Arnett (2017) further defines imagination as the ultimate pursuit of justice. In doing so, Arnett establishes the ethical criterion of inclusion where "justice requires imagination that sees farther than the near attending to a large sense of community—protecting those beyond proximate obligations" (148). For Arnett, such inclusion must protect those at the margins of society. Arnett, Sarah M. DeIulii, and Matthew Corr (2017) introduce transparency as a means by which to expose fantasy, empower imagination, and prioritize inclusivity.

Arnett and colleagues establish inclusivity of all stakeholders as the foundation of ethical risk and crisis communication. They argue that transparency, by its nature, is inclusive when it engages stakeholders both within and external to the organization. All who are at risk participate in decision-making processes based on the discernment of "publicly vetted evidence and rationality" (2017, 64). This inclusive and candid discernment process has the capacity to expose tensions and biases in "what is protected and promoted" (64). In other words, transparency requires considering the opinions of those who have the most to lose as well as those with the most to gain. When external stakeholders are excluded from crisis planning, the potential for promoting the organization over protecting diverse stakeholders remains unchecked. Conversely, transparency through inclusive dialogue among diverse internal and external stakeholders creates "crucial organizational relationships" through which diverse parties advocate for distinct and shared priorities (64). Capitalizing on these relationships increases the likelihood that crisis plans will account for the diverse needs of multiple stakeholders. This guiding principle for effective risk and crisis communication generally and crisis planning specifically is further illuminated in Arnett's (2013; 2017) examination of works by Arendt and Levinas.

Despite the promise of transparency in crisis planning, the process may be disrupted or even rescinded altogether by what Arnett (2013) describes as the "unearned confidence and optimism" inspired by modernity. Consequently, fantasy documents fall within the realm of what Arnett (2013) referred to as the "bad faith" of modernity (3). Arnett (2013) asserts that "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).

Bad faith sets the stage for two potentially tragic crisis planning errors. First, unmerited confidence fuels a bias on the part of organizations and industry assuming paradoxically that human-caused risks will be dismissed through crisis plans based on the same human engineering that created the risks in the first place. At the extreme, the bad faith of fantasy documents proposes solving a problem by doing more of the same actions that produced it. Second, crisis planning in bad faith lacks the transparency needed to account for all stakeholders. For the sake of profit and expediency, those at the margins of society who have the most to lose and may be the most difficult to protect are also ignored in the planning process.

Addressing Problems with Problems

Arnett portrays the paradox of solving problems with more problematic action as an illumination of events through what Arendt described as artificial light. Assuming light where there is only darkness creates conditions for the reality of risk to “unleash havoc when expectations of unrealistic hope go unmet” (Arnett 2013, 4). Thus, the fantasy or theatre of risk reduction impedes meaningful planning by relying on unrealistic assumptions. For Arnett, part of the transparency process is based on accepting the reality of darkness, the unknown, or uncertainty. Accepting darkness in favor of transparency allows all stakeholders to engage in a dialogue accepting what is known and what is unknown. The pursuit of true light, “holy sparks” in Arnett’s words (3), is the place at which dialogue begins. Risk planning, then, is only effective when all stakeholders work together to seek light in the darkness of uncertainty. As Arnett explains, “The philosopher does not trust the darkness of the cave, but it is darkness that gives opinion, friendship, and community its fabric—one cannot confuse the importance of navigating through life with a snapshot of truth in self-generated light” (187).

Inclusivity

Through the works of Levinas, Arnett reveals the foundational criterion for inclusivity. Specifically, he establishes consideration for those who are not at the table, “the unseen Other,” as paramount (Arnett 2017, 147). For Arnett, the genuine search for those stakeholders forgotten by standard operating procedures of superficial crisis planning is endless: “Levinas is attentive to justice located within a community that considers the unknown third as the heart of the judgment and discernment. Attending to those not present is at the core of justice” (146). Transparency in the public discernment of evidence, described above, is impossible without situating all stakeholders at the table, regardless of their material wealth or social regard. Crisis plans created without accounting for such inclusive transparency at best lack imagination and, at worst, are relegated to mere fantasy.

In summary, fantasy documents create an illusion of risk reduction and enhanced crisis response capacity. Consequently, communities are lulled into

assumptions of safety by hollow, superficial actions that create a theatrical sense of security while allowing original risk to remain unabated or further intensify. For Arnett (2013; 2017), the remedy to fantasy is imagination. Unlike fantasy, imagination fosters creative solutions forged by reality. Imagination invites transparency through which information is discerned in an inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders, both internal and external to organizations or industries. Such inclusivity is not possible without engaging in an earnest search for all who are at risk, accompanied by a sincere invitation to participate in the crisis planning conversation.

The Report

The *Final Report and Recommendations by the Council* created by the Prioritization of Critical Infrastructure for a Pandemic Outbreak in the United States Working Group was intended to assist in managing infrastructural challenges to the food supply during a pandemic (Denlinger et al. 2007). The group was charged with addressing six key issues which were believed to be essential for protecting the nation's economy:

- Identifying and defining "critical services" that must be maintained in a pandemic
- Establishing criteria and principles for critical service prioritization
- Defining critical services priority (with principles for variation, if needed)
- Identifying critical employee group(s) in each priority critical service
- Building a structure for communication and dissemination of resources
- Identifying principles for effective implementation by DHS and HHS

With the benefit of hindsight, we now know that a pandemic did indeed develop. Moreover, although the document was written based on a hypothetical pandemic caused by influenza rather than a novel coronavirus, the descriptions about how events might play out are eerily similar to how the COVID-19 outbreak progressed from late 2019, when the virus began spreading in China, through 2020, when it became a global pandemic (Edwards et al. 2023).

In many ways, the report accurately predicts the progression and consequences of a global pandemic. However, one area where the report falls short is in the section focused on the Food and Agriculture sector. The report focuses on the production, processing, and delivery systems of the US food supply chain. The US food supply chain is a complex system of many entities including farmers, production and packaging plants, transportation, restaurants, and grocery stores. The report accurately acknowledges the size and complexity of the Food and Agriculture sector and recognizes that its sustainability depends on other services and sectors such as infrastructure, finance, and transportation, but it does so in just two and a half pages of text (Denlinger et al. 2007).

The Analysis

We use a case study method focusing on US meat-processing plants and their failures during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic to illustrate places where statements and observations made in the NIAC's 2007 plan did not translate into meaningful action during the pandemic. In this sense, the food and agriculture section of the report is a clear example of a fantasy document. This is evidenced by noting the industry's failure to account for a diminished workforce, failure to prioritize its workers for vaccination, failure to have adequate PPE stockpiled for workers, and blatant risk-taking behaviors even when the dangers of COVID-19 were fully realized.

The facilities where meat is processed and packaged became some of the earliest "hotspots" during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (Saitone et al. 2021). Several factors made processing plants ideal environments for viral spread. The temperature was kept at levels where the virus appeared to thrive, workstations did not adhere to social distancing recommendations, workspaces included many metal surfaces on which virus-laden fomites could collect, and the working environment was replete with loud machinery, resulting in workers (even those in close proximity) having to yell to be heard, thereby releasing more droplets into the air. Combined, these factors led to 57,000 infected employees and 270 deaths by February 2021 (Whitehead and Kim 2022). Other employees, who became known as the "worried well," chose not to come to work because they did not feel safe, and, consequently, plants were forced to close and cease operations for a period of time (Gallagher and Kirkland 2020). Doing so was particularly devastating to the pork industry, as the three major plants responsible for 15% of all pork production in the US (Smithfield Foods in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; JBS Pork Processing in Worthington, Minnesota; and Tyson Fresh Foods in Waterloo, Iowa) had to shut their doors (Gallagher and Kirkland 2020).

These plant closings created backlogs throughout the supply chain. Producers who rely on a very strict timeline to raise pigs from farrowing to finishing, for example, found themselves with hogs ready for processing and nowhere to send them. Unfortunately, this supply chain backlog meant that nearly 600,000 hogs that would otherwise have been processed for meat were instead culled by farmers (Eller 2020). The economic and emotional impact caused from killing and disposing of these animals before they reached production was unprecedented and became a secondary crisis caused by the virus.

The first problem illustrating that this section of the report is a fantasy document focuses on the role of the workforce as critical to operations during a pandemic. The report begins by acknowledging the potential threat of a pandemic devastating the industry:

If a pandemic outbreak strikes the United States, production capacity could be severely limited due to an unavailable workforce . . . Many entities have already established Pandemic Flu Continuity of Operation Plans and many more are in various stages of development. Given a pandemic influenza vaccine will likely not be readily available until many months after the onset

of the pandemic, it is imperative to minimize the virus' spread and impact by ensuring these plans . . . are in place and functional prior to such onset. (Denlinger et al. 2007, 84–85)

However, the report falls short in acknowledging the critical role of plant workers as essential just a few lines later by claiming that “after extensive discussions, the Food and Agriculture sector determined that few, if any, critical food or agriculture facilities exist that would warrant . . . employees from those facilities to be included in a pandemic influenza vaccine/antiviral prioritization scheme” (85). The authors acknowledge the potential impact of a pandemic on the industry’s workforce and production; however, they fail to acknowledge that this same workforce should be considered “critical” when prioritizing vaccine distribution. These contradictions, coupled with evidence of what actually ensued in 2020, further illustrates that this section of the report is a fantasy document.

In addition, the report claims that “many entities have already established . . . plans and many more are in various stages of development” (Denlinger et al. 2007, 85). However, another report published eight years later as a joint effort between the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and and Department of Homeland Security (DHS), titled *Food and Agriculture Specific Plan*, suggests otherwise when it urges the industry to prepare for “interruption of operations within the sector [that] could have a potentially devastating impact on the nation’s public health and economy” (United States Food and Drug Administration 2015). This second document goes on to highlight the four highest risks as (a) food contamination and disruption, (b) disease and pests, (c) severe weather, and (d) cybersecurity. Moreover, the disease and pests section is devoted solely to animal disease. There is no mention of how to respond to a human health pandemic. Nearly a decade after publishing the original report calling for each sector to finish developing their pandemic response plans, the Food and Agriculture sector still failed to even mention human disease as a potential threat that could cause substantial disruption to this sector.

Second, in addition to failing to prepare for workforce shortages, the food and agriculture section of the report also failed to recommend that leaders stockpile for and/or distribute to employees any PPE to use while on the job. In fact, there is no mention of PPE in the entire food and agriculture section of the report. In Appendix B, the report does discuss medical and non-medical countermeasures. The report correctly assumes that, “given the assumed shortage of vaccines and antiviral medications, non-medical products are likely to play an even more critical role” (Denlinger et al. 2007, 49). Another document prepared by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in 2009, titled *Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic*, gives very specific instructions about the need to stockpile various kinds of masks, including N-95 respirators and surgical masks, depending on the level of risk and exposure for employees. The report even goes so far as to give a specific formula for estimating the number of masks needed by recommending two masks/employee/shift for 120 pandemic workdays, which means 240 masks per exposed employee. The final

report issued by the NIAC Working Group recognized the need to implement non-medical countermeasures while a vaccine was being developed and distributed and made specific recommendations about the types of masks to have on hand in another document, yet the food and agriculture section fails even to mention PPE in its plans, further demonstrating that this plan qualifies as a fantasy document.

The final, and perhaps most egregious, failing of this plan is the “wait and see” approach it takes to the entire process. The following quotation illustrates the sector’s overstated optimism:

The Food and Agriculture sector also possesses many factors that will likely bode well for operations continuity during adverse situations without intervention. For example, the sheer numbers of entities . . . and experience dealing with past natural disasters and strikes will be beneficial to keeping operations running. Moreover, American ingenuity will help the industries/entities adapt and continue operating during and after a pandemic outbreak. It is critical to embrace this concept, as the development of vaccine is likely to require four to six months from the time a pandemic materializes. (Denlinger et al. 2007, 86)

This blasé attitude turns from worrisome to downright dangerous when we see the deliberate risks that were taken with employee lives at these processing facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, workers at the Smithfield plant in Sioux Falls were offered a \$500 “responsibility bonus” if they worked for one month without an unexcused absence (Jankowicz 2020). Clearly, this incentive was meant to encourage workers, even those who were sick or had been exposed to someone who was sick, to come to work anyway and potentially expose and infect more workers. Sadly, this is not the worst example of negligence to occur in this industry. The most egregious example of this industry’s lack of care for its employees came when Tom Hart, plant manager of Tyson Fresh Foods in Waterloo, Illinois, allegedly organized a “winner take all” betting pool for management to make wagers on how many workers would test positive for COVID-19. Ultimately, 1,000 of the plant’s 2,800 workers were infected and six lost their lives due to COVID-19 (CBS News 2020). Rather than “American ingenuity” prevailing in a way that would prioritize employee health and well-being, corporate greed and negligence took hold and spurred decisions that had devastating consequences on the physical and mental health of employees and farmers throughout the supply chain.

In response to public criticism for the industry’s failure to act responsibly, Kenneth Sullivan, CEO of Smithfield Foods, issued a letter to Senators Elizabeth Warren and Cory Booker. In it he writes, “What no one anticipated, and has never happened in our lifetimes, is the scenario we are living through today. That is, our harvest facilities, which are the critical linchpin in the supply chain, could be threatened, en masse, by a global pandemic that threatens our ability to produce food” (Grabell and Yeung 2020). Obviously, Sullivan’s letter is wrong on several accounts. For instance, the fact that the NAIC Working Group was formed and its report was published in 2007 demonstrates that this sector *did* anticipate a pandemic and the potential impact it could have on the industry. What the Food

and Agriculture sector failed to do was make realistic plans for how to handle these potential threats should they manifest into a crisis. Instead, the report limited its focus to other risks generally and animal disease specifically. As one industry executive stated, “We were probably more prepared for animal pandemic issues than we were for human pandemics” (Grabell and Yeung 2020).

