

Teaching Foundations in Peace Studies¹

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In the Fall semester of 2008 I taught, for the first time, two courses with the title 'The Roots of Peace and Conflict.'² Preparing for the course highlighted a number of inadequacies of the approach previously taken to Peace Studies at my university. After reviewing the course outline and materials, it was clear that the course was primarily information orientated. As such, there was no serious effort to teach an explanatory account of the origins of conflict beyond considering the significance of statistical theory. There was limited acknowledgment of the effects of bias, however, there was no theory of history to contextualize it. As a result the course had neither the text nor pedagogy to orientate the student towards discovering foundations for peace.³ This inadequacy led me to a revision of the course along lines suggested by the work of Bernard Lonergan and Philip McShane. A month before the fall semester was to begin, I learned that University of Toronto Press would be publishing Kenneth Melchin and Cheryl Picard's *Transforming Conflict Through Insight*; Dr. Melchin sent me a partial draft for my perusal.⁴ It would serve as a text for the course, which I supplemented with readings from Lonergan and McShane. I knew, however, that pedagogy would be my greatest challenge. How I met this challenge, and what light it might shed on functional collaboration, is the subject of this article.

¹ A version of this article was presented for the Halifax Lonergan Conference of 2008. The theme of the conference was functional collaboration.

² I lecture part-time at Mount Saint Vincent University in Family Studies, Philosophy and Ethics.

³ The texts on Peace Studies at the University library all lacked any serious foundational perspective.

⁴ Ken Melchin & Cheryl Picard, *Transforming Conflict Through Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). My thanks to Ken Melchin for sending me a partial draft and assisting in moving the publishing date forward in order to receive the text in time for the autumn semester.

1 The ‘Conflict’ in Peace Studies Pedagogy

The previous course in Peace Studies was primarily career orientated and focused on the various global organizations mandated to work for peace in areas of human conflict.⁵ For some students the course was an elective that they thought might be interesting, but most of the students expressed some interest in working with foreign services, the UN, and missions abroad. The course provided the student with readings on the history, set-up, and mandate of the peace organizations and allowed for class discussion on these readings. As this was a philosophy course, cross-listed with Family Studies, it also highlighted the various theories of political justice.⁶ Students were evaluated in the traditional style of examination by memorization.

In the Department of Family Studies the primary focus is on preparing students for professional careers. Students get little experience of explanatory learning, therefore little or no experience of science, and no experience of self-attentive methodology.⁷ That can be a positive factor in some cases: having little or no prior philosophy, they are not yet ideologically opposed to self-attentive methodology. The negative side is that all of their other courses are directed towards maintaining and enhancing their naïve realism. Thus, while I intended to introduce the students to an expansion or revolution in their view of empiricism, the sociology, philosophy, and psychology departments reinforced a common sense view of reality. As a result, only about 1/6 of the sixty students expressed a real interest and enthusiasm about the ‘turn to the subject’ of self-attentive methodology. The *conflict* in Peace Studies, then, is the absence of any effort to teach an explanatory account of the data of consciousness relevant to conflict resolution. Rather than push towards explaining the roots of conflict as manifest in the dynamics of our own lives, the pedagogy of Peace Studies has been content to offer a Wikipedia-like summary of conflict organizations. Attention to the

⁵ These organizations are not all restricted to a specific conflict. Many, such as the World Health Organization and the Hague Peace Appeal for Youth, are mandated to assist in resolving the affects of civil and/or economic strife. The most well-known organization is the United Nations. Many more have evolved on a smaller scale since the UN’s inception. There are a multiplicity of NGO’s and Academic organizations dedicated to developing strategies towards resolving human conflict.

⁶ This course in Peace Studies is cross-listed with the Philosophy and Family Studies departments. As an interdisciplinary course guest professors from the philosophy and sociology departments participated. This provided students with helpful examples of different approaches to conflict studies.

⁷ The professional programs at this university communicate and highlight statistical method and policy research work. It contributes to the “deadening effect of courses” in which one’s talent and enthusiasm are “buried in the training of a B.Ed. Program.” See Philip McShane, *Divyadaan Journal of Education*, 13/3 (2002), 281.

dynamic structure of ‘you and I’ that grounds our experience of both conflict and conflict resolution are systematically left out of the course. The tension arises from teaching the student what the student is not. This disjuncture within Peace Studies is symptomatic of a general problem in university pedagogy, in the educational process generally and, ultimately, in the politics that informs peace efforts.

