Currere or The Erasure of the Author: Does it Really Matter Who the Scholar is?

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Many academic presses do not like personal narratives because they are not considered professional and who cares about the author?! Some editors argue that libraries will not buy academic books that have personal narratives embedded in them. Why is it that scholars are supposed to hide behind their writings? This debate can be traced back to ancient debates in philosophy where it was argued that what mattered was the text at hand and not who wrote it. Derrida deals with this question in the film *Derrida* (Kirby & Ziering, 2003), which is a biography and documentary about his life and work. When asked the question about the life of a philosopher, Derrida intimates that, for traditional philosophers, all that matters is that Heidegger, for example, lived, wrote, and died. In other words, the life of the philosopher does not matter. What matters are the texts he/she leaves behind.

Clearly, Derrida does not take this position. In the film, we learn about Derrida's personal life, we meet his wife Marguerite—who is a psychoanalyst—we see his very cramped apartment, we watch him eating breakfast, comb his hair, and even pick out his clothes with the help of a dresser. While we see him in his everyday life, a narrator's voice reads from his texts while Derrida walks down the street of Paris. The narrator's voice flows throughout the film in between scenes of him giving a lecture to students in South Africa, walking through his archives, talking on the telephone, greeting his cat. So, the film does two things: it narrates snippets of his texts to introduce viewers to his scholarly work while viewers accompany him through his everyday world. For Derrida, then, it seems that it matters who the philosopher is. Perhaps, we might call this a Derridean *Currere*.

What is *Currere*?

William Pinar (2015) introduced the notion of *currere* in the 1970s when the Reconceptualization was founded. *Currere* means self-study. One studies the self in order to be a self in relation to an other. Studying the self also involves thinking about one's own personal story. Scholars who write their personal stories are still suspect in the academy, however. Biographer Benoit Peeters (2016) tells readers that Derrida's work in the French academy has been looked upon with suspicion partly because it breaks with tradition, partly because it uses language in puzzling ways, and partly because it introduces ways of thinking about complexity, paradox, and autobiography that make traditional philosophers uncomfortable. Certainly, the film about him breaks with tradition because it is autobiographical. This is not the first time Derrida has ventured into the autobiographical. His work called *Circumfession* (Derrida, 1999) explores his Jewish identity. One could argue that Derrida engages in *currere* especially in his text *Circumfession.*

Currere is not just about the self—as a stand-alone thing—but it is about the self in relation to an other. I state elsewhere that *currere* "always involves the double movement of self and society, of the personal and the political" (Morris, 2015, p. 104). *Currere* is about the inter-relations of the self to the other, the self as it is embedded in the larger socio-political scene. Studying the self in the midst of the social also

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means studying the social in the midst of the self. Early in his career, Pinar formulated *currere* after Sartres' (1968) *Search for a Method* (which included four phases: The progressive, regressive, synthetic, and analytic) (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). It is important to note that Pinar (cited in Morris, 2015) later in his career begins to shift his notion of *currere* to be more inclusive of the social and the world in relation to the self. Pinar states

> Expanding, then, my initial emphasis from individual existential experience to the intersubjective engagement that can occur through complicated conversation, *currere* incorporates questions of history, society, and culture as they are personified in individual lives, passionately expressed in public service. (Pinar, cited in Morris, 2015, p. 104)

Pinar places more emphasis in his later work on *currere* and public service. But what does public service mean in the context of curriculum studies? Pinar (2015) argues that study is a form of service to the world. Study that leads to writing that leads to publication (which is public) and that leads to change in the world is service. And there are other ways that one can serve the public or be engaged in work in the world, of course. Public school teachers are clearly working in the public. Professors who teach at public colleges and universities are there to teach the public. Public school and public universities—it is important to note—are not, generally speaking—elitist. Public institutions are for a more general public, and hence, their ideal project is more democratic, at least it should be. If the state and politicians would stop interfering in the work of public schools and universities, perhaps students and teachers could really engage in education.