Although the food and agriculture section of the report falls short of being a helpful, realistic plan, it does get some things right. The report correctly predicted that a significant period of time would be needed to develop and deploy a vaccine. Although the authors of the report anticipated four to six months rather than the ten to twelve months required in the case of COVID-19, they did acknowledge time as a factor. In addition, the report mentioned the benefits of industry leaders having experience with natural disasters and strikes. When an organization experiences a “focusing event,” it creates an opportunity for learning and thus policy changes (Fishman 1999). In this case, however, previous experiences did not lead to learning or policy change, constituting what Birkland (2009) calls “fantasy learning.” Although the plan makes note of experiencing previous focusing events, it does not discuss what was learned from those events or how those experiences informed an approach to this planning process. The plan also fails to note how a pandemic differs from previous focusing events and how those key differences will impact the response.

The food and agriculture section ends with one final vague and uninspiring paragraph:

Unfortunately, a lot of the future needs will depend on variables (i.e., timing, location, preparedness efforts) that are yet unknown. In addition to these known unknowns, there are likely many things (the “unknown unknowns”) that we do not even know that we do not know at this stage. As a pandemic situation develops and materializes, the unknowns will become known and the needs of the sector will become more apparent. Once this happens, the Food and Agriculture sector will be able to take the appropriate actions. In the interim, it is in the Food and Agriculture sector’s best interest to prepare for the worst while continuing to explore its options. (Denlinger et al. 2007, 86)

While there are myriad issues to this “wait and see” and “figure it out in the moment” approaches, especially considering something as potentially devastating as a global pandemic, the bigger issue is the clear evidence that the meat processing facilities did *not* take appropriate actions to protect its workforce or slow the spread of COVID-19 while waiting for the development of a vaccine (Kindy 2020). The industry did not have continuity plans in place in the event of severe worker shortages, which had a domino effect for producers who wasted time and money raising hogs that were then culled due to closed processing plants. These facilities also incorrectly anticipated the criticality of their workforce for vaccine prioritization, failed to stockpile or distribute necessary PPE for workers, and, in some instances, took deliberate and devastating risks with employee health in the name of financial security.

Conclusions and Implications

Some of the rhetoric surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic has been that there was no way to know or predict how things played out and that many industries were left on the back foot when the world changed in March 2020. This statement is only partially true. As risk and crisis communication professionals know, there is no way to anticipate fully how an event might play out, but there is still value in the crisis planning and preparation process (Seeger and Sellnow 2019) so long as that process does not result in fantasy learning or fantasy documents (Clarke 1999). As this examination of the 2007 report demonstrates, the world *has* been planning and preparing for a pandemic like COVID-19 for over a decade. Even though the NAIC working group focused on influenza as the cause of the hypothetical outbreak, the fact remains that the document very accurately predicted the impact of the pandemic, many of its major disruptions to daily life, and the need for non-medical interventions to slow the spread of the disease while vaccines were being developed and deployed. However, the section focusing on the Food and Agriculture sector does not appear to have taken these predictions to heart when attempting to plan its response. This was made clear by four key failings: not anticipating worker shortages due to life-threatening illness, not prioritizing workers for vaccination, not stockpiling or distributing adequate PPE for workers, and, in some cases, prioritizing financial goals over worker health and safety.

The lack of specificity or genuine attempts at planning in the working group report coupled with the actions taken by some meat processing facilities in the Food and Agriculture sector highlights how this report meets Clarke's (1999) definition of a fantasy document. While Clarke generally referred to documents produced *after* a crisis had occurred, usually in the form of a "lessons learned" piece, this report is a clear example of a fantasy risk communication and crisis plan produced prior to a crisis and seemingly ignored by one of the three main sectors involved in its production (1999). Admittedly, the plans gave industry leaders little to nothing to work from when the pandemic began, but even basic measures were not taken, like understanding what to do to keep workers safe so plants could continue operating.

Furthermore, as illustrated in the Tyson and Smithfield examples, deliberate and unnecessary risks were taken as plant leadership gambled with their workers' health and safety. As the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, there will no doubt be talk about "lessons learned" and probably some newly drafted and revised crisis plans to prepare better for the next global disruption. As illustrated here, those tasked with creating and revising such documents must not fall into the same trap as the 2007 team: that of producing a fantasy document that fails to make any reasonable or realistic attempt at protecting workers at all levels of the industry and supply chain.

We argue that Arnett's (2013, 2017) ethic of inclusion based on the works of Arendt and Levinas provides a way forward in crisis planning. Line workers in meat processing plants suffered tremendously during the pandemic. Thousands of illnesses and hundreds of deaths were documented among workers in US meat

processing plants (Whitehead and Kim 2022). As we described above, working conditions and a failure to adapt them at the onset of the pandemic contributed to these illnesses and deaths. One can assume that the lack of planning to protect workers, and the unwillingness or inability of the industry to adapt as COVID-19 spread, caused deaths and illnesses that might have been prevented with better planning.

As the pandemic continued, many of these plants had to close, resulting in human despair through illness, death, the emotional toll of culling healthy animals, and a loss of employment among low-income line workers. The physical and emotional toll on workers during the pandemic may not have been shared by plant owners and managers. In some cases, plant owners experienced notable short-term financial gains as meat prices rose during the pandemic (Edwards et al. 2023). Based on Arnett's ethic of inclusion, the needs of workers remained at the margins of both the planning and response processes for the COVID-19 pandemic.

How might the situation change if workers were invited to the table with crisis planning decision makers? Would workers have innovative ideas for self-protection in the workplace? Would they be able to pinpoint the most debilitating flaws in the assembly lines of meat processing plants? Weick and Sutcliffe (2015) offer compelling evidence that the answer to these questions is likely yes. They insist that the workers placed closest to the actual product, in this case the meat being processed, have profound insights on how to address risks associated with the product and process. Workers witness failures that are both addressed and unaddressed by management. They also observe innovative workers who find ways to work around inefficiencies, sometimes for good and sometimes in ways that further intensify risk. Failing to garner this knowledge leaves plants less informed and more vulnerable to failure. Thus, the dialogue Arnett (2017) recommends among all stakeholders, including those workers at the margins, is good for the workers who bear the brunt of the risk but may potentially be valuable for the organization, as well.

We realize that a shortage of animal protein in the supply chain created challenges for consumers during the pandemic. These challenges were met with a proclamation by then-president Donald Trump, declaring meat processing plants critical infrastructure. Thus, plants could reopen and be "shielded from some liability" (Swanson et al. 2020, para. 6). The industry deserves credit for its efforts to protect workers upon reopening. Plants included new features such as plexiglass barriers between individual workstations, face shields, and masks (Swanson et al. 2020). While these changes were a helpful reaction, a planning process with an ethic of inclusivity could have recognized the need for such protective features and had them in place or ready much earlier in the pandemic.

On an applied or practical level, this study establishes two irrefutable observations. First, stakeholder inclusivity is essential to effective crisis planning. A failure to include all stakeholders, including those at the margins who are easily overlooked, can have devastating effects. In this case, many lives were lost among workers, and their quality of life was negatively impacted due, in part, to poor crisis planning. Second, inclusivity cannot be assumed in the crisis planning process. The working group appointed by Secretary Leavitt was likely well

intentioned in their planning process. The group foresaw the food supply chain problems manifest during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the group did not recommend or enact an inclusive information gathering and planning process. The current best practices for crisis communication explicitly advise crisis planning. This list of practices, however, can and should be improved by clearly articulating the need for inclusivity in this planning process. Our hope is that this essay provides an initial step in that direction.

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Integrating Tenacious Hope and Feminism: Global Necessity

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Abstract: Two scholars coming from different parts of the world, namely, Russia and the United States, enter into a conversation about feminist ethical dilemmas in communication scholarship and ways to address them in light of current crises unfolding around the world. In examining problems or tensions associated with gender justice, we integrate the concept of tenacious hope, developed by Arnett (2014, 2015, 2020, 2022), with processes associated with feminist theorizing to illuminate how dilemmas unfold in different locations impacted by persistent and emergent threats to human rights and gender autonomy. Tenacious hope seems to be an integral yet unrecognized quality of feminisms, which, as movements, center action and refuse to accept *simpliciter* that the change will suddenly materialize or just happen. Tenacious hope offers an ethical stance that, when integrated within feminisms, allows for countering the disintegration and disregard for the Other ubiquitous in today's discourse. The concept of tenacious hope becomes a lens through which feminist ethical dilemmas and feminist activist practices can be analyzed to understand intersections, overlaps, and differences that inform communication scholarship today.

Keywords: tenacious hope, feminist ethics, feminisms, communication

Two scholars coming from different parts of the world, namely, Russia and the United States, enter into a conversation to challenge each other about ways to engage with difficult perspectives—not by glossing over differences and disagreements but by showing how in a dialogue each perspective matters and is valued. Drawing from Martin Buber (1967), Ronald C. Arnett (2015) contends that dialogue had been and remains “the hope for this hour” (1). Today, this hope seems illusive. As we are writing these lines, the coronavirus pandemic that led countries to shut down borders and left millions dead worldwide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2023) has been usurped in news about continuing racial unrest, health and economic disparities, climate change, and the Russia-Ukraine war. The need for dialogue seems ever more critical today.

We used this opportunity to hone in on one question that brings together Arnett's (2022) tenacious hope and our own feminisms, namely, how can an integrated tenacious hope and feminist theorizing help communication scholars and activists imagine and work toward alternative futures in light of current crises? In this endeavor, we explicate tenacious hope and feminisms beyond simply saying that these are ongoing efforts to bring optimistic visions of better lives to fruition and to engage in praxis for equal participation and gender justice, respectively. To compare and contrast these concepts, we focus on communication and feminist ethical dilemmas.

We explore each separately and in combination through our conversations and our autoethnographic reflections. We link two concepts developed by Arnett—tenacious hope and dialogue—into a conversation on ethical dilemmas that feminism(t)s face in the current moment, complicated by persistent and emergent threats to human rights, bodily integrity, and safety of women around the world. In bringing together these two concepts, which have not been aligned together previously, we work on how feminists can convince themselves and others that current struggles are not hopeless but require the unity of opposites offered by Arnett. We first discuss tenacious hope and feminisms, then shift to four questions that draw upon tenacious hope-feminist intersections and contradictions. This question-based approach crystallized during our multiple conversations over the last year, when we discussed the feminisms with which we each are familiar and the bearing that tenacious hope has in our lives.

Tenacious Hope and Feminisms

Tenacious hope seems to be an integral yet unrecognized quality of feminisms, which, as social movements, center action and refuse to accept *simpliciter* that the change will suddenly materialize or just happen. Indeed, the continual generation of global and locale-specific feminist waves are hopeful insofar as they orient toward agendas needed in particular times and places, knowing full well that single initiatives or interventions can never achieve all the needs for gender justice. At the same time, dialogue, “a continuing hope for this hour” (Arnett 2015, 1), offers a productive mechanism for countering the disintegration and disregard for the Other ubiquitous in today's discourse. The concept of tenacious hope becomes a lens through which feminist ethical dilemmas and feminist activist practices can be analyzed to understand intersections, overlaps, and differences that inform our work today. We do not aim to generalize or issue universal prescriptions; rather, only focusing on a snapshot of time that is now, we hope to incite further reflections of fellow scholars on what it means to engage with feminist ethical dilemmas when tenacious hope and dialogue become our guiding lights in our own situated moments of hopefulness and despair.

Evgeniya: Russia has been waging a war on Ukraine for a year and a half at the time when I am writing these lines. The war has caused not only fatalities of Ukrainian civilians, and Ukrainian and Russian soldiers, but also an immense divide in Russian society and Russia's cultural cancellation. As a

direct result of the war, women in Russia are recruited by the vicious tandem of the state and Orthodox church to serve the nation by birthing new citizens and taking care of the wounded and crippled by the war. The law banning so-called “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” (Sauer 2022), the change of Constitution to include a sentence to specify that marriage is a “union of a man and a woman” (President of Russia 2020), and repeated exhortations from the state’s representatives to curb or ban abortions and to prohibit gender-affirming surgeries signal terrifying strengthening of militant patriarchy and direct threats to women and LGBTQAI+ folks. At the same time, it is feminists in Russia who remain agents of cultural and political opposition to Putin’s regime and its war. It is indeed a moment when hope is crucial yet insufficient at the same time.

Patrice: There are a number of US national exigencies that are worrisome to say the least—the upcoming national elections that will undoubtedly prove contentious, the reversals in or hindering of voting and women’s bodily integrity rights, climate change, crumbling of rigorous higher educational initiatives and the banning of books in local communities, and indigenous people’s loss of place and resources essential to their livelihoods and well-being, among others. To say that we hope this phase in US politics will pass, much as the McCarthy Era of blacklisting “communists” in the 1950s eventually dissipated, says nothing about what can or should be done. It is difficult in the moment and without collective strategizing to know how to mobilize agency most effectively and who might be inadvertently marginalized.

As we think about these moments in our lives, we move into the next section that discusses the bases of tenacious hope and feminisms.

Bases of Tenacious Hope and Feminisms

In this section, we develop the concepts and embodied responsibilities aligned with tenacious hope and feminisms by providing overviews and distinctions among different voices as situated in their local cultures and with global significance.

Patrice: It may seem odd to begin by discussing the Scottish Enlightenment, a period of time from 1688 to 1800, as named by William Robert Scott (Arnett 2022, 4). Arnett (2022) offers tenacious hope as a concept he developed when reviewing the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers’ works and as an antidote to unbridled optimism and as a modernist belief that progress will continue unhindered. In the midst of contemporary geopolitical struggles, conspiracy theories and acts of hatred, and the emergence from COVID-19 pandemic chaos, hope offers assurances that things will get better.