2 Teaching Peace Studies

The experience of developing and teaching this course for Peace Studies led me to reflect more deeply on my own pedagogy, especially in terms of Philip McShane’s maxim of “teaching children children.”⁸ When we teach, we teach not one but three experiences of understanding. We teach our understanding of a topic, Peace Studies for example; we teach our understanding of our selves; and we teach our understanding of the student.⁹ If the understanding of all three is an expression of self-understanding and is spontaneously expressed within the context of differentiated consciousness, then the understanding of the topic, our self-understanding, and our understanding of the student will come together as *one* act of communication: all three understandings are expressed simultaneously.¹⁰ We find the link in how the mind works. When teaching Peace Studies, one is *teaching students students*. Even if one is unschooled in such self-identification, one is still teaching with one’s own personality, one’s own understanding of the topic, and one’s own understanding of students.

What *constitutes* this form of communication? When the subject as teacher expresses, in words, him or herself subjectively, the student’s own subjectivity is also exposed to him or herself.¹¹ This approach projects the self that we are back into consciousness. This is a prime example of what Lonergan meant by linguistic feedback. Such a refinement of self-expression requires lengthy reflection into one’s own subjective dynamics, while at the same time appreciating that the student has the same dynamic. An appropriation of *what* we are shifts *how* we express our inner world. Such appreciation *begins* with a turn to our

⁸ Anyone familiar with McShane’s writings and teachings will have come across this phrase. See his articles on education at <<http://www.pmeshane.ca>>

⁹ “One is teaching oneself oneself through a struggle with ‘identification.’” See Philip McShane, “A Reform of Classroom Performance,” *Divyadaan Journal of Education*, 13/3 (2002), 287.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ As Bernard Lonergan expresses it: “expressing the subjective experience in words and as subjective.” *Method*, 88 n34. See also, Philip McShane, *A Brief History of Tongue: From Big Bang to Coloured Wholes*, Axial Press, Halifax, 1998. Chapter 2: “How-Language: Works?” He *works* patiently for the reader to heighten their awareness of the ground of language in a way that would seem to express what Lonergan means by linguistic feedback.

subjectivity and with it there occurs a developing appreciation of our curiosity and an acceptance of an authentic orientation in the cosmos.

Given the conflict in peace studies I adverted to above, the challenge was to shift the course away from memorization and nominalism and towards making explicit the implicit dynamics of conflicts that reside in all human beings. I began by working with simple puzzles and examples of conflict, which introduced the students to the way they solved conflicts in their own lives. The main emphasis was on the three question types: What questions, Is questions and What-to-do questions.¹²

The following is one of the puzzles used to heighten the student's subjective experience of their own curiosity.

$$\begin{array}{cccccc} \underline{A} & & \underline{E} & \underline{F} & \underline{H} & \underline{I} & \underline{K} \\ B & C & D & & G & & J \end{array}$$

This is a puzzle I have often used, and many of my readers may be familiar with it as well. I ask two questions: 1) what is the law orchestrating the placement of the letters? and 2) what are you doing when you are solving this puzzle? I encourage the students to remain engaged in oscillating back and forth between these two questions. The second question requires the first engagement in order to provide the data required to answer the second. I then offer the following clue for those who have not yet achieved the insight.

$$\begin{array}{cccc} \underline{1} & \underline{4} & \underline{7} & \underline{1} \\ 2 & 3 & 5 & 6 & 8 & 9 \end{array}$$

At this point I offer a brief discussion of the child's possible experience of curiosity. I ask the students to imagine the child asking a question fully embodied. Their entire anatomy is involved in the asking. Their chemistry, physiology, psyche, and desire to understand are functioning as one. The pattern of one above and two below may mislead you. Did it? I then offer the following further clue for those still puzzling.

$$\begin{array}{c} \square \\ \hline 0 \end{array}$$

While, those who have the insight relax and smile, there is usually some anxiety among those who have not yet got the insight. Two points

¹² Philip McShane, *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations* (Exposition Press, NY, 1975), chapters 2-4 & 6.

are worth mentioning here: 1) the anxiety inhibits the degree of self-presence to their curiosity and 2) the anticipation of wanting to provide the solution also can inhibit a second order of reflection. The desire to understand the puzzle or provide the solution usually remains dominant. At this point I ask the students what they are experiencing along with their puzzling. Responses range from some minor anxiousness to frustration because they anticipated ‘getting’ it quickly. We then explore reasons why some get it quickly and some do not, assuring students that it has very little if anything to do with their inherent intellectual capacity.

