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Making Space and Taking a Position: Imaging Jesus in Liberal Education

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Making Space and Taking A Position: Imagining Jesus in Liberal Education

John Dewey (1997) describes education as a means “of bringing people together, of doing away with the barriers of caste, class or race, or type of experience that keep people from real communion with each other.” As an academic, certain parts of my experience—my Filipino forebears, my middle school teaching history, even my progressive political commitments—are sanctioned in the current conception of liberal education while other dimensions like my following of Jesus Christ, seem like uninvited guests to the university party. Historically, Christianity has been associated with some of the most shameful moments of human degradation as well as the most hopeful moments of human liberation. Sobered and expectant, I want to imagine how Jesus can be a part of liberal education.

In The Spiritual Life of Children (1993), Harvard professor Robert Coles challenges me through his work with Connie, a twelve year old in the Boston area.

“Doctor,” I was told, “you’re not interested in my religion, only my ‘problems.’ But without my religion I’d be much worse off, don’t you see? How about encouraging me to talk about that move, about what I experience when I go to church, instead of sitting there, bored, waiting for God to pass from this conversation?”

Faith informs her way of knowing and acting in the world. If teaching and learning is enhanced by helping students to understand my worldview; if this process can help them understand how to make space for other viewpoints in the conversation as well as develop their own position, then I need to consider how my faith in Jesus might be a part of my teaching and scholarship here at Grand Valley. Literary critic Anne Kaplan (1994) contextualizes her theoretical work with her teacher and Nazi collaborator Paul DeMan within her Jewish history. Annie Rogers (1996) simultaneously tells her story of abuse while narrating her therapeutic sessions with an abused child. Clifford Geertz (1990) claims that paying attention to who tells the story in anthropology and as the content.

What could General Education be? I ask students to study examples of their social action. (2002) Nickel and Nicolas Kristof’s women trapped...

I then share a... of this essay Melissa says, “I never... silenced.” Jeremy says “I have a problem through... is persuading people that teaching, students are important to... protest of GVSL’s practices, development of schools for gay, as well as efforts on campus.

Making space for my teaching encourages positions. Thinking of possible moves through a symposium on liberal education for faith community, I wonder how difference we’ve a new opportunity to name, determine what matters, revise and grow and... At the same time, position, rather than detachment, I can enter into community, and this viewpoint. I can see that it be possible to do this. Yet this is a complex process that not mean imposing a new idea but means teacher-taking-a-position... a conversation of multiple realities as teachers to see, to construct their...
Making A Jesus in Liberal Education

I believe that teaching is an invitation as a means of perception away with the process of experience and each other. I experience—my role teaching his-nments—are the universe party. I am associated with some degradation as human liberation. Imagine how Jesus (1993), Harvard through his work Boston area.

Interested in my but my religion I I need about encourag-what I experience there, bored, conversation? and acting in the advanced by helping study, if this process the space for other as develop their own positions. Thinking about my experience, I see two possible moves that we might consider in terms of this symposium on liberal education. We need to make space for faith commitments, in addition to the space for difference we've already provided. People need opportunities to name the world, to tell stories about it, to determine what matters. They need space to speculate, revise and grow through liberal education.

At the same time, I've come to see the need to take a position, rather than maintaining the myth of objective detachment. I can name myself as a follower of Jesus. I can enter into conversations on my subject matter from this viewpoint. I can model for students how it might be possible to do this and maintain intellectual integrity. Yet this is a complicated move. Taking a position does not mean imposition. It does not mean silencing. It does not mean teacher-centric education. It means creating a conversation of multiple voices. It means using our agility as teachers to set an example while helping students to construct their own positions.

Jesus is my example of how to model this space and positioning. He invites people to “come and see.” There is space and there is choice. In this same way, I hope students and fellow scholars can come and see how people like John Dewey, Robert Coles and Jesus inform the ways I teach, learn and live.

References