Arnett (2022) states that his “project unmask[s] optimism as paradigmatically bound to the singular direction, a predetermined course for the good” (1). Arnett cautions against such abstract thinking and feelings untethered to the realities that hard work is needed—the obligation to do this labor—to actualize the hopeful

futures that people envision. He says that tenacious hope requires reflection as well as “responsible individual action as one discerns how to navigate an understanding of the good nurtured by a unity of contraries, a theme long present in Scottish intellectual life” (1). Tenacious hope can be visualized as the unity of contraries or tensions of self–other, individual–community, family–work, assurance–doubt, imagination–experience, and present–future (the “not yet”) that emerge full force in situated action grounded in time, place, and embodiment. Tenacious hope offsets commercial growth, focus on individualism, and “obsession with a future good” (6). The tensions with which tenacious hope grapples manifest in different ways. These include abdication–responsibility, mindless pursuits–reflection, progress–restraint, universal–local, passivity–vitality, fantasy–realism. In struggles between optimism and tenacious hope, there are no final answers, just warnings that when one equates victory with a sense of reified clarity, tenacious hope falls into the abyss of unidirectional optimism and progress (Arnett 2022, 12).

The ethical appeal, then, of tenacious hope is that it “demands responsibility from and for many—including those not directly seated at the table of decision-making” (Arnett 2022, 18). Tenacious hope aspires to change and transformation. This transformation unifies “individual achievement and concern for social life” (23). Different Scottish writers eschewed cause–effect thinking and promoted the need to cultivate unending questioning along with tackling difficult issues with integrity and compassion.

Arnett’s communication ethic of tenacious hope is one that envisions a future while remaining grounded in practical reality and holds much in common with core feminist values (Buzzanell 1994; Linabary et al. 2021). Like tenacious hope, feminist inquiry and advocacy rail against linear thinking and its simplistic solutions. Both embrace emotion, community, context, and collaboration. These characteristics are found in the different waves of feminisms and current explorations of how to counter commercialism, reliance on capitalism as a solution for human needs, and emphasis on the self (e.g., neoliberalism, post-feminisms, political factions) in the Global North and Eurocentric cultures (see Maingi Ngwu 2022). In contrast, for the Global South, the emphasis is less on theories, specific goals, and fights for gender equality than on injustices that are grounded in lived conditions (Bachmann and Proust 2020). Moreover, “feminist scholarship from the Global South also pays particular attention to five interrelated issues where the experiences of Global South citizens are especially illuminating: economic justice, migration, human rights, decolonization, and peace and disarmament” (Bachmann and Proust 2020, 71). Asiatic feminism emphasizes female flourishing and gender egalitarianism (Yin 2009). African feminisms focus on fluidity, survival, orality, shapeshifting, holism, situationality, and collectives, not simply women’s and children’s interests pitted against those of men and members of LGBTQ+ communities (Biwa 2021; Cruz 2015, 2017; Maingi Ngwu 2022). Ideas about gender and performance from global perspectives center on identity, context, communication, and feminist studies (Kroløkke and Sørensen 2006) in ways that attend less to waves and particular cultural and local interests and more on how knowledge is constructed and where gender power imbalances shift.

In knowledge and power construction, our characterizations of early feminist movements are too simplistic to portray the complex feminist activity and (mis)alliances within each setting and among different groups that self-identify as women, men, and LGBTQ+. With third and subsequent waves, greater attention to intersectionalities and culture, contradiction in human communication, difficulties in enacting inclusion and difference, and attention to local and global movements afforded by technologies came to the forefront (see Buzzanell 2020). These newer appeals sustain tensions and provoke different feminist dilemmas. With these tensions has come reckoning with consequences and appreciation for local circumstances, much as Arnett (2022) argues that “communication ethics as tenacious hope dwells in a home of ethical striving and unquenchable self-doubt, a unity of contraries” (195).

Evgeniya: Arnett’s formulation of tenacious hope centers it as “a form of social resistance” (2014, 274) that promotes “communication ethic of responsive transformation” (2022, 58), highlighting its stubbornness in the face of social injustices and flexibility to work toward change in constantly evolving reality. In one of his works, Arnett (2015) points out that tenacious hope is a prerequisite to dialogue and that today, when we must finally learn to live with difference and prosper, the need for dialogue is global. Without hesitation, feminist practitioners and researchers answer to this need worldwide, laboring to initiate and drive social change (Pal and Nieto-Fernandez 2023). Hope is one of their commitments that has been central for decades.

There are several feminist texts that engage with hope directly or metaphorically. Among them is Gloria Anzaldúa’s (2009) “La Conciencia de la Mestiza” from 1987, in which “world-traveling”—being able to “travel” from one culture to another and simultaneously remain situated inside and outside communities and cultures—is presented not as a curse but rather an opportunity to resist hegemonic frameworks. Similar to Arnett’s (2022) theorization of tenacious hope, Anzaldúa engages with tensions and explores contradictions present in every liminal life to illuminate how existence at intersections and borderlands is guided by hope, which, in turn, is embodied in resistance to dominant paradigms.

There are other important contributions that illuminate hope, how it emerges, is sustained, and is politically charged in feminisms—for example, Sara Ahmed’s (2014) “cultural politics of emotion.” Ahmed (2014) describes hope as integral to feminism(t)s, grounded in the “present as affected by its imperfect translation of the past,” and realized through “collective working for change” (182–83). We are reminded that hope is integrated in political action: “politics without hope is impossible, and hope without politics is a reification of possibility (and becomes merely religious)” (184). Following Ahmed, there is hope in feminism—hope that brings people to feminism and hope that feminism embodies. Hope also is a premise of Black feminist thought (Collins 2000). The concept of intersectionality alone has been hope-generative and “has inspired vital feminist work and nurtured and inspired feminists’ struggles” (Martinsson and Mullinary 2018, 12).

In sum, we draw on our backgrounds to reflect upon the intersections of hope and feminisms. Attention to hope as a geo-temporally specific orientation in Arnett's (2014) theorization of tenacious hope leads us to consider the meaning that the idea of tenacious hope can take in various cultures. These meanings are tied to semantics of the word "hope" that illuminate certain contextual factors—historical, cultural, and political. We close this section with Evgeniya's reflections that Russian culture is steeped in beliefs about the precedence of fate over individual agency and about resignation before the power of current events and the course of history. The very idea of hope is controversial. On the one hand, what else is left when the agency is surrendered and individuals face the implacable reality unarmed? Hope should be the answer. Russian sayings support this gravitation toward hope to counteract the merciless whirlpool of time:

Без надежды – что без одежды. И в теплую погоду замерзнешь.

(Being without hope is like one without clothes—she gets cold even on a warm day.)

Надежда умирает последней.

(Hope dies last.)

These sayings portray a reliance on hope in sensemaking and an orientation toward the good—even in hard times. On the other hand, there is a subtle understanding that hope alone is not enough:

Из одной надежды не сшить одежды.

(You cannot make a coat only out of hope.)

In turbulent times, such as now, the importance of hope for individuals, groups, and society grows exponentially. But does it lead to action or inaction in a culture that does not believe in individual agency?

Questions

We ask four main questions and draw on our personal and scholarly commitments to describe how the emphasis on localities, ethics, and communication guide our discussions of tenacious hope and feminisms. Sometimes we provide a combined response to the question, but at other times we felt that the differences in our responses needed to be highlighted to render localities distinct. In those passages, we offer our autoethnographic stories to make the theories more concrete. These questions ask about (1) understanding the different tensions in tenacious hope and in feminisms that can develop new insights for praxis, (2) examples of where combined feminist and tenacious hope activism benefits self and others, (3) orientations toward the local that can reinvigorate Arnett's communication ethics and feminist ethics, and (4) ways in which feminisms and feminists can move toward tenacious hope.

1. Ron Arnett talks about different tensions that are inherent to tenacious hope. In what ways are these tensions similar to or different from tensions inherent to different feminisms with which we are familiar?

Some feminist advocates exposed fundamental contradictions that would mitigate against equality, but the approach seemed so radical and so impossible to change society (see Campbell 1973) that these views did not gain traction. Even more so, when the equality that seemed assured by means of legal and policy remedies did not happen, feminisms expanded to understand more subtle feminisms in which individuals believe that parity has been or could be achieved if women wanted it (see Sandberg 2013; Slaughter 2012; Rottenberg 2017).

For example, men in engineering espouse beliefs in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and profess that women should have the same opportunities in their engineering program (Buzzanell et al. 2023). However, these same men also say that women are being forced to enroll in engineering because of all the pressures—from mentoring, summer workshops, teachers and other socializing agents, and engineering programs in their colleges—and that, clearly, if women wanted to be engineers, they would not need to be coerced into enrolling in these majors. After all, the men say that they did not need any special programs, scholarships, units like “women in engineering” (Buzzanell et al. 2023, 10), and so on to join and remain in engineering programs. Such contradictions in worldviews and reasoning mean that these men can articulate all the DEI reasons for inclusion while their feelings about DEI and women’s membership directly contradict DEI efforts.

The plexus of these tensions has varying effects on the movement and its proponents and activists. Some are destabilizing, leading to misunderstandings between feminism(t)s locally and globally (see Ghodsee 2018; Pal and Nieto-Fernandez 2023; Tlostanova et al. 2019); others are more generative, resulting in novel ways of addressing complex issues of gender inequality. These tensions, realized in instances of (un)ethical communication and organizing, include but are not limited to self-other, individual-collective, family-work, imagination-experience, and others. They are logical continuations of our life conditions—political, geopolitical, economic, cultural—and simultaneously arise from our individual and collective ethical preferences. Others are the heritage of the movements’ social history. Together, these tensions are uncomfortable in that they make us pause and contemplate which extreme of the dichotomy we choose to honor and why and what/who is left behind when we make our choice.

Importantly, along with these tensions, the importance of locale-specific circumstances became salient, much as Arnett (2022) argued for tenacious hope. Arnett insists that “tenacious hope struggles against marginalization” (191) and concludes that “communication ethics as tenacious hope dwells in a home of ethical striving and unquenchable self-doubt, a unity of contraries” (195). Its ethical appeal, then, similar to feminism’s goals (Buzzanell 1994; Linabary et al. 2021), is that it “demands responsibility from and for many—including those not directly seated at the table of decision-making” (Arnett 2022, 18). Tenacious hope

aspires to change and transformation that unifies “individual achievement and concern for social life” (23). Intrinsic tensions of feminism and tenacious hope echo each other, contradict, and acquire new dimensions when interlaced. The facets of tenacious hope that stand out with each particular movement or group are geopolitically, temporarily, historically, and culturally dependent. In what follows, we present two instances—local and global—where the tensional nature of both orientations becomes clear.

2. What are some examples in which combined feminist and tenacious hope activism benefits self and others?

With affective, paradoxical, and dilemmic feminist approaches (e.g., Buzzanell et al. 2023; Harris 2016), we see everyday enactments of Arnett’s (2022) tensions, which he derives from the Scottish Enlightenment and compares to contemporary challenges that require a communication ethics response. We borrow the less verbalized sides of Arnett’s tensions—doubt, experience, responsibility, restraint, and vitality (which are part of assurance–doubt, imagination–experience, abdication–responsibility, progress–restraint, passivity–vitality)—knowing that a wholesale shift to another side is inadequate, especially if we attempt to integrate or extend beyond the opposites. Feminist research illuminates the tensions that are quite similar to the opposites with which tenacious hope struggles and offers partial solutions.

Patrice: In the US, individuals and organizations struggle with concepts that are difficult to research, publish, and understand, especially when dealing with language that is contested, like social justice, privilege, political stances, BIPOC labels, Whiteness, and white supremacy (Hanasono et al. 2022). For instance, the idea of privilege needs a nuanced approach or else it tends to be conceptualized and actualized as unidimensional, additive, and divisive. Individuals have difficulty envisioning the structural and institutional means by which privilege is deployed. Furthermore, much of the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) literature, including that which is feminist in orientation, phrases privilege as binary without articulating the multiple intersecting identities over the course of a lifespan (Hanasono et al. 2022). Without understanding these complexities it is difficult for individuals to construct how they might engage in allyship behaviors, meaning that the concept of allyship is more abstract than concrete to them. Such understandings may assist people to act more effectively as allies and understand the different ways of tackling unequal treatment of women and other vulnerable groups (Buzzanell 1994; Ro et al. 2023). These examples are from Western, US-centric findings, but the tensions are manifest at a global level, as well.

Evgeniya: The multitude of injustices and oppressions that feminists work to address, and even the very act of engaging with societal wounds from a feminist standpoint, results in uneasy questions of representation, speaking for/about others, and ultimately inclusion and exclusion in feminist methodology, scholarly work, and praxis.

Tenacious hope serves an important purpose in thinking about inclusion and exclusion in connection with feminisms globally. For example, in pursuing the goal of illuminating, problematizing, and finally ending the struggles of marginalized communities, one of the first questions feminists face involves who must be included in the process. The ethical and moral struggle that accompanies this particular dilemma is intense and often garners polarizing reactions. Tenacious hope, however, as an ethical orientation that demands meeting with and learning from difference, becomes a possible answer to antagonizing debates.

Tenacious hope and feminisms both guide us to lean toward multipronged inclusion. First, both feminist thought and tenacious hope insist on the necessity of putting a stop to “repetitive discounting of those different from us” (Arnett 2015, 1) and acknowledge their agentic capabilities (Pal and Nieto-Fernandez 2023). Feminism(t)s who/that exist and work within the transnational paradigm strive to include women at the margins into polyphonic dialogue, meaningful collaboration, and “knowledges of alternative and indigenous ways of organizing” (Pal and Nieto-Fernandez 2023, 16) in order to resist oppressive capitalist, neoliberal structures and processes, as well as militant patriarchy. Integrating difference and tenacious hope’s commitment to inclusion “demands courage to continue to meet and learn from difference” (Arnett 2015, 268).