This exercise serves to prolong attention to the student’s experience of curiosity and provides sufficient data for the meta-reflection to follow. The puzzle should, therefore, lend itself to a few clues. I am reluctant to give the solution, but by class end those who do not yet have the insight have one of two responses: 1) they have given up and consider it not worth their while, or 2) their anxiety evolves into agitation. These responses expose a lack in the students of the experience of sustained curiosity. Without some comfort in this zone explanatory learning is not really possible. I usually then provide the solution. Teaching puzzles this way reveals my own understanding of how I come to understand and should raise for the student the question of how they themselves come to understand. The student is nudged to discover that they are a *what* as expressed in the formulation, “*What* is a schoolboy (schoolgirl).”¹³ Notice that the lack of a question mark shifts the focus and meaning towards a more luminous appreciation of the *whatness* that is each of us: ‘I am a what.’

After a few classes, I moved into an explanation of the nature of science using the analogy of the periodic table. The periodic table made possible a systematic approach to chemistry. By introducing Mendeleev and Meyer’s insight into the relationships between the atomic weight and mass of the various *elements* that were then known, I am able to show why alchemy lost its fascination after 1869. More puzzles helped to draw out student’s awareness of the *elements* of their own consciousness and the relationships between those *elements*. That experience is quite difficult when you are teaching students who have little experience of explanatory learning.¹⁴ Students are so well indoctrinated into nominalism and memorization that explanatory understanding, because of its difficulty, is regarded as irrelevant to the practical task of getting a good grade. This was borne out in some of the course evaluations, which reported that the course was rather philosophical, their meaning being the traditional ‘stuff’ of ‘abstract’ thinking.¹⁵

¹³ The brackets are my own. The formulation is Philip McShane’s.

¹⁴ Noticing the elements of consciousness and cultivating curiosity are related activities of pedagogy but the first activity does not necessarily lead to the second.

¹⁵ I am using this term ‘abstract’ in the traditional sense. In the context of procedural analysis the term takes on the meaning of the acts of consciousness

Later lectures focused on bias and neurosis. Students became aware of their unintentional truncated neglect and its affects on how they resolve their own conflicts. With this foundation in place we envisaged together how this kind of neglect might inform the efforts of UN and other peace organizations to resolve world conflicts. Only then could I introduce a theory of history, with its notion of progress, its cycle of decline, and its indications for the long-term reversal of cultural decline. It is only after the students have achieved some familiarity with the foundations of self-attentive methodology that I introduce world issues for discussion. In this course we examined the civil war in Afghanistan. The students suggest resolutions and are required to provide reasons for their suggestions. I invited two officers, who had served more than one tour in Afghanistan, to speak to the class. Over time the students begin to appreciate the complexity of the situation and this instilled an appreciation of the need for a creative approach to conflict resolution. Jumping to military or other solutions took on a new context and led to a heightened appreciation of the need to approach the issue in a quested state.

Finally, I introduced the notion of a functional specialist division of labor as a long term solution to both human conflict and to the *conflict* in Peace Studies itself.¹⁶

Obviously, this is far too much material to cover in one course, but students seldom get a second opportunity at the topic. Unfortunately, as students have a degree to finish, the momentum to explore this approach fades away. Students who managed to take a second course with me usually have to rearrange their courses or get their director's permission.¹⁷ Students are torn between the desire to seriously understand themselves and the pressure to pick a career. They find it difficult to major in *themselves* in a university of *one*. Academic counseling then takes on a quite different diplomacy. All I can do is suggest and encourage outside-class seminars and discussions to support

adding to experience shifting the focus away from correspondence views of knowing.

¹⁶ It is interesting to note the Truth and Reconciliation Commission established in South Africa shifted attention away from retribution. That is a different process than mediation. It raises the topic and fruitfulness of conversion of the individual or group and eventual healing from deeds of the past.

¹⁷ I am currently teaching a 4000 level course in ethics. Some of my students are in their second year at university who can enroll in the course with permission. Prerequisites are incidental. This happens frequently as the department courses are not developmental. Imagine a first year physics student asking to enroll in a fourth year level of quantum physics. He or she would be lost. The present state of the social sciences lends itself to a lack of development in course levels.

and encourage their interest.¹⁸ I also direct students to other readings and universities where they can do further study.

3 Curiosity as Foundational for Teaching

While efforts in self-attentive methodology direct students towards an appreciation of the dynamic structure of intentional consciousness, with its 13 elements of cognitional structure, my experience as a teacher has slowly taught me that it is the cultivation of *curiosity* that is the essential first step. It is also what has been most neglected in methods of education and culture in general. Strategies for academic survival with its accompanying neurosis, in both teachers and students, replace the genuine cultivation of curiosity.