Currere and the Psychoanalytic

Historically, curriculum scholars who do work in *currere* draw on psychoanalytic literature(s). Psychoanalysis is mostly about intrapersonal issues (interior psychic landscapes gone wrong) or inter-personal issues (the child's relation to the mother gone wrong, i.e.). However, psychoanalytic literature does not usually deal with politics in the context of psycho-social issues. Curriculum scholars like Bill Pinar (1995), Madeleine Grumet (1988), Peter Taubman (2011), Deborah Britzman (2016) and myself have worked for years in the intersections between psychoanalytic literature(s) and *currere*. Psychoanalytic literature is rich and deep and offers us a way to theorize the self. Dreams, the unconscious, defense mechanisms, the family romance (i.e. the Oedipus complex) offer food for thought for curriculum scholars. Unfortunately, psychoanalysis is still the step-child of the academy and has never really found a home there. Why this is, is perhaps political. But that is a question for another day.

Currere and the Political

Often scholars critique psychoanalysis for not being political. Althusser (2016) is one intellectual who attempted to draw on Freudian and Marxian theories creating a more political psychoanalysis. However, few curriculum scholars have drawn on his work in any depth. Being able to combine Marxism and psychoanalysis is no easy feat. Derrida (1998, 2006) has written on both. *The Specters of Marx* and *Archive Fever* are about Marx and Freud, respectively. Generally speaking, curriculum theorists—historically—who work in politics or psychoanalysis have either drawn on Marxist theory or Freudian theory, not both.

Currere and the political can also be thought of through the lens of multicultural literature(s). Thinking through *currere* politically, Hongyu Wang (2015) calls for a multicultural *currere*. I think that multiculturalism is inherently political. Wang states that

> Multicultural *currere* as subject matter asks both teacher educators and teachers to examine their own subjectivity as beings from a particular race, gender, and class; to unlearn social norms that play the role of exclusion; and to resituate their commitment to the work of social justice. (p. 111)

The work of social justice is political. Examining race, class, and gender is political. Examining the self through these lenses is political. However, it must be noted that who is included in the multicultural literature(s) is highly contested. And that, too, is political. Most generally, and historically, multicultural literature has been about marginalized groups and the problem of white privilege. Who decides who is on the margin is a political question. Throughout Wang's (2015) article, she cites the plight of African-Americans, Chinese women—especially during the Cultural Revolution—Hispanics, indigenous cultures, the working class, Native Americans, and women generally. One might add to this list disabled peoples, persecuted religious minorities, those suffering from mental illness, and the list could go on.

A political *currere* is framed in a different way by Denise Taliaferro Baszile (2015). She conceives *currere* from a critical race/feminist perspective (p. 119). Baszile (2015) states

> Critical race/feminist *currere* is an autobiographical exploration guided by the question: Who am I as a non-white woman?... She tries to grapple with the question in part by reading autobiographically; that is to bring a text into the fold of her internal conversation. For instance, when she reads Plato, Charles Darwin, Michel Foucault, or Karl Marx, she asks, Who are you? Where are you? Where am I? (p. 119)

The gendered nature of race and the raced gender complexity is not lost on Baszile. One cannot separate race, class, gender from the political either. Both critical race theory and feminist theory are political. Who decides what knowledge is of most worth (Spencer's famous question) is a political question that is important to Baszile (2015). As an African-American woman, Baszile wonders where she is represented in the canon when she reads and studies dead white males. For me, though, the answer to this question of the dead white male is not to just throw out "Plato, Charles Darwin, Michel Foucault, or Karl Marx" (Baszile, 2015, p. 119)—and I do not think that is what she is getting at. The point is, rather, to integrate marginalized writers into many different kinds of canon(s). There isn't just one canon—as Alan Bloom (2012) might think in his reactionary book, *The Closing of the American Mind.*

Currere as Pathography and Spirituality

Alongside the political, one might imagine a *currere* that deals with pathography (the study of illness) and spirituality (the metaphysical ramifications of illness). Pathography is the study of illness from the patient's perspective. The medical literature is written mostly by medical sociologists, MDs, surgeons, etc. Scholarly literature by patients is still marginalized. The trade book industry, however, publishes

many books about people's personal journeys through illness. *Teaching Through the Ill Body: A Spiritual and Aesthetic Approach to Pedagogy and Illness* (Morris, 2008) is one of the few pathographies in the field of curriculum studies that also explores being ill from the patient's perspective and the spiritual ramifications of illness and education. In *Teaching Through the Ill Body,* I write about the phenomenological experience of illness in its connection to spirituality, especially to Buddhism and Judaism.