The above-mentioned mutuality of feminist orientation and tenacious hope is not without a discrepancy: feminism(t)s add moderation to tenacious hope’s aspiration to inclusion. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2005) contended, it is impossible to achieve unity solely through a shared collective experience or similar treatment, given our varied circumstances. The view that exclusion can be avoided is illusory, and the very histories of feminism(t)s show that it is inevitable. Sometimes exclusions operate within movements, like the exclusion of Second World feminism(t)s from the Western feminist canon (Bonfiglioli and Ghodsee 2019), and lead to epistemic oppression (Dotson 2012; McKinnon 2016). Other times these exclusions are external, like the structural exclusions of women, feminine others, queer and transgender folx, and others, that feminist movements resist. Yet, there are instances when feminism(t)s exclude in order to protect, heeding Linda Alcoff’s (2009) warning to speak for others mindfully and remember that “the positionality or location of the speaker and the discursive context” (7) matter immensely and affect both the meaning of what is said and what is considered as truth. Echoes of this call can be found when tenacious hope “assumes responsibility for acknowledging the reality of multiple perspectives and learning from them” (Arnett 2015, 268), instead of working in silos. Acknowledging differences in a way that honors the multiple worlds we inhabit is where tenacious hope and feminist commitments overlap.

Embracing tenacious hope with its commitment to action, overcoming difficulties, and creativity is likened by Arnett (2015) to hard work, which we do with an open heart and open ears, ready to learn, though the outcomes are never guaranteed. Feminists globally have been long engaged in the hard labor of propelling social change and justice with no assurance of success. Additionally, deep engagement with tenacious hope inspires useful questions for feminist movements. When we act, who do we include/exclude, and at what cost? What

strategies do we stick to, and which do we abandon or reframe? How do we decide whether we want to be included into transnational collaborations or stay decidedly local and thus exclude ourselves from many forums where we can seek and find allies/accomplices? What do we do when we find ourselves excluded? We believe that these questions are always open-ended and cannot be separated from the time, space, available resources, and other conditions that enable or constrain feminist action. Yet, tenacious hope offers a new dimension to how these questions can be answered: in times when there is no “clarity of direction” (Arnett 2020, 9), we should keep hope that improved and more just social relations will eventually lead to a more equitable reality for people front and center in feminist communication.

3. How has the orientation toward the local been used most recently to reinvigorate feminisms?

As Evgeniya reflects on Arnett’s (2022) formulation of tenacious hope with facets of togetherness-solitude and extensiveness-precision, she notes that, in feminist work, every avenue and opportunity to engage in cooperation and adjudication of contentions must be explored.

Should cooperation be local, global, translocal, or transnational? Can there be alliances between feminism(t)s? Can we strategize and act across borders, or should we focus on our localities? Can there be a political “we,” and who should be included in it? These questions have multiple answers depending on who is asking and who are we answering with or for. One way to address them is by looking at tenacious hope that foregrounds situated action grounded in time, place, and embodiment.

Feminisms have always been situated in the local, but the local has been, at times, a privileged place that focused on White, middle-class women’s concerns and remains so even now as attempts are made to broaden participant bases and understand how awareness and maneuvering within socio-political-economic-cultural-historical locations by particular group members, or standpoints, provide broader worldmaking (Linabary et al. 2021). The local does not mean only those spaces and places but also the communication contexts within which feminisms struggle to urge equity. Scholars and advocates situate topics in the local. Hence, we must explore and contrast Second World and Global South feminisms with humility, knowing full well that such labels do not ever encompass the complexities and richness of the local standpoints subsumed by these labels.

Within the tensions of collective-individual and global-local feminisms, there have been deep divisions and tendencies toward grandiose cooperation (Mohanty 2005, 2013; Narayan 1998). Certain struggles of today’s world—ravenous expansion of multinational companies; the interconnectedness of the state, military, and corporations; the displacement and loss experienced by communities; forced migration; the rise of extreme nationalism and xenophobia; the widening disparity between the wealthy and the impoverished; and the degradation of the environment (Pal and Nieto-Hernandez 2023)—are ubiquitous and seem to require substantive collective effort to overcome. Yet, other features

of coloniality—Western hegemony in knowledge production and contemporary imperial capitalism—mandate separation of those negatively affected by them from those who benefit from global epistemic and socio-economic inequities.

Transnational feminism epitomizes global thinking about feminist cooperation *sans* hegemonic feminism as an overarching philosophy steeped in tenacious hope. It is an analytic framework that remedies previous failures in feminist movements' attempts at acting across borders. Partially articulated in Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal's *Transnational Practices and Interdisciplinary Feminist Scholarship: Refiguring Women's and Gender Studies* (2002), transnational feminism critiques the Global North's uniform understanding of what constitutes gender inequality and subsequent framing of what feminist politics should look like globally and locally (Pal and Nieto-Hernandez 2023; Nygren, Martinsson, and Mulinari 2018). Transnational feminism has been a successful orientation toward feminism(t)s working together to resist various oppressions, reclaim spaces for political action, and to establish long-term collaboration through focusing on relationship-building across borders. At its base, there is tenacious hope that urges one to be comfortable with difference, appreciate it, and ultimately celebrate it through the work of "learning from each experience—understanding difference and refusing to equate this with that" (Arnett 2015, 4). It is hope that "permits the meeting and understanding of monologic ground that matters to another" (4) and promises a chance to come together and build communities. However, in a quest to decolonize feminist philosophy, transnationalism has been subjected to critique as promoting Western-centric interpretation of nation and imposing uniform understanding of oppression (Bonfiglioli and Ghodsee 2019; Conway 2017).

There is power and hope in the transnational and global. However, there are times and conditions when the local must take precedence over the global, especially when the West, capitalism, and coloniality conveniently masquerade as "global." In such instances, Second and Third World feminists join Western feminist initiatives in acts of solidarity, yet Western feminists rarely support Second World feminists "back" (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021). Tenacious hope, then, comes to play a two-fold role: First, it serves as a base orientation that grounds and ties together local activism in times when local work is needed through "opening our imagination and putting forward fantasies, visions, and ideas about alternative inclusive and democratic futures" (Nygren, Martinsson, and Mulinari 2018, 5). Simultaneously, it binds people for transnational action in the future, allowing space for the local to strengthen and building "solidarity across conflictual locations, experiences, and visions . . . between and through diverse struggles" (5).

To have tenacious hope is to employ new forms of action that are not hegemonically approved (see Marling 2021; Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021; Khrebtan-Höerhager and Pyatovskaya, forthcoming) and move toward ideals that are not, in one way or another, global (e.g., gender equality in its Western understanding). Moreover, to have tenacious hope is to recognize that feminist visions are diverse, embedded in our present, and tied to our past in ways that allow for multiple struggles to unfold at the same time. Resisting the many faces of oppression thus becomes a concentrated attack on different fronts. Acting

locally is not a move toward isolation but rather a path toward asynchronous and multifold transformations with the recognition that “even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground” (Ahmed 2014, 189) and that regardless of setbacks or failures we continue the work in hope of the changes (Arnett 2015, 2020).

It might seem that focusing on the local intensifies polarization. Describing the concept of a communicative meeting, tied directly to tenacious hope, Arnett (2015) emphasizes that it is “a prescriptive ethical stance resistive to provincial self-preoccupation within an individualistic culture” (261), tying tenacious hope and communicative meeting into a framework that supersedes Western-centric individual autonomy. However, not all cultures and communities espouse individualism, and when we zoom in on certain localities, connection, reciprocity, and respect for another—hallmarks of tenacious hope—materialize as primary values. There are indigenous feminisms that honor “nearly universal connection to land, to territory, to relationships framed as a sacred responsibility predicated on reciprocity and definitive of culture and identity” (Green 2020, 4). Then, there are Second World feminisms that inherited a collectivist past and state-socialist women’s achievements in gender equality. Finally, there is Black feminist thought that radically shifted our understanding of community as based on competition and domination to one that centers connection, “caring, and personal accountability” (Collins 2000, 189). Polarization, therefore, only becomes real when we champion unbridled individualism and see others as competitors, instead of collaborators, allies, or accomplices (Kendall 2020).

For feminism(t)s, continuing to work locally while refraining from disregarding positions different from ours nourishes hopefulness for what is yet to come and creates space for alternative futures. When local activism becomes an element of the global, not a step down from it or a detached episode of resistance, focusing on the local is an acknowledgement of responsibility we have for one another right here and right now, including responsibility to understand each other (Arnett 2015). It is a form of ethical stance that forces us, following Kulpa and Mizielińska’s (2016) profound summation, to continuously question:

[W]hat do “here” and “now” mean—for you, for me, for us? How do we (re)construct them? What elements of a past are persistent in the present? In what form will the present survive into a future? . . . What will become history, and what will remain forgotten forever? Unspoken? Unwritten? (12)

Such grounding brings forward histories of places and spaces—their past and present geo-temporalities, with the borders created, reconfigured, dismantled, and re-drawn—and cultures in their permanence and fluidity as determining the kind of feminist work that needs to be done locally and often influencing how it is to be done. Tenacious hope, with its commitment to the present, doing the work, openly acknowledging our biases, and actively paying attention to surprising and revealing aspects of life (Arnett 2018), then, is realized through courage and resolve to take “a feminist orientation, a way of facing the world, which includes facing what we might not recognize, with others we do not yet know” (Ahmed 2014, 188).

Evgeniya: Locally grounded, hopeful feminism(t)s create new terms in their native languages that do not exist in English-speaking communities and through language a) establish their own feminist vocabulary to signify phenomena that were first recorded in these locations or concepts first formulated there and b) resist colonization of knowledge through the use of English that often “becomes the oppressive tool of controlling access to, and distribution of (academic) knowledge” (Kulpa and Mizielinska 2016, 21). For example, a term *зетерообре́чённость* (heterofatality) (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021, 134) was coined by an anonymous activist collective in Ukraine in 2017. It analytically captures “a social regime” (similar to heteronormativity) and also “the state of mind that determines people’s lives painfully and hopelessly” (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021, 134). Another word, *zboku*, is made up of two Ukrainian words—*збоку* (aside, next to) and *збоченство* (perversion-ness)—coined by ZBOKU, a Ukrainian activist collective. The collective conceptualized *zboku* as a “decolonizing gesture toward the word ‘queer’” (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021, 129) that distorts the very concept, “turns it over and places a conversation in the east instead of west, in the south instead of north, on the bottom instead of the top. . . . Because there is . . . (political) stubbornness in ‘zbochenstvo.’ There is mutual exchange, mutual support, and vulnerability that unite us all” (Zboku [Збоку] n.d.).

Ahmed (2014) suggests that “the moment of hope is when the ‘not yet’ impresses upon us in the present, such that we must act, politically, to make it our future” (184), urging us that hope is tied to the present moment through our actions. Similarly, Arnett (2022) insists that tenacious hope “strives in spite of the circumstances, attending to locality with an aspiration for change and transformation” (39) and is expressed through action and not mere waiting that the future will bring about the needed change. Locally grounded feminism(t)s, therefore, are crucial to keep the hope for different futures alive.

4. How are feminisms and feminists moving toward tenacious hope, or how can they?

It is important that feminists, regardless of their geographic location, political leanings, and agenda, recognize the power of hope in their work and its lasting presence in feminist activism (Ahmed 2014; Martinsson and Mulinary 2018). Moving toward tenacious hope globally would mean acknowledging that feminist activist practices can and do take various forms and that the level of their visibility, (un)eventfulness (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021), and integration or lack thereof into other broader movement(s) do not define their feminist-ness. Commitment to working toward political, economic, and social equity for all marginalized groups in a given locale does.

For feminism(t)s, moving toward tenacious hope can look different depending on their locations, availability of resources, safety, and an array of other factors. Since tenacious hope dwells in “honest admission of partiality and responsive attentiveness to the revelatory, the unexpected” (Arnett 2018, 281), feminism(t)s can, when needed and depending on how these factors intersect, lean

toward one of the poles of the tensions inherent to tenacious hope and move farther from the other, engaging in creative interpretation of hope.

Evgeniya: Moving toward tenacious hope can be expressed through varying commitments. For example, “uneventful feminism” (Mayerchyk and Plakhotnik 2021, 127) in Ukraine embraces “anti-nationalist and anti-colonial agendas” (122), and the work of activist collectives that belong to uneventful feminism is defined as being unsuccessful—“opposing the capitalist meaning of success” (126) and not seeking mass-influence but rather finding alternative ways of socio-political engagement (Mayerchyk and Plakhotnik 2021). In some locations, moving toward tenacious hope translates into anonymity to avoid persecution, like Feminist Antiwar Resistance in Russia (Dubina and Arkhipova 2023). As tenacious hope “permits the meeting and understanding of monologic ground that matters to another” (Arnett 2015, 4), moving toward it, here, means rejecting neoliberal demand for visibility and, through remaining anonymous, attaining ambiguity and continuing to recognize and embrace differences. Both ambiguity and recognition of difference are crucial for continuing feminist work even in the most hostile of environments.

In other locations, since tenacious hope implies “simultaneous attentiveness to others and relationships” (Arnett 2014, 274), opacity becomes another way toward being tenaciously hopeful. Raili Marling (2021) stresses that opacity, even though it presumes “unknowability” (103), also involves relation and solidarity with those who we labor to truly know and see. There is already a glimpse of tenacious hope as the basis for opacity, as it is the movement toward others and “knowing one’s own position and learning that of others” (Arnett 2022, 24) that is important for both. Taken together, these examples show how feminism(t)s practice “creativity in response to existential conditions” (Arnett 2022, 58), or, in other words, embrace tenacious hope as an important orientation for feminist activism. Being tenaciously hopeful—locally and independently when needed—then inspires conscious collaboration with others transnationally and translocally.

Conclusion

As we bring our essay to a close and reflect upon tenacious hope, we have a greater appreciation for the multiple, conflicting, challenging, and invigorating areas with which feminisms contend—namely, lived precarities, constitution of knowledge, and ethics. Making tenacious hope visible as one of the feminism(t) commitments in times of utter despair, and recognizing various creative ways of engaging in feminist activist practices to enact tenacious hope, makes the very act of hoping in feminism a political act (Ahmed 2014). It also means we should refrain from imposing a uniform understanding of how the tenacious hope-feminisms nexus looks. With that, conversations surrounding tenacious hope as a feminist orientation would look different in different environments or might be impossible or almost impossible in these different environments at certain times. Yet, tenacious hope reminds us that feminism, regardless of the location, “fights ignorance, prejudice, and injustice in all of its forms, *using all possible strategies for*

change" (Ghodsee 2019, 243, emphasis added), and it is often in the unity of opposites, seeming incompatibilities, that tenacious hope dwells.