Two events in 1981 set me on a course of seriously exploring curiosity. Philip McShane suggested the topic to me as my MA thesis.¹⁹ Writing the thesis both heightened my awareness of the significance of curiosity in human knowing and, most tellingly, made plain my neglect of my own curiosity. This made me painfully aware of the same neglect in the culture that formed me.²⁰ That same year, I had occasion to call Bernard Lonergan when he was residing at Boston College. He asked me what I was working on. I replied that I was researching the child's quest. He responded quite enthusiastically: "That's the genesis of it all."

Just what might Lonergan have meant by that response? We experience that children are curious before they learn language. They 'make sense' of the 'objects' of their experience by moving them about, fitting them together with other things.²¹ They explore their environment with vigor. Something is going on in their minds. Once children begin to speak they express this 'something', this subjective dynamism, through continuous questioning. Their questions are full-bodied: they want to

¹⁸ I facilitated a seminar in 2008 with the focus on introducing participants to the 13 elements of cognitional process. It had little success. The fragmentation of our times was expressed in people wanting to know in a nutshell what Lonergan was all about.

¹⁹ Robert Henman; *The Child as Quest*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984). The book is an exploration and application of the child's quest as a method in education.

²⁰ Elements of inauthenticity still remain unknown and although unknown still remain operative in one's living and teaching. One may be at the mercy of dysfunctional family life, a brutal authoritarianism, disorientation of nominalist education or a personal crisis. Any of these can and will affect the focus of consciousness in its desire to understand.

²¹ To make sense of an experience is to engage the elements of consciousness. The moving about is akin to manipulating a diagram. The 'object' is what is given in experience but it is also the intended destination of the quest to 'make sense' of what is given.

understand.²² Parents do not have to teach their children how to do this or send them off to some special school to learn how to ask questions. It is their spontaneous ‘way’ as it is our adult ‘way’ too.²³ The primary data of a teacher is her or himself. While we conclude to the child’s more embodied questing, we must begin with our own experience, which will most assuredly evoke the misguided mechanisms of childhood survival.²⁴ As Philip McShane writes: “The merely empirical is the language of education and scholarship. Furthermore, that language includes child-talk, and talk of child-talk, even by children. So, self-interest is abundantly merely empirical in an elementary non-reflective form. One may say that sensibility is spontaneously expressive of self-interest.”²⁵ We are not answers; we are first and foremost quests - echoes of the wonder identified by Aristotle and Socrates. When we understand we experience a temporary shift of focus that is later replaced by further questions, a return to our way, but now as a different person. Think of your ‘way’ and ‘you’ being recycled by ‘you’ anew each time insight occurs.

In my 25 years of teaching I have witnessed that fading and disruption in myself as well as in students of all ages. Our ‘way,’ you might say, is taken from us; we have been alienated from our way. If our ‘way’ is disrupted, faded, alienated, unknown to us, how do we go forward towards what our way desires - understanding?²⁶ How can we begin to appreciate the difference between the common sense realm of meaning and that of explanatory meaning if our ‘way’ is underdeveloped or disrupted? The challenge in developing the course in Peace Studies was how to kick-start the student’s curiosity so that one is *teaching students students*. The curiosity of children, although not understood by them, is authentically motivated if the experience of the womb and the early years have been hospitable and nurturing on the levels of

²² Children learn from their past experiences which influenced their present activities. This is a micro-foundational beginning of the two phases of functional specialization.

²³ We might think of children as naturally displaced. See Philip McShane’s *Process: Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minds*, 83-86. Available at <www.philipmshane.ca/process.html>. The child’s spontaneous objectification of their curiosity is most often faded through parenting and education strategies neglecting the ground of such objectification. Regardless of the topic I teach, my main focus is on revitalizing such spontaneity and developing new strategies to assist in that effort.

²⁴ See my articles on Growing Children and Parenting at *Roberthenman.com* for a discussion of some of the distortions that presently dominate our cultural crisis as well as strategies for possible development.

²⁵ Philip McShane, *PastKeynes Pastmodern Economics: A Fresh Pragmatism* (Halifax, NS: Axial Press, 2002), 101.

²⁶ It is perhaps worth noting that the Axial Period in its truncated parenting and education schemes does not ‘produce’ systematic thinkers in great numbers. Our beginnings will be expressions of ‘adequate inadequacy.’

chemistry, psychology and freedom to ask and explore. Can we say this about our own curiosity?