There have been many curriculum theorists who have written about spirituality before me. It must be noted, though, that the notion of spirituality is a contested one. Raymond Lawrence (2017)—a well-known figure in chaplaincy studies—says that spirituality is a weak and meaningless term. But those of us in curriculum studies who work in the area of spirituality do not quibble so much over the meaning of the word spirituality. James Macdonald (1996), in his book, *Theory as a Prayerful Act*, was one of the earliest writers on spirituality and curriculum studies. Dwyane Huebner (1999) was another early writer on spirituality and curriculum. Both of these theorists wrote from a Christian perspective. Later on in the history of curriculum studies, Jewish writers began to emerge. Alan Block (2004, 2007, 2009) has written much on the complicated relations between Jews and Christians in education, and he has been roundly critical of the unspoken Christian underpinning of the curriculum both in colleges and in K-12 settings. David Bleich (1999) has been writing on Jewish concerns and education for decades. He especially notes the ways in which Jews have been historically shut out of academe until the mid-20th century. H. Svi Shapiro (1999) has also written about how Jewish intellectuals are "strangers" in academe. Educationist Philip Wexler (1996, 2000, 2008) has been writing about Jewish mysticism for some time now from a sociological framework. David Smith (1999), in his well know book *Pedagon* (which is a neologism for the agony of pedagogy), writes about growing up in China and thinking through Eastern traditions. William Pinar (2015) also notes that, in his early years while at the University of Rochester, he was engaged in Zen Buddhism.

All of these curriculum theorists write in some way about their own experiences—even if they are not writing autobiographies, per se—as spiritual persons in academe. Obviously, spirituality is part of who they are as scholars. Bleich (1999) points out that, in the mid-20th century, if Jews could even get hired in academe being Jewish was not something talked about. And Jewish intellectuals were certainly not encouraged to write about their Jewishness. In a way, then, the curriculum theorists I mention above are doing the work of spiritual *currere*, even if they do not directly talk about themselves.

Teacher *Currere*

As a teacher, I have been working on deepening my sense of presence and being-there in soul, spirit, mind, and body for my students. Schenck and Churchill (2012) write about the healing arts (and teaching is a healing art).

> The metaphors "emptying" and "becoming hollow" describe the feeling of having set self aside—the state of being cleared out. And it is this state that allows the practitioner to be present both to the [student] and to the larger powers that encompass [student] and practitioner alike. (p. 79)

I have focused much of my attention on being attentive by "becoming hollow" and "emptying" out the noise in my head while listening to students' narratives.

Although presence and fully "emptying out" is not fully possible or even realistic, it is possible to be more with the student in mind, spirit, soul, and body if I focus all of my attention upon them and put myself in the background somewhere.

The continual being-there, in the moment with the student—as well as being constant over time—helps deepen teaching. But by deepening teaching, the teacher still does not understand fully the impact she has on her students.

Being a teacher means understanding that I don't understand—in the profound sense. Our complex relations with the Other are part of the numinous-ness that is life. There is always already an open-ness to the mystery of the self-other relation of teacher-and-student.