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Leading from the Middle

Calvin L. Troup

Abstract: Augustine’s rhetoric and philosophy of communication is incarnational. This essay explores *praxis* (theory-informed action) implications of Augustine’s incarnational commitments for leadership communication, which he locates within households and commonwealths or, as we might say, in communities. First, the essay establishes Augustine’s incarnational grounds for leadership practices, including the necessary relationship between humility and dialogue in a triadic framework. Once grounded, the essay considers questions of communication practice according to three major coordinates: authority, confession, and community. Finally, the essay reflects on how Augustine’s orientation of incarnational rhetoric and philosophy of communication invites us to “lead from the middle.”

Keywords: Augustine; incarnation; leadership communication; dialogue; rhetoric

About 2,100 years ago, the Roman empire suffered from a leadership void. People equipped with the character, training, and experience to lead the ship of state opted out of government leadership. The public preferred rogue eloquence—fine-sounding words devoid of wisdom—that propelled and defended the eruption of mobs. As thoughtful public deliberation disappeared, sage leaders who professed wisdom through eloquence retreated into private lives to protect their families and fortunes from frivolous lawsuits in an increasingly litigious society. Cicero (1949) explains these conditions in *De inventione*, a work he wrote as a young man describing the decline of the Roman Republic. After a lifetime of leadership in the Roman Republic, he was proscribed (the government took his property and his head) as Imperial Rome emerged.

Perhaps every age bemoans a lack of leadership, which is easy to allege but difficult to prove. But Cicero provides helpful insights that link wisdom and eloquence, rhetoric and oratory to good leadership. He insists that good leadership *praxis* puts principles into practice. For Cicero, however, wisdom and eloquence are not sufficient. In the lost book *Hortensius*, he indicates that leadership, the work of the ideal orator, requires wisdom and eloquence with virtue (Augustine 2014). Virtuous leadership is a function of ethical communication practices; the wise

leader faithfully unites word and deed. Although unattainable, Cicero considers this a worthy end for leaders to pursue.

Augustine (354–430 AD) extends Cicero's (106–43 BC) commitments to rhetoric as ethical leadership practice. As Augustine served the emperor teaching rhetoric in the imperial city of Milan, the *Hortensius* sparked an unquenchable fire in him to acquire the kind of practical wisdom to which Cicero aspired. Augustine's pursuit of wisdom appears in the *Confessions*. He charts a path through the wisdom and knowledge of his world—from the Manicheans through academic skepticism to the Platonists—none of which approached Cicero's high standard. Only the Incarnation—the union of word and deed by Jesus Christ—could satisfy the expectation Cicero had set for Augustine (2014, III.iv.7, X.iv.6).

In *De doctrina Christiana*, Augustine (1997) builds directly on Ciceronian coordinates and rationale for ethical rhetoric. Augustine favors wisdom over eloquence alone: "He who speaks eloquently is heard with pleasure; he who speaks wisely is heard with profit" (IV.v.8). Yet Augustine advocates the study of both, since silent wisdom is of little value:

Who would dare to say that truth should stand in the person of its defenders unarmed against lying, so that they who wish to urge falsehoods may know how to make their listeners benevolent, or attentive, or docile in their presentation, while the defenders of truth are ignorant of that art? (IV.ii.3)

The rhetorical tradition we have been considering, sometimes called the school of civic rhetoric, includes Protagoras, Aristotle, and Isocrates in Greece; Cicero, Quintilian, and Augustine in Rome; and the medieval encyclopedists through Vico in the Italian Renaissance (Troup 2009, 242–43). The school of civic rhetoric is a shared rhetoric of the Greek *polis*, the Roman republican commonwealth, and ethical leadership communication that functions best within the sound of the human voice, a consideration impossible in any imperial realm (Guinness 2016, 58–59). A working definition attributable to the school of civic rhetoric illustrates a *praxis* approach to leadership as a teachable, practical art: rhetoric is the art of making wise choices about future courses of action, in contingent situations, based on probabilities, not certainties, to the greatest degree that the case will allow.

Substitute "leadership" for "rhetoric," and the fact that Cicero, Augustine, and others in the school of civic rhetoric equate the two becomes obvious. The practical art of rhetoric, according to the school of civic rhetoric, *is* leadership. Yet the correlations between leadership and rhetorical *praxis* are philosophical as well as definitional. Truth and wisdom guide ethical communication across the full spectrum of leadership, the purpose of which Augustine (1998) says in *City of God* is to coordinate social action. The human dynamics of coordinating social action through rhetoric and persuasion constitute the demands of leadership, in contrast with techniques of social control informed by mass psychologism that have been dominant since the early twentieth century (see Bernays 1928; Ewen 1996; Tye 1998). Since the turn of the twenty-first century, these techniques have only accelerated and been amplified by digital technologies, devices, and infrastructure.

To explore ways in which an approach to leadership today might be informed by an incarnational communication ethic, this essay first establishes Augustine's grounds for incarnational leadership, including the necessary relationship between humility and dialogue in a triadic framework. The grounds for "leading from the middle" open further questions of communication practices according to three major coordinates: authority, community, and confession. Finally, this study will reflect on how Augustine's orientation of incarnational rhetoric and philosophy of communication invites people in leadership roles to "lead from the middle."

Incarnational Rhetoric: Humility and Dialogue in a Triadic Framework

Augustine's conversion to Christianity offers an entry point for pursuit of Cicero's enigma—how to unite wisdom, eloquence, and virtue in practice—an ethical rhetoric and philosophy of communication. The solution is the Incarnation (Augustine 1997; 2014). The Incarnation solves the ethical dilemma posed by dominant mind-body dualisms in the thought systems of Augustine's day, announcing the mind and body as an integral whole and essentially good (see Augustine 1997, I.xxiv.25). Ultimately, the Incarnation presents the human person as a singular whole in whom heart, mind, soul, and strength are indivisible. The oneness of the incarnate person is manifested in resurrection. The person is not an embodied spirit. Therefore, the division of body and soul at death, which does violence to the human person, requires resurrection for human life (I.xix.18). Augustine (2014) goes on to build his entire rhetoric, epistemology, and hermeneutic on incarnational ground (X.iv.6, XI.ii.4). He recognizes the perfect union of good word (wisdom and eloquence) and good deed (virtue) in Jesus Christ (2014, X.xliii; 1997, I.xxxvi).

But the Incarnation introduces a virtue alien to the conventional rhetorical framework for leadership: humility. Humility has no place in Greco-Roman rhetoric or leadership. Why? Because humility is no virtue in Greco-Roman culture. As Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) explains about the Greco-Roman view, humility is associated with servitude and subjugation, not leadership. The Roman schools of rhetoric in which Augustine (2014) had first learned taught the conventional wisdom: lead by winning through artful eloquence without regard for truth or goodness (I.xviii.28–29). The ethic was formal and aesthetic, and the goal was conquest, not service. Therefore, an advocate could take pride in having a guilty client acquitted, if not an innocent opponent convicted (IV.ii.2).

The Incarnation is intrinsically humble. We see the simple logic of humility as told to children in the traditional story of the Nativity. Jesus is born into the world as a helpless baby, wrapped in cloth and laid in a manger. The conditions indicate the circumstantial humility abhorred by leaders in the Greco-Roman world. But Jesus did not merely find himself in humble circumstances. He humbled himself. In this second sense, humility radically alters the terms and conditions of leadership. The integral, virtuous union of word and deed as

leadership *praxis* is predicated by volitional (not circumstantial) humility. Augustine locates the entry into ethical rhetoric and wise leadership in a volitional humility essential to the Incarnation (Augustine 1997, I.xiv.13; Elshtain 2018, 50–51, 66; Troup 1999, 145–78). The humility of the Incarnation is stated succinctly in the Book of Philippians as follows:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5–8)¹

The Incarnation teaches personal humility as a prime virtue. Jesus is not merely an object lesson or example. He exhibits and inhabits humility. Yes, God himself enters the field of human life, the essence of humility. Wisdom himself comes into the world in heart, soul, strength, and mind, speaking and acting as a fully human person. And he walks onto the scene as the humble teacher instructing, exhorting, correcting, and encouraging humility, particularly for leaders.

Jesus teaches humility in leadership directly. The one who would save his own life will lose it (Matthew 16:25). The first shall be last, and the last shall be first (Matthew 20:16). The one who would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave (Matthew 20:26). The word and deed, volitional humility of the Incarnation is taught through proclamation and the practice of washing the disciples' feet: the poignancy of the lesson appears in the disciples' objection not to the word but to the deed. Jesus demands that the lecture and the lessons be received wholeheartedly (John 13:1–20).

The teaching has been embraced by a school of leadership known as “servant leadership,” first popularized through the work of Robert Greenleaf (2008). While the servant leadership moniker has become a Christian leadership commonplace, Greenleaf's articulation of servant leadership is not “religious” in the sense of requiring Christian belief for effective practice. But volitional humility incarnate is his cardinal virtue for leadership.

The Incarnation teaches humility as a predicate for good leadership. Classical virtue means fulfilling an ideal design, perfectly exemplifying the characteristics of a class, category, or species. Champion show animals are virtuous; they embody the standards of their respective breeds. Humility defines virtue for incarnational leadership. The standards call leaders to forge ordinary practices directed by humility, oriented by confession, and focused on neighbors, not self. With leadership *praxis* in mind, what might humility in incarnational leadership *live* like?

¹ All scriptural quotations in this article are taken from the English Standard Version of the Bible.

That humility leads through the Incarnation remains paradoxical. The conventional wisdom today echoes Greco-Roman inclinations against humility: Humility is weakness. Leadership requires strength associated with pride. A low opinion of oneself disqualifies one from leadership. The circumstances of humility would seem to stifle agency, precluding action and making leadership impossible. The point here is not that incarnational leadership magically makes pride and humility synonymous. No, pride and humility are antithetical.

Yet Augustine (1997) maintains that through the Incarnation, God chose to inhabit the profound limits of human personhood—the uncreated being becoming creaturely (I.xiv). To embrace or incarnate the human condition indicates a humble valence, but the humility of the Incarnation is willful and active. Rather than disrupting action, humble volition serves as a robust motive for human agency in leadership that is antithetical to pride.

The pridefulness against which incarnational humility works is well defined by Jean Bethke Elshtain (2018). Reflecting on Augustine’s work, she says that pridefulness “turns on the ground that we are the sole and only ground of our own being,” including “the presumption that one can master knowledge and attain epistemic completeness and certainty through one’s own unaided efforts . . . a refusal to recognize finitude itself, hence our own radical incompleteness” (51).

Augustine repeatedly attacks pride and embraces incarnate humility in the *Confessions*. He confronts pridefulness using a figure of thought called *aporia*. Through *aporia*, Augustine confounds us with questions he himself cannot answer to force the issue of human finitude. For example, amid an extended line of questioning on the nature of time, Augustine (2014) pauses to say:

Behold how you have made my days old, and they pass away, but how I do not know. We talk of time and time, of times and times: “How long ago did he say this?” “How long ago did he do this?” “How long a time since I saw that?” “This syllable takes twice the time of that short simple syllable.” We say these things, and we hear them, and we are understood, and we understand. They are most clear and most familiar, but again they are very obscure, and their solution is a new task. (XI.xxii.28)

After a number of pages of continuing questions, Augustine says, “How then do I know this, when I do not know what time is? Or perhaps I do not know how to express what I know? Woe is me, who do not even know what I do not know!” (XI.xxv.32).

Through *aporia*, Augustine (1997) consistently calls us to embrace humility and reject pride, because “[k]nowledge puffs up; but charity edifies” (II.xli.62). He takes his lead from the Incarnation itself. Jesus, always already equal with God, did not see equality with God as something to be grasped (Phillipians 2:6). And, radically, Augustine claims repeatedly that no position exists that could possibly place one person over another (1997, I.XXIII.xxiii; 1998, XIX.xv; 2014, XIII.xxiii).

Good leadership never grasps for equality or recognition. Although he was never self-seeking, Jesus never denied his deity. He received worship and exercised his power in service of others (never in service to self). Volitional

humility-in-practice meant dedicating himself to serving others wholeheartedly. The call to leadership is wholehearted service to others in love (Augustine 1998, XIX.xiv).

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis ([1942] 2001b) develops the antitheses of humility by contrasting diabolical and incarnational humility. Diabolical humility tries to hold a low opinion of oneself, particularly one's gifts, abilities, and character, which invites a certain level of self-deception. The purpose of demonic humility is "keeping their minds endlessly revolving on themselves," but incarnational humility's purpose is to "turn the man's attention away from self to Him [God], and to the man's neighbours" (70–71). Lewis elaborates:

The enemy wants to bring the man to a state of mind in which he could design the best cathedral in the world, and know it to be the best, and rejoice in the fact, without being any more (or less) or otherwise glad at having done it than he would be if it had been done by another. The enemy wants him, in the end, to be so free from any bias in his own favour that he can rejoice in his own talents as frankly and gratefully as in his neighbour's talents—or in a sunrise, an elephant, or a waterfall. (71)

Focus of attention, not self-deprecation, is pivotal to incarnate, volitional humility. "Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call 'humble' nowadays . . . always telling you that, of course, he is nobody," says Lewis ([1952] 2001a). Instead, he "will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all" (127).

And the Incarnation teaches precisely this sort of humility—acute self-awareness that propels service, not self-absorption. Jesus knows himself perfectly and never deprecates himself. He is unconcerned with himself. And he knows others perfectly: "He himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25). He claims deity and never denies his own power or position as the Son of God. And he acts accordingly in every circumstance.

Jesus maintains humility even when his deity becomes evident. He receives worship, which in Hebrew teaching would be blasphemous for any creature (John 9:38). Angels always reject worship, which is reserved for God alone. When the disciple Peter professes, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus affirms Peter's profession, blesses the disciples gathered with him, and asks them to tell no one this truth (Matthew 16:13–20).