4 Concluding Remarks

The cultivation of curiosity is the starting point in teaching Peace Studies as it is the starting point for any human collaboration. Curiosity provides in its drive towards understanding a heuristic unity that eventually blossoms into explanatory expressions of a science of Peace Studies and would ultimately inform any collaboration in their implementation in history.²⁷ It is the *sine qua non* of Lonergan's discovery of functional specialization.²⁸ Is this not what Lonergan meant when he said: "That's the genesis of it all?" Currently teachers are at the mercy of common sense eclecticism paraded as science. Students are victims of that series of inadequacy.²⁹

By teaching children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and raising two children I have experienced a wide range of disparity in the development and destruction of childhood questing.³⁰ The challenge was

²⁷ There is the even deeper unity in the "leap back, from extroversion." Philip McShane, *A Brief History of Tongue*, 143. This phrase has long challenged me in my own efforts at a more secure grounding of generalized empirical method. This morning, as I do each morning, I greeted 'my' sun from my 9th floor balcony with that meaning in mind. This leap back is not into some notion of introversion. It is a growing appreciation of our 'sensability,' our sensing self and our minding connecting it all. The challenge and progress comes and goes seething in the fragmentation of our times and the ever precarious difficulty of 'being at home in transcendental method' but more positively of the joy of *discovery growing*.

²⁸ Functional specialization would over time initiate a transformation of professors, teachers and students and such series of inadequacy through the recycling of developing strategies of education on how to cultivate and sustain curiosity. A teacher who is functioning with a differentiated consciousness and an appropriated state of curiosity would be aware of the need for a pedagogy that cultivates the student's curiosity towards insight, knows at what stage the student is at, where he or she has to get, and how he or she is to get there. And it would be a spontaneous activity of a particular genuine differentiation. We will have to wait for that with a long-term patience.

²⁹ In "Unethical Education" A student's final essay submitted in a course on ethics in 2009, Nicole Ongco writes: "...if we all possessed healthy curiosity, our education would be much more rich and fulfilling. We would not be learning things simply because we had to, but because we had a genuine curiosity to understand. I have another year of university left that will be brimming with multiple choice questions, memorization, and stress, that being said I will most likely graduate *owing* instead of *knowing*" (6).

³⁰ It is worth noting, perhaps, that even teaching with deficiencies, some students catch something. A few aspects emerge: 1) this is something completely new and alluring, and 2) they begin to develop some appreciation for the novelty of getting insights. In a recent class on ethics while I was

reinitiated in a new way for me over the past six months. If I am to teach more authentically the three aspects of teaching that I have mentioned above, my curiosity needs to be continually exercised through efforts at trying to understand, both my topic and the required strategies of pedagogy. Just as a therapist cannot help the patient without the willingness of the patient to explore a neurosis, so the teacher cannot teach for understanding if the student is not curious. Once there is a shared curiosity, collaboration and the division of labour that goes with it, is possible.

I have attempted in this paper to acknowledge distinctions in the process of teaching and communications as well as the need to focus on the cultivation of our own curiosity as a way towards cognitive agreement. My effort at teaching Peace Studies manifested the difficulty of applying the general heuristic in two ways: 1) the difficulty of cultivating and sustaining a student's curiosity within the current academic climate,³¹ 2) and the lack of collaborative explanatory scholarship as a resource.³² The reversal of this situation is a long term project. It will require the creative collaboration of those willing to face the difficult task of unblocking their own disordered curiosity and willing to share the journey with others. The effort of teachers to cultivate the curiosity of their students is a crucial step. That step, however, has the curious residue effect of helping teachers discover their own curiosity and so beginning the healing of their own deformed curiosity. Such healing is a good beginning and crucial to the implementation of the functional collaboration and its application to conflict resolution.

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attempting a new twist on the self-creative process of consciousness, a student remarked, "This is a spirituality." She got an insight that one would have suspected was outside the context of what I was trying to get across. It is these kinds of events that not only characterize the many ways of human development but also how continuous efforts of developing new strategies of pedagogy can bring forth leaps.

³¹ I make this remark in appreciation of the challenge of academic survival and the need to make a living. In my 25 years as a sessional lecturer in philosophy and ethics I have experienced an exceptional degree of academic freedom. Unfortunately, this does not help the students much in their mainly solitary efforts to discover themselves.

³² I am thinking here of Lonergan's lectures in theological method. During his years at the Gregorian (1952-64), with the context of *Insight* in mind and his eight-fold solution to the Axial Period still a few years away, he had to work through the various specialties alone.