Being a teacher means embracing responsibility and obligation. Teacherly authority has much to do with obligation. When I speak of obligation here, I am not speaking of an abstract Kantian concept, like ethical imperatives. Here, I am speaking of both the obligation to be there (literally), yes, and also to be there in one's uniqueness. Donald Capps (2001) puts it this way:

> In *Personal Destinies*, David L. Norton presents the argument that obligation to be ourselves has ethical priority over all other obligations. He discusses the "inner voice" or "daimon" to which we are obliged to be true, and uses language like "integrity" and "identity" to describe this inner voice. (p. 93)

Teacherly authority, hence, suggests listening to our shadows (as Jung would put it), integrating those shadows, and not projecting them onto our students. Teacherly authority, for me, does not mean I am an authority on something, but I take responsibility for unpacking what it is about myself that needs to be worked through psychically. And, in the working through comes "integrity" and responsibility to respond—as Levinas might put it—to the student in the best way I can, knowing that my inner "daimon" is still there needing to be further worked through.

Teacherly authority and confidence go hand in hand. Like troubling the concept of authority, the concept of confidence needs troubling. Schenck and Churchill (2012) put it this way:

> Confidence does not mean cocksureness, or assertions of infallibility or guarantees of help, any of which would be inconsistent with humility. Confidence is most often a "quiet confidence," not loud proclamations, which ironically serve to raise doubts about the abilities of judgment of the practitioner. (p. 21)

Teacherly authority is, thus, a "quiet" authority. I step with a certain lightness of being—as Kundera might call it—into my classrooms. I am quietly respectful of students. I am "quietly confident" and humble to be in the presence of students.

Currere and Death

Teaching means dealing with the big questions. *Currere* is about life-movement, psychic movement in time, space, and place. But *currere*, too, should also be about the end of life. Being alive means facing death. And this is something that we need to talk about in the classroom. School shootings have driven home the importance of addressing this unspeakableness. This is a subject no one talks about. And that is what curriculum theorists do—talk about the unspeakable. Of course, I will never understand how to help others cope with death and dying. I don't know how to do this in my own life. I have lost both of my parents, all of my grandparents, and some

friends to illness and suicide. These losses still hurt. I am speechless before death. As Emily Dickenson put it, death does not kindly "wait" for me or for anyone for that matter. I can say nothing in the face of death. Being there—for students—in the face of death, especially in the light of the continual school shootings, is important.

Jung (1999) states that "the meaning and worth of life never becomes more urgent or more agonizing than when we see the final breath leave a body" (p. 11). I have only witnessed the "final breath leave a body" once, with a cat. I felt an overwhelming sense of profundity at the meaning of life and at the finality of life. As Migel de Unamuno (1954) puts it, "There is something which, for lack of a better name, we call the tragic sense of life, which carries with it a whole conception of life itself and of the universe" (p. 17).

Students who find out that one of their parents or siblings might be dying experience what Kenneth Doka (2014) calls "anticipatory grief" (p. 13). There is, as Doka suggests, no consensus on what this term means. However, I find it a useful concept. What does it mean when something is anticipated? To wait. To wait perhaps in agony. David Smith (1999) once coined the term pedagon, meaning the pedagogy of agony. Death is that crisis that is THE "pedagon" of life. Death brings into question educational, autobiographical, psychoanalytic, theological, philosophical, sociological questions—with such intensity.

I find helpful Weisman's (as cited in Doka, 2014) "psychosocial stages" of confronting impending death. One "psychosocial stage" is what Weisman calls "impact distress" when someone is told he/she has cancer, for example. The other "psychosocial stage" is the "existential plight," when "the [person] continues to adjust to the diagnosis, initial treatment, the reality of cancer, and the threat of death" (p. 25).

I experienced both "impact distress" and had an "existential plight" when I was told that I had ovarian cancer.

It has been two years, Feb. 9th, that I had major surgery and chemotherapy for ovarian cancer. I am, as they say, two years out from the cancer and am in remission. James Woods (2015) asks: " what about cancer…. I was told that God's ways are incomprehensible and…a Job-like humility before the incomprehensible [like ovarian cancer] must be cultivated" (p. 7). But Woods (2015) states that "God's reply to Job is…radically unhelpful" (p. 6). In the book of Job, it is said that "the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys" (Job 42:12 English Standard Version). In the face of a diagnosis like ovarian cancer, Job's story makes no sense. The "why me" mantra only carries so far and is not helpful. And most who are diagnosed with ovarian cancer get nothing back. In fact, most who are diagnosed in stage three or four die. I was one of the lucky ones, however, because they caught the cancer early. My survival rate is much higher than someone who is diagnosed in stage four.