Jesus acts decisively as a leader, but exclusively in the interests of God the Father and his neighbors, never in his own interests. Perhaps the most poignant examples of Christ's constant orientation come in the temptations of the wilderness and the garden. In the wilderness temptation, Satan tempts Jesus to abandon his devotion to God the Father and to serve himself. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is tempted to abandon the Father's will and to preserve his own life at the expense of all who would be saved through his sacrificial death. Only Jesus fulfills the two great commandments—to love God and neighbor—which is only accomplished by acting at his own expense. He dies not against his will but through the action of volitional humility.

G. K. Chesterton (1959) captures this antithetical form of humility as driving action: "A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth. . . . Nowadays the part of a man that a man does assert is exactly the part he ought not to assert—himself." The link to action follows: "The old humility made a man doubtful about his efforts, which might make him work harder. But the new humility makes a man doubtful about his aims, which will make him stop working altogether" (31–32).

Jesus leads through action in word and deed in both the wilderness and the garden. He conducts himself within dialogues that reveal volitional humility. In the wilderness he talks with Satan, a fallen creature, in the presence of God. In the garden he talks with God the Father in the presence of the disciples. These examples are repeated throughout the gospel narratives, in which the mutual presence of God and others is always assumed and regularly articulated. The prophets and apostles likewise assume the constant, simultaneous presence of God and neighbor as a present reality, not an abstract concept or idea in any hypothetical sense. The dialogue may engage God with neighbors present or in mind or engage neighbors with God present. Occasionally, the dialogue engages both together, as in public prayer or preaching.

The wilderness and the garden dialogues teach us a volitional humility manifested in a triadic, incarnate relationship between persons. As C. S. Peirce and Mikhail Bakhtin, among others, indicate, incarnate dialogue is triadic in nature and structure. Their accounts suggest that all human dialogue is triadic semiotically, assuming the presence of a "third" that conditions the conduct and contributes to the content of the conversation (Peirce 1931, 1.345–46; Bakhtin 1993, 125–26; Bakhtin [1990] 2014, 597–603).

The situation, direction, and action of triadic dialogue demonstrates the volitional humility of incarnational leadership. Jesus humbles himself by coming *down* to lead his people, working within a people whom he gathers around himself for their sakes. He takes on the ancient name Immanuel. In so doing, he locates all good human leadership in the middle of the people and in the middle of things.

Since God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we are reminded that alienation between God and humankind as well as alienation between people are horizontal chasms, not vertical ones. God has always been coming down, condescending to initiate personal relationship with his people in their community (Isaiah 57:15). The Incarnation is prefigured communally throughout the Exodus in the tabernacle in which *Yahweh* dwells, a tent placed amid the tents of his people throughout their wilderness wanderings (Numbers 2). And Jesus centers the eschatological dwelling of his people in the City of God around himself in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1–4).

Incarnational leadership is necessarily humble leadership. The humility in view is volitional and is conducted within community through word and deed. Rather than a humility that expects leaders to hold a low opinion of themselves, the volitional humility taught by Jesus Christ is practiced through dedicated service to God and neighbor, without attention to oneself. The inattentiveness is self-denial, not in judgment of self but in a steady focus of attention elsewhere for the good of others (Luke 9:23). Augustine (1997) explains that he would never have

converted apart from this singular fact; the virtue of humility emerges through the Incarnation in accord with obedience to the two great commandments observed simultaneously without regard for reward or recognition of self (XXVI–XXVII). Under such conditions, leadership emerges to advance love and liberty in the middle of the people being led. The incarnational leader leads from the middle.

Humble Authority

Leading from the middle means working *under* authority. The Roman centurion from the gospel narrative explains this well when he sends attachés to Jesus asking him to heal a servant. Jesus says he will come to the centurion's home. But the centurion indicates that Jesus need only speak a word, not come in person, saying, "I too am a man set under authority" (Luke 7:8). Not only can the centurion direct soldiers or servants to accomplish certain purposes, but he is also always, to use Bakhtin's (1993) term, "answerable" (40). In other words, all human authority works within an *a priori* "ought."

Leading under authority means that all human leaders are ultimately answerable to someone other than themselves and should act accordingly. As Bakhtin (1993) explains, triadic dialogue describes answerability—leading under authority—as a *given*. The "third" present in the conduct of all human dialogue holds an active, authoritative role to which we are always appealing for judgment, relying on for judgment, or, perhaps, ignoring as though to avoid judgment (28, 37–38, 56). Triadic dialogue accounts for an authority structure within human language that results in answerability, to which leadership must respond. Authority is an intrinsic feature of human communication. Accordingly, virtue emerges directly within human action.

The answerability of authority puts leaders in and under authority simultaneously. Understood in this way, human authority functions within a humble ethic of action that is a linguistic given, not a human construct. The centurion recognizes Jesus' authority *and* identifies with Jesus as though working under authority is a commonplace. He assumes Jesus will understand, and Jesus commends the centurion for exercising exceptional faith.

Humble leadership recognizes that authority is given. Therefore, no one can take authority, and no one needs to claim authority. The reference point for human authority is never oneself. Instead, being under authority, to be received and ordered under role and responsibility, is a condition of leadership. What the centurion assumed about Jesus leading under given authority Jesus explicated when he said that he did nothing on his own authority, only that which God the Father willed him to do (John 12:14–15; 14:10).

Guiding, directing, assigning, delegating, and deciding can all be done under authority, but status subsides. Moses's assignment to future kings of Israel exemplifies humble authority that embraces leadership but forsakes status:

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the

Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel. (Deuteronomy 17:18–20)

By contrast, attempts to establish, claim, or take authority make an authoritarian power move that departs from humble authority altogether. Authoritarian leadership defies the constraints essential to authority.

Humble authority acknowledges spatial and temporal limits of office and role. The limits constitute the boundaries within which leadership freely operates under authority. As Augustine (1998) describes in *City of God*, commonwealth emerges from humble household leadership in which the head of household is compelled by love to subordinate himself sacrificially to the needs of others (XIX.xvi). Humility is required if the house is to be ordered by love. But the authority is limited within the household. The household functions under the customary and legal authority of the commonwealth, an authority established by the alliance of households.

Office and role delimit humble authority, calling for leadership within a specific mission constrained by given conditions and circumstances. As a mentor under whom I served for a time often remarked, people love the cliché of “outside-the-box” thinking by leaders, when the stark reality is that the best leadership takes place “inside the box.” Because human leadership is necessarily incarnate, the leader’s limits must be included in the conditions and circumstances under which authority is exercised.

Under authority, a prime task of leadership is to frame the terms of discussion, of deliberation, and of decision contexts—the “box” in which creative, constructive initiatives and solutions can emerge. Leaders work in this way to shepherd communities, institutions, and organizations while remaining faithful to their respective missions. Humble authority does not engineer the leader’s desired decision but the conditions for good decisions to emerge.

Beyond households, institutions, and organizations, humble authority builds commonwealth through concerted leadership. Commonwealth, as envisioned by Augustine (1998), must be carefully orchestrated by leaders working together, because contesting, demanding, or asserting authority confounds commonwealth (XIX.xvi).

Humble leaders work under and *from* authority. The focus of attention for such leaders shifts from authority and self to mission and the community. Working from authority frees leadership for humble service within households, institutions, organizations, and beyond for the good of their respective communities.

Humble Community

Leading from the middle means working with people and through people, not working around people. Community is a necessary condition for leadership, no

matter how community might differ from case to case. Remembering Augustine's definition of rhetoric as the coordination of social action, a gathering of persons predicates human leadership. As the patterns of Moses and Jesus suggest, incarnational humility precludes overlords, those who would lead as elites above the community (Matthew 20:25).

In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1978) explains that the reality of community is humble. Idealism concerning community, what Bonhoeffer calls a "wish-dream" of community, makes the idealist an authoritarian overlord prone to dismantle the real community (26–27). Leaders are inclined to fall prey to arrogant idealism:

God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own law, and judges the brethren and God Himself accordingly. He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of brethren. . . . So he becomes first an accuser of his brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally an accuser of himself. (27–28)

Real communities inhabited by incarnate human beings shatter illusions and present the conditions under which only humble authority can sustain community life. To begin, community life is constituted within the limits of human finitude. Beyond basic finitude, Bonhoeffer (1978) forces us to accept the pervasive reality of willful sin and the presence of evil in ourselves, others, and our communities. The recognition of sin and evil should be an antidote to the twin arrogances of pietism and irreverence (26–27).

Humble leadership works to feed humility and starve arrogance in the community. Pride believes itself to be worthy of demanding and controlling community resources, but humble leaders quietly make resources scarce for those who cannot demonstrate humble service. Resources follow service—the exercise of formal and informal humble leadership—in a healthy community.

To lead humbly is to honor the willing offer of humble service. Volition cannot be required. As Martin Buber taught, many things essential to community cannot be mandated (Arnett 1986, 172–73). Unless voluntary, constructive acts turn toxic and stifle the community they would cultivate if offered freely. And in this sense, the health and strength of community leadership depends upon a coalition of the willing: people who will work together under authority and from authority for the good of a confessing community.

Humble Confession

Leading from the middle depends upon the act and regular practice of confession, a willing act of humility that occurs within community under and according to a given word now spoken or recalled. The maxim "actions speak louder than words" misses the reality that, for human beings, words predicate all meaningful, ethical acts. Word and deed are inextricably linked, even when twisted. Language animates human action in space and time, including the action of leadership. Our

words locate us in dialogue under authority and in community—the context for incarnational leadership.

The purpose of incarnational leadership is to work under authority to advance confessional content and community action through a mission grounded in that authority. The confessional word may be personally expressed but is never merely self-expression. Self-expression advances personal power without authority. To act under authority is humble, confessing that someone or something other than oneself provides the content of leadership.

Therefore, the humble confession of incarnate leadership listens first. Leaders listen for the given word of authority, learning the grounds and boundaries from which to lead. Confessional acts of leadership respond to the given word—a word of mission for the community, not for the leader. The leader engages the community in confession, understanding confession as the action through which the community responds and working under the same authority, word, and mission that calls for and compels leadership.

Os Guinness (2015) posits that the alternative to confession is hypocrisy:

Open, voluntary confession is part and parcel of a strong and comprehensive view of truth, and therefore of realism and responsibility. Whatever we do and have done, whether right or wrong, is a matter of record and reality. Responsibly owning up to it therefore aligns us to reality and to truth in a way that liberates. And far from being weak or an act of surrender, confession is the expression of rare moral courage, for in confessing a person demonstrates the strength of character to go on record against himself or herself. (203, italics in the original)

Resonance between leaders and the community under given authority is the essence of leadership in good faith. Guinness continues, “When we confess, we face the truth, shoulder the responsibility for what we have done, and walk forward without the complicating clutter created by lies or the fear of exposure” (204). To listen to the word of authority and respond by confessing under authority in the community produces high-fidelity leadership—faithfulness in word and deed. The virtue of incarnate leadership is confessional action predicated by word so faithfully that word and deed are indistinguishable from one another in space and time. Thus, we can understand leadership under authority as responsive to confessional truth and as recognizing truth-in-action, an *alethaic* form of rhetoric marked by coherent truthfulness, faithfulness, and goodness (Troup and Christians 2014, 164–71). To lead with *alethaic* rhetoric is an exercise in building trust within the community. People can count on the leader in word and deed.

But faithfulness in word and deed never surpasses *proximate* fidelity. Human leaders work under conditions of finitude and failure. The limit conditions of human leadership are both internal and external. Internally, we are prone to errors in judgment, practical and moral. Externally, challenges in the world and life surpass human capacities and make every human leader inadequate. Proximate fidelity requires appropriate confession of inadequacies and infidelities as a function of leading under authority. Incarnational leadership confesses mistakes and sins against the mission and the community. Infidelities compromise

leadership, but confession can restore proximate fidelity—the confession of errors and a return from an error toward the goodness of the given word and mission of the community.

Bonhoeffer (1978) explains the value of confession for the community in his classic work *Life Together*: “In confession the break-through to community takes place” (112). What is not confessed leads to withdrawal, isolation, and “poisons the whole being of a person.” But practicing confession of mistakes and sins in leadership is daunting:

Confession in the presence of a brother is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts, it cuts a man down, it is a dreadful blow to pride. To stand there before a brother as a sinner is an ignominy that is almost unbearable. . . . this humiliation is so hard we continually scheme to evade confessing to a brother. Our eyes are so blinded that they no longer see the promise and the glory in such abasement. (114)

The conventional wisdom that dissociates humility from leadership cannot countenance confession. To confess is a sign of weakness. Confessing mistakes, errors, and sins diminishes authority over others, pride of office, and power.

Pride takes responsibility by recognizing error and assigning blame. As Bonhoeffer (1978) observes of church leaders,

A pastor should not complain about his congregation, certainly never to other people, but also not to God. A congregation [community] has not been entrusted to him in order that he should become its accuser before God and men. When a person becomes alienated from a Christian community in which he has been placed and begins to raise complaints about it, he had better examine himself first. (29–30)

As Bonhoeffer notes, evading confession leads people to place themselves over and to turn against legitimate authority and real communities. To mock authority and scoff at community is easy precisely because of the mistakes and failures of leadership. A critical spirit asks a question, but never an honest one. And the questions of attribution are poorly disguised, mere assertions in the form of unanswerable queries designed to trigger scripted accusations.

As a practice, to confess as a leader is difficult, particularly at the beginning. But proximate fidelity in leadership can only be accomplished as an established practice and habit of leadership. The difficult confessional practice of incarnational leadership repeatedly turns toward and returns to the given, authoritative word and the community under which it works, owning errors, mistakes, deceits, and sins. Unconcerned with their own voices, not speaking or acting for themselves, incarnate leaders do not degenerate into critique or advocacy but continue to engage and build through proclamation that can function in dialogue by virtue of the intrinsic humility of confession.

The proximate fidelity found through the practice of confession in incarnational leadership produces good fruit. Under authority and in community, incarnate leaders can ask honest questions, provide honest answers, and maintain openness without reacting or responding to criticism of their persons,

communities, or authority. Under authority and in community, incarnate leaders can define the terms of engagement and the boundary conditions for decision-making and direction. Under authority and in community, incarnate leaders can function as teachers, mediators, and moderators, engaged in confessional forms of listening, dialogue, and proclamation. Under authority and in community, incarnate leaders can initiate proximate practices and norms aligned with missional words and deeds, assessing their constructive merits from which good policies can emerge.

Conclusion: Leading from the Middle

Leading from the middle is the heart of incarnational leadership. Granted, most leaders in the world do not serve as chief executive officers, presidents, monarchs, or dictators, but that is not the point. Rather, authority situates every human leadership role “in the middle.”

The concept that authority has no real existence, that authority can be reduced to just one more hegemonic structure, relies on a hermeneutic circle that ends up with leadership inescapably in the middle. If authority is a construct, then no one really has authority, only power that cannot be maintained. Michel Foucault (1980) taught this persuasively. In power relationships, right and wrong, good and evil, fidelity and infidelity are simple sentiments or diabolical fictions. Nevertheless, the death of the author and the eradication of any signifier associated with the crucifixion has been preferred to the Incarnation (Barthes 1977; Kristeva 1986, 226–27, 236).

But if authority exists, it belongs to no human leader as its master. Rather, it masters us all. We are all under authority. To lead well means first to acknowledge and identify the scope of our assignment under authority. We are in the middle to begin with. And second, we are in the middle of a community—because, as Augustine (1997; 1998; 2014) insisted, no human being stands above another in person. Authority is not, after all, a matter of age or beauty, height or weight, male or female, or of any ethnicity or skin color, but of role and responsibility within a living human community. In this sense, leadership is never status, only service within a mission—a duty station (Schultze 2005, 15). Leadership assignments and responsibilities vary from one station to another. None are simple, and all are important to the health and welfare of people and peoples. But both wisdom and observation insist that good leadership proceeds *in medias res*—in the middle of things.

Leadership from the middle is humble because it follows the Incarnation proper. It is humble because it is incarnate. It is humble because it is necessarily under authority, a word heard and confessed. It is further humble because it is confessional in and for a community. The humble confession of leadership proclaims a word of mission that builds up. It is constructive in word and deed, even when corrective, working to coordinate social action through wise choices about courses of action, not for self, but under authority for the confessional community.

Finally, incarnational leadership—humans leading one another from the middle—is proximate, because it is limited and lost, but it can be good when humble and confessional, because the Incarnation promises and delivers on true redemption, even through suffering.

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The Department and the Discipline—Permanence and Change: Interview with Richard H. Thames

Richard H. Thames

The following offers an interview with Richard H. Thames, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University, conducted by graduate assistants Michael R. Kearney and Natalia E. Tapsak on September 8, 2023. Dr. Thames reflects on his professional association with Ronald C. Arnett and the ways that Arnett's scholarship, teaching, and service influenced the department and the discipline.

How would you describe the department's approach and position in the discipline when you first joined?

That's ancient! You're going to find out approximately how old I am!

Actually, I wound up joining the department rather unexpectedly. I had been in the seminary and had gotten interested in rhetoric through one of my professors. I asked him where I should go, and since I was already in town, he said, "Just across town—Pitt." He gave me a recommendation, and I received a teaching assistantship. I thought this meant I would be assisting someone, but I was notified just before classes started that I would be teaching two Public Speaking classes. I said, "This is going to be difficult because I've never *taken* public speaking!" I thought public speaking was a remedial course in college, and I had been somewhat surprised, when I got interested in rhetoric, to find out that there were departments in speech and that you could even get a PhD in speech. My neighbor happened to teach speech at one of the nearby girls' private schools, Winchester Thurston, and her sister taught at Duquesne. They offered to help me put my class together. I met them for an evening, and they gave me some help, but I pretty much went off on my own.

Two years later, there was a note on my kitchen table from my roommate saying, "There's a job at Duquesne. It's yours, if you want it." I said, "Yeah, I want it!" I made an appointment to get interviewed. I went over for the interview on the third of July, and on the fifth, which was just before my birthday on the sixth, they

called—I had the job. The only thing was I had to learn phonetics. So, that gives you a clue.

Phonetics was required in the School of Education because they were trying to get rid of all kinds of rural accents so their people would sound educated. I would walk in and say (with a thick Southern accent—I grew up in Alabama), “I’m Professor Thames, and I’m going to teach you how to talk right.” At one point, I wound up teaching three phonetics classes a semester for a year. It was horrible! I taught that and public speaking. After about three years, one of the faculty members left, and they asked me to teach a lecture course.

This was when the department was beginning to expand. It, like many other speech departments, had emerged out of the English department. We became Speech and Theater on the basis of performance, while drama stayed in English. So, we could study Shakespearean plays, and drama students could study Shakespearean texts. The only full professor in our department had a PhD in oral interpretation. For instance, he taught lectors for the diocese, acting, and a number of other things. The reason I had gotten the job was because a member of the department became ill with an unexpected illness, and they didn’t know if he would come back. He taught directing and courses like that. I was hired year to year. There were three people in theater, and one or two in speech. This was the beginning of audiology and speech pathology, which is now part of the Rangos School of Health Sciences. So, we also had a few people from Mercy Hospital teaching then.

That was the department. We had a person who did not even have his master’s and was teaching part-time with us interpersonal and group discussion—the hot new classes at the time. This was when the name “communication” indicated more of a social science approach. There was a great deal of tension between communication and rhetoric in a lot of departments.

So that’s what the department was like when I got there.

What kinds of academic changes took place after that?

The department began to change quite a bit over the next few years. The professor of oral interpretation retired. We dropped a lot of classes in acting and oral interpretation. We hired someone full time to teach interpersonal and group discussion and all those courses that were part of “communication” at the time. My role expanded, and I got to teach a senior-level class. I taught Thomas Kuhn ([1969] 2012). I remember having lunch with somebody from education, and he was flabbergasted that I taught something as complex as Kuhn to my undergraduates. I still do that, by the way; I still talk about paradigms and rhetorical induction in my undergraduate history class.

There was a rather limited sense of what constituted speech at the time. I was doing my best to expand it. I had not gotten my PhD yet. I was three or four courses short, so I was taking those to finally get to my comps and then my PhD. Everybody was telling me I was lazy, and I wasn’t getting my PhD, but I think I was the second person in my cohort to get my PhD, and the other guy beat me by

two weeks. I was the first person in the department that had a PhD in rhetoric and communication.

They had hired a friend of mine from the history department, who was a full professor; the graduate dean had created a position for her. (This was when the college had a dean, and the graduate school had a dean; the dean was dean of more than the college. It was a very strange arrangement. It was only in the next few years that they consolidated the graduate departments in the particular school they were a part of.) The graduate dean, who administered graduate programs in the college as well as other schools at the university, hired a colleague in history to find programs that would cost very little and prove profitable. This colleague discovered “liberal studies” as a popular possibility. It was for people who enjoyed school, missed school, and went back just to read things and have intellectual discussions with other people. At one point, I wound up directing the program for several years.

The other program was a master’s in communication. No one in the department taught in that program before me. When I was finally assigned a course, I insisted that if I was teaching in a graduate program I wanted to be treated like graduate faculty. Graduate faculty typically only had three course preparations, instead of four, which I had had for nearly ten years—two in public speaking and two in phonetics.

At one point, they decided to turn one of the older buildings into a communication center, and they moved journalism and speech down there because both were beginning to take off, particularly under the rubric of mass communication. But part of the problem was that these were two departments that did not typically get along and were constantly fighting—though I had good friends in the journalism department, such as an older friend that taught advertising. He had a house up in Lake Erie, and he would drive me up during the summer that I was doing most of the work on my dissertation. His wife was wonderful. She would ask, “How’s the dissertation going?” She’d look at her watch and say, “All right, that’s ten minutes. I don’t want to hear anything more about it.”

At that point, there was a lot of tension between journalism and communication because they taught *writing* for radio and TV, but we had someone teaching radio and TV *announcing*. Announcing, obviously, was a *speech* function, whereas journalism was a *writing* function. It was the same kind of split that had occurred with English. This was also the beginning of organizational communication, and organizational communication tended to cover some of the same material that PR did. So, there were constant conflicts between us and journalism.

In the mid-80s, they decided they were tired of our fighting over commonalities and who would be teaching what, and they combined the two departments. We became a department of communication. The journalism people chafed at that, and it really did not work well. There was a period when you were seeing journalism and speech being merged together all over the country, and then after about ten or fifteen years, there was a period when all of those departments were splitting up again. When we had been separate, we fought over what we had

in common. Once we got together, we fought over our differences. There were a lot of discussions about scholarship, particularly once we had a PhD program. They wanted to get scholarly credit for writing newspaper and magazine articles, and we said, "No, that's not scholarship."

What led the department to be interested in the work of Ronald C. Arnett and to bring him on as department chair?

Once we merged, they wanted to get an outside person from the field to chair the new department, and the first year's search was botched. They could not find good candidates. I argued that they did not know anybody in the first place and that they needed someone with connections and friends. We also needed to advertise far more widely than we had. I was not on the search committee because there was a committee that was reevaluating all the programs in the college, and they put me on that instead.

We had a national search. Through some connections I had with Iowa, because of some work I had done helping to organize the Kenneth Burke Society conference at Temple University, I asked for recommendations. A friend from Iowa recommended somebody to us who had credentials in both communication and journalism, which seemed perfect. That chair began to hire people who were more in communication than in rhetoric. Some journalism faculty were encouraged to retire, and we took on the character more of a social science program, even though the hired chair and I were in rhetoric.

As the story always seems to go, we didn't get along. There was constant warfare and fighting. We eventually had to begin a search for a new chair. This time, the entire department was on the search committee. We had some extraordinary candidates. I called up a former faculty member and asked if he knew anybody, and he said, "Ron Arnett," who had been one of his wife's professors. I wound up talking with Ron quite a bit on the phone and got him to apply.

We ended up pursuing a different candidate unsuccessfully for about three weeks and received no answer. In the meantime, Ron had been interviewing elsewhere and had been offered a position as provost, because he had been vice president and dean at his alma mater, Manchester College. (In fact, if we really get into the details, we had been interested in Ron during a previous search, before his appointment at Manchester, but we were unable to hire him at that point.) If we had offered Ron the position right out of the gate, we again would not have been able to hire him, because he was waiting on another position as provost. He thought about it and decided he did not want to be an upper-level administrator again. He wanted to be closer to his discipline, and when you are provost or dean, it is more difficult to exercise your discipline. He wanted to come back as chair. We offered him our position three weeks later, after he decided not to take the other job—perfect timing.

What are some of the biggest changes you have seen in the department's approach and position in the discipline since Dr. Arnett became chair?

Once he was hired, Ron had discussions with the president, John Murray, and the provost, Michael P. Weber. I had gotten to know Weber over the course of the year because he had been the graduate dean and had been on the committee for evaluating all the departments in the college. He was very pleased that we had hired Ron, and he and the president talked to Ron, who was interested in starting a PhD program. The dean at the time thought there was more money to be made in PhD programs, so he was in favor of that. Over Ron's first couple of years, he did a very good job of putting a fractious department back together.

By that time, English was going through its own throes. Interpersonal difficulties were rife. They were searching for a new chair. The president suggested that Ron lead the committee, because he had put back together this fractious department. He had a reputation for dealing with things like that. So Ron headed up the search committee for a new English chair. They finally found three people they could all agree on, but when they took the names to the dean and the president, the president felt that Ron had done such an extraordinary job of holding together a fractious search committee and getting them to work well that it was stupid to be going outside to find a chair. Three of the leading candidates were chairs of departments of English and communication, because these disciplines had not universally split over the course of the century; speech was still in some English departments. The president was hesitant to bring in a stranger to oversee the department, to take a chance, when we already had someone who had chaired the committee and proven to be a miracle worker in holding people together. He wound up naming Ron the chair of the English department, and the communication department was then affiliated with English. In return for doing that, the president backed our creation of a committee to explore the possibility of putting together a new PhD program in rhetoric.

We worked on that over the year and submitted our proposal to the state. There were a number of questions. I was on that committee with a faculty member in the English department. We were allowed, then, to start a trial period of the PhD, which could last between three and five years. The PhD was a joint program, and we had a sizable number of people apply. I think Annette Holba may have been one of our first students. Things seemed to be going along swimmingly, except that the English department chafed at having a chairman who was not in English. Ron had gotten along well and had brought the English faculty together. In return, the united English faculty were now united against our being affiliated departments. They wanted to have their own chairman and to break away.

We wound up splitting again, and they found their own chair without Ron's help. Since the English department already had a PhD, we got the newly created PhD program. We were still combined with journalism, and now with the PhD program, there were disputes about the nature of scholarship. Again, when communication and journalism were separated, we fought over what we had in

common. When we joined together, we fought over our differences. So, journalism split off, creating their own master's program and eventually merging with multimedia arts. This has happened to much of journalism; it's all on the internet now. They merged and we got the PhD program. We were back down to rhetoric and communication. In fact, we were the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies.

When we hired Ron, he had said that the health of the department would depend on how rhetoric was accepted, because he found this to be true just about everywhere he had been. If the rhetoric part of the program was healthy, then the department was typically healthy, too. By then, a lot of the differences between communication and rhetoric had completely disappeared. The specific use of the term "communication" from a social science approach began to drop out. It was not necessarily a social science approach any longer. Many of the original tensions disappeared.

Our PhD program was "okayed" early and considered exemplary by the state. A couple of years later, the university decided to look at all the graduate programs, as they had done with the undergraduate programs. Calvin Troup and I put together the report, which was also considered exemplary. We became fairly established by then, and our program has been running for nearly twenty years. So it went until Ron's recent retirement.