Dying of terminal cancer brings nothing, nothingness. Dying of a terminal disease does not make a better person, more saintly, interesting, noble, brave, or courageous (see Susan Sontag, 2003, for more on this). Dying of cancer is not like the plight of Job because 14,000 sheep do not magically appear after chemo is over. There is no gold at the end of the rainbow. There is no rainbow.

Currere as Jewish Ethics

Ethics is, for me, the heart and soul of teaching and of Judaism—my tradition. Doing good works in this world is what is important. Good works in the Jewish tradition are called *mitzvot*. This is how I see the work of the professorate; we must do

good works in the midst of the world, in the here and now. *Passionate Lives in Public Service* (Pinar, 2009) is a profound phrase that means much to me.

Pinar (2015) points out that Alan Block makes a connection between the work of Joseph Schwab (who emphasized the practical) and his concept of deliberation and the Jewish tradition of learning. The Jewish tradition of learning involves not only study but action in the world. Pinar (2015) puts it like this:

> To appreciate Schwab's notion of "deliberation," Block situates the concept in "the traditional Jewish pedagogical methods of the Yeshivah…. In the yeshiva, "study [is] institutionalized…as a performative act…." Such complicated conversation is simultaneously intellectual and spiritual. (p. 15)

Deliberation is the bridge between the practical and the theoretical, the world and the self who studies that world. "For the Rabbis, study must be related to the practical—to the continued striving for a holiness that can only be realized in our daily lives in this world" (Block, cited in Pinar, 2015, p. 15).

I have been much influenced by the work of Alan Block, a Jewish curriculum scholar. Block (2007) has written one of the most important books in curriculum studies on the intersections of Judaism, teaching, ethics, and education. When he took a sabbatical, he "searched" for himself in Judaism and education. Block (2007) says:

> I had begun searching out the silences: where and how did Jewish discourse get eliminated from the educational practices in the Western world, and more particularly, in the United States. (p. 19)

Jews live in a predominantly Christian country in the United States. We are clearly a minority, but in the multicultural literature, we are nowhere to be found. Svi Shapiro (cited in Morris, 2016) addresses this issue. He states that

> It is also a curious, if little commented on, fact, that while the "postmodern" moment has meant an unparalleled acknowledgment of the salience of "difference" and the "other"…within critical educational studies at least, this has not included much about Jews as either an oppressed or marginalized group. (cited in Morris, 2016, pp. 85-86)

In the United States, Jews are not considered a minority. Jews are invisible in most conversations on politics, or education, until men carrying torches walk down the street with swastikas on their shirts. This is one of the most disturbing images for me that flickered on TV after Trump was elected. My God, I thought, what country am I living in?

To be Othered, to be insulted, to be confronted with anti-Semitic remarks, is a reality for Jews, not just in the U.S. but in Europe and elsewhere. Although anti-Semitism might not be as bold in the U.S. as it is in Europe, it is still here and on the rise since the beginning of the Trump presidency. Of course, Trump has opened the door to all kinds of hatreds, but anti-Semitism is one of them. Skinheads and Neo-Nazis are not shy in their hatred of Jews, African-Americans, and more.

With yet another school shooting, and no resolution at hand, we find out—not from mainstream media but from online sources—that the shooter was anti-Semitic. Why was this a part of the story left out on national television? This is something that we must examine and trouble.

A *Currere* of Jewish Ethics Must Confront Anti-Semitism.

I wrote about anti-Semitism previously (see Morris, 2001, 2002, 2006). It seems that I must write about it again—a future book project. In 2002, I wrote about the Heidegger controversy in a book I co-edited with John Weaver called *Difficult Memories: Talk in a (Post) Holocaust Era.* Heidegger has influenced many in the curriculum field, as well as across the disciplines. Heidegger is particularly troublesome to me because he was a rabid anti-Semite and a Nazi. Scholars used to find all sorts of ways to excuse him or ignore the controversy or say that his story has nothing to do with his philosophy. I wrestled with these issues in 2002. I thought I was done talking about Heidegger. However, the return of the repressed is upon us. Heidegger's (2017a; 2017b; 2017c) anti-Semitism has surfaced again with the publications of what are called his *Black Notebooks*. Jean-Luc Nancy (2017) has written what I consider to be a bold critique of Heidegger's anti-Semitism, although he does seem to equivocate at times. This equivocation can be no more. The upshot of Nancy's (2017) book is that Heidegger's philosophy is, at root, anti-Semitic. The argument that readers separate his philosophy from his anti-Semitism no longer washes.

Currere and Chaplaincy

After suffering through the realization that I had cancer, suffering through the surgery and chemotherapy and then living with the fact that I am a cancer survivor, I decided to become a healer-teacher-chaplain. I began studying chaplaincy about eight months ago and have been doing the work of chaplaincy at a trauma-one hospital. I am an inter-faith chaplain. My Jewish identity shapes my chaplaincy, but I do this work in a secular hospital and work with all kinds of people from different religious backgrounds. This is my "passionate" life in "public service," as Pinar (2008) would put it. Chaplaincy is another form of teaching as I see it. But this kind of teaching is based on listening, not talking. Chaplaincy is taking care of the sick and caring for them not in a didactic way but in the way of silence. Tell me your story is all one has to say. It amazes me how much people who are suffering need to talk, want to talk, and just want someone to listen to them.

When I think of my interest in studying chaplaincy, I think of the work of Dwayne Huebner (1999). His work has had the most influence on my own in this area of spirituality, theology, chaplaincy—both in a scholarly way and in spiritual and worldly way. Huebner's famous phrase "the lure of the transcendent" suggests that—as he puts it—there is more, always more, to things, to situations, to people, to what we make of the world. He called this "moreness." Huebner wrote much on the intersections of theology and education, as well as on politics, aesthetics, history, and more.

It is interesting to note that Dwayne Huebner (1999), who was one of the earliest curriculum theorists to write about Christianity and education, abandoned the curriculum studies field to become a member of Yale Divinity School. What is curious is that no one really talks about Huebner's getting out of curriculum studies. Why do scholars abandon this field? Frustration.

I can certainly understand Huebner's frustration. Being housed in a college of education is highly problematic for a curriculum studies scholar. Colleges of education are very frustrating places to work. I am housed in a place that is conservative (perhaps most colleges of education are). Other faculty outside of our unit look at us with suspicion and distrust. Still, all of these years after the founding of the Reconceptualization in the 1970s, curriculum studies scholars—at least in my

college—are misunderstood and thought of as doing soft scholarship or are thought not to be doing real scholarship because what we do does not involve quantification.

Some of my colleagues in curriculum studies have talked about the possibility of starting a center of cultural studies and moving our unit there. A pipe dream. But alas. So, my generation of curriculum theorists are in the same situation that Huebner was in back in the 50s and 60s. A lack of respect for our discipline, after a while, takes a toll on the psyche. But for me, I choose to stay. I am committed to my scholarly life and work in curriculum studies, even if I am misunderstood. Even if I am frustrated.

Does it Matter Who the Scholar is? Erasure or *Currere*

Is it important to know who the scholar is as a person and as an author? Or should the scholar erase herself from the text? Traditional academic work is all about erasure of the author/scholar. Does my life history matter to anybody else? Or is it important to know who I am in order to understand my academic writings? Is the biography of the author an important curricular question? Yes. Still, it is risky to write about oneself as a scholar. As if it doesn't matter who I am. As if it doesn't matter how who I am shapes my work? Again, Denise Baszile (2015) asks the questions in relation to *