How did you see Dr. Arnett embody his work and philosophy in scholarship, administration, and teaching?

The scholarship question is a matter of his modeling scholarship for other people in the department. (I do believe that, after five years, Janie Harden Fritz and I were the only ones left from the original department. Janie had come in January of 1992, and most of these changes with Ron had occurred a year and a half later.)

As I mentioned earlier about administration, Ron had had the choice of going on to be provost or president at a small college, and he decided to stay close to his discipline. He felt that he was not exercising his discipline as an administrator. He always felt most at home as a chair. I really appreciated that because I had seen situations at other colleges where the chair was quite ambitious, and it did not always work out to the health of the department.

In terms of teaching, Ron was a very good teacher. Again, he modeled that. We are evaluated in terms of scholarship, teaching, and service, and teaching was always first. Our focus of attention was not on the top journals, but we were a publishing department and I think we were and are considered one of the top programs in communication. In other words, everyone has gotten tenure on the basis of teaching excellence and scholarly effectiveness, and there is still quite a bit of scholarship that comes out of the department.

How has your professional relationship with Dr. Arnett affected your own teaching, service, and scholarship? For

example, what might be some similarities and differences in scholarship between you and Dr. Arnett?

Ron and I were interested in entirely different things, though there's not that much difference in our ages. We were going through school at much the same time: I was going through seminary while Ron was going through an interpersonal program at Ohio University. We both wound up reading a lot of hermeneutic, and we would talk about that. We felt that the introduction of hermeneutic had a lot to do with changing the discipline. At that time, if you were going to study the history of speech, you would study speeches—it was not the history of rhetoric. Kenneth Burke had been introduced in the early 50s, and there was more and more rhetorical scholarship occurring in the discipline in the 60s. Walter Ong was coming out of St. Louis, and we were getting the beginning of media studies. Many of the forces that had shaped departments over the course of the century were falling to the wayside, and there were new forces beginning to shape programs. For instance, if you're going to split writing and speech, then you have to identify what is important about speech, what distinguishes it as a discipline. Many departments took a political speech orientation up until the 60s, when we started getting the social science orientation and organizational, discussion, small group, and interpersonal communication. With the introduction of hermeneutic, Burke coming into the discipline, and Burke being from English many of the old distinctions became problematic and broke down. The department began to change. If you taught persuasion thinking in terms of rhetoric, then it was only natural to ask questions about interpretation. That's when many of us began to read hermeneutic.

This actually turned out to be a source of conflict with journalism. Journalists were beginning to ask questions about ethics, and they bordered on questions about interpretation, the ethical interpretation, of what was going on. They got right up to the door, and, in many ways, what caused the conflict was that they refused to go in. They were given the chance to become less professional and more academic in their orientation, around the question of ethics, which Ron was a big figure in, and hermeneutic. They just didn't want to do it. The most philosophy they were interested in was First Amendment philosophy, and we could not get them to go far into ethics other than rudimentary ethics. We certainly could not get them into questions of interpretation. See, newspapers had originally been party organizations, but as newspapers increasingly began to expand and have the possibility of large distributions, they could no longer be party organizations. So, they followed the emerging ethos of the day, which was to be scientifically objective. That began to inform a journalism for the next century or so. When you start asking questions about ethics, and ethics begins to shade over into interpretation, it makes the scientific notion of reporting objectively somewhat problematic. So, they didn't want to ask the deeper questions. This had a lot to do with why we, again, wound up splitting. They insisted on remaining professional, a profession, and did not move into academia.

But, like I said, Ron and I talked a lot about hermeneutic. When the department put the doctoral program together, we stressed that there should be a course in hermeneutic, that it was an important course for people in rhetoric. There were also more and more people in communication who were reading hermeneutic; it became quite characteristic of the field. Of course, that led into deconstructive hermeneutic, which was a new era of conflict, but it was over far more substantive questions.

Regarding the question of similarities and differences in scholarship, as I mentioned, Ron and I had been interested in quite different things. Besides the interest in hermeneutic, the other area of interest that we shared was economics. I had a distaste for economics for as long as I could remember. The only time I paid attention to economics was in the 80s with Reagan's tax cuts. However, one of my best students had stayed in touch with me for years. He was from Pittsburgh and got his PhD in finance. By the way, the irony was that when my wife went back to school and got her MBA, he was her TA. We became fairly good friends. I remember getting interested enough in economics at the time that I said to him, "I have been reading a lot of this stuff, and I've just got one really big question: 'Is there any such thing as "enough" in modern economics?'" He thought about it for a minute and said, "I don't know why I'm saying this, but no."

"Enough" turns out to be, as I discovered when I got interested in this again, a really important concept in Aristotle's economics. I had been studying Burke for years, did my dissertation and all my publications on Burke, but I had never really done much on Marx. So I had said, "Well, I really need to start reading Marx." I started reading Marx and finding a lot of secondary work on Marx. That was when I discovered Scott Meikle, who had written *Essentialism in Karl Marx* (1985) and *Aristotle's Economic Thought* (1995). And that was when I started getting interested in economics not as a social science or pseudo-science but as a matter of rhetoric, which is Aristotle's approach. So, Ron and I began talking about that because we wound up doing some things in common then.

When the department split, they were asking me to teach Rhetoric and Philosophy of Advertising. I said, "I don't want to do that. I want to teach Marketplace," which was great because there wasn't anybody else who could teach it. They said, "You don't know anything about it." I said, "Well, I want to learn!" That's the virtue of having a PhD program. You don't have to know more than your students; you can learn at the same rate as them, but you're doing it semester after semester after semester. So I got quite interested in that, and I wound up teaching an undergraduate course in it. Now I've got a new course called Rhetoric and Economics at the junior/senior level, which I taught for the first time last year.

The economics got Ron and me interested in a lot of the same philosophical questions. I would end up reading Smith, who was in ethics prior to having written *The Wealth of Nations*. We would argue about Smith and his notion of the impartial observer. We had some different opinions on that. One of the issues that emerged out of that is that I got quite interested in Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes is considered the father of modern political science, but he's also considered by many as the father of individualistic competitive capitalism. This got me reading a lot of

the stuff that Ron read, like Alasdair MacIntyre. People don't realize that MacIntyre had early in his career been a Marxist before he renounced Marx and became far more interested in Aristotle. I got quite interested in that. I had taught, with a person in journalism, a course in ethics, where I had wound up, because I had always been interested in Galileo, talking about Hobbes—there are quite a few connections between them. Hobbes then led me to go through a number of readings that I might not have gone through.

One of them was a college mate of Burke's, John Herman Randall, who had stayed at Columbia and become the Woodbridge Professor of Philosophy and ultimately the dean. I remember I was reading Randall's (1960) book on Aristotle, and he talked about what it meant to be a political animal. This was Hobbes! This was Aristotle! This was the whole nuts and bolts of economics!

It became clear to me how Hobbes was operating. Hobbes famously dissolves the polis. He treats it mechanistically. He takes it apart like a machine, and then if he can explain how to put it back together, it means that he understands it. If you're Aristotle, you can't take the polis apart and put it back together. It's like an organism. If you take the organism apart, you lose the holistic forces that originally held it together. So when Aristotle says that we're political animals, he's saying that we're animals of the polis and that anything that is a-polis is a beast or a god. He defines us primarily as linguistic animals. Then, when he goes on to say that we are political and rational, he is talking about—and this is what I read from Randall that I never read anywhere else and that got me so excited—the notion that you learn language only within the polis, thinking of the polis as a linguistic community. You do not learn to speak outside of the polis. We speak because we have first been spoken to.

If you understand that, and you look at what Hobbes is trying to do, it's impossible: If you take the polis apart, you lose something in the same way that if you take a cell apart, you just can't put it in the blender and put it back together again. You lose something, and what you lose is language and reason. You can't have a pre-political creature that decides to create a social contract and enter into the polis, because it would have neither language nor rationality, which are both critical for conceiving of and communicating the notion of a social contract. So Hobbes became nonsense.

In fact, I wrote the entry on Hobbes for Dr. Arnett's (2018) encyclopedia with Annette Holba and Susan Mancino. My claim was that Hobbes was looking for some naturalistic base for ethics. If you go back to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* from the 60s, it was Alasdair MacIntyre (1967) that wound up writing the entry on Hobbes on "Egoism and Altruism." He wound up stressing, anti-Hobbes, not the notion of competition but of reciprocity. I started with that notion, but I've eventually moved away from it. Ron keeps saying he doesn't care what I call it, I'm still talking about reciprocity. But my idea is that if we're not called into language, what are we?

There's the instance of Victor in 1798—a child who is found without language in the woods of Aveyron. François Truffaut made a film about it called *The Wild Child*. About the time that the film showed up in Los Angeles, social services had found a girl, who they named Genie, who was raised without

language. Her father claimed she was mentally retarded and had kept her in her room, tethered to her crib with nothing but a potty. He beat her every time that she used language, that she tried to talk. They had a son, but he didn't do the same thing to the son. This was the "forbidden experiment": you raise somebody and forbid them language.

I got very interested in cases like that because, again, if somebody speaks, and you respond, then that's how language originates. We're called *into* ourselves and *out of* ourselves. We're called into this realm that the sophists called *nomos*, which features the linguistic nature of it all. *Nomos* is the word from which we get "name." We dwell in that realm; that's what makes us human. But we have to be *called* into that realm. The question was, it seemed to me, whether you were fully aware of it or not, that you felt a degree of gratitude toward the people who had called you. Whether you could articulate that or not, it's "*the voice of others*" (Thames and Mancino 2018, 232; italics in the original).

This is probably the source of some of the scholarly disagreement between me and Ron because Levinas talks about the face of the other. I don't know enough about Levinas, but he is one of those people who deny reciprocity, saying it is not the base. But I was inclined toward reciprocity because of MacIntyre, though I don't think it's necessarily a matter of reciprocity anymore. What Hobbes is trying to find is a new beginning for everything. That's why he comes up with his argument of the polis and the social contract. But there *is* a new beginning, a new naturalistic beginning for ethics, in the notion of the acquisition of language. We acquire language because somebody speaks to us, and does that elicit a degree of gratitude?

In my article on Hobbes for Ron's encyclopedia, I wound up writing that we are "befittingly oblige[d]" (Thames and Mancino 2018, 232). I was using the verb for obliged because it does not have the same ethical force as "obligation." When you're "obliged" to do something, it's like, "You really should consider this. It's something that's important." That's the way I talk about it now far more than the question of reciprocity. It's not that we feel an "obligation" because somebody has called us into language. I would say it's more that the beginning of ethics is the sense of gratitude that we feel toward others who have called us into language and, in a way, into ourselves, as conscious of ourselves, but also out of ourselves into the realm of *nomos*.

One of the interesting things that showed up in seminary is the question of the Holy Spirit, which has always been associated with community and communication. One of my favorite professors, who was one of the reasons I went to that seminary, pointed out to me that we can talk about something that exists *between* us, but that's two people. In Greek, when the object of the word *en* is plural, you should translate it as *among*. So, the question that I asked was "Where does the Spirit exist?" The Spirit exists *among* us. But where does language exist? We think it's in our head, but that's not language. That's a capacity for language, but the actual language we speak is *among* us. That's where language is found—among us. When someone speaks to us, they call us into that which exists among us. They call us into that larger linguistic fellowship, for want of a better word. And we

spend our lives within that realm—the realm of *nomos*. And when we develop a sense of ethics, I would argue that it begins in a sense of gratitude.

I find it remarkable that this question of where language comes from is not a question that everybody is asking. I read an excellent book by Christine Kenneally (2007) called *The First Word: The Search for the Origins of Language*. She has a PhD in linguistics from Cambridge, but she's a writer, not an academic. Her book is a pretty thorough investigation of language and the extent to which elements of language may be found in other species. It's a fascinating book. It stimulated a lot of my thought. (My great friend—my dissertation director, mentor, and best friend, really—Trevor Melia, before he died, asked me what books I was reading. He was always asking me what books I was reading. I recommended the Kenneally, and he said, "Can you send me a copy?" I sent him a copy while he was still semi-well. He died of mesothelioma that he contracted in the London blitz during World War II, though he nor his siblings never knew it, from asbestos that was constantly in the air from bombed buildings. In one of my last really thorough discussions with him, he talked about how the book was perfect. It was exactly what he wanted to read.)

So, I find the question remarkable. How is it that we have this capacity? Everybody talks about language, but where does it come from? The only person who I ever found who addressed that question is John Herman Randall. He addressed it, like I said, in his book on Aristotle. That had a lot to do with the way I wound up teaching Aristotle, the way I wound up teaching Jeffrey Walker, the way I wound up teaching epideictic, the way I wound up talking about the early period when rhetoric was emerging as a discipline along with poetry. I'm just surprised that it's not a larger question.

So, you can see what kind of questions I get interested in. That was one of the things we were discussing before Ron retired.

Is there anything else you want to say about Dr. Arnett?

Just that I miss him. We had stopped doing it, but we, in various times of troubles, would take long walks together. He lived out in the North Hills, so we would take the 5-mile trek around the lake in the park. It's not so much that I miss *that*, because it had been quite a while since the last time, but I miss the *possibility* of doing that.

We shared a lot of things, and that doesn't mean that we always got along—we had some real arguments about various things—but I greatly appreciated the leadership that he brought to the department. And I greatly appreciated his friendship.

Richard H. Thames, PhD, explores the rhetorical influence of ideas within and across historical periods. His work traces the intellectual lineage of thinkers from various historical periods and examines how their ideas shape, maintain, and change beliefs in intellectual and popular culture. He is known for interpreting Kenneth Burke in terms of the organicism and naturalism encountered at Columbia University in 1916. A founder of

the Kenneth Burke Society, Dr. Thames helped organize the original Burke conference in Philadelphia in 1984 and the centennial conference at Duquesne in 1996. He edited the society's newsletter for over a decade and now serves on the editorial board of the society's journal, the KB Journal. Dr. Thames served as an Associate Editor of the Quarterly Journal of Speech (1998–2001) as well as a reader off and on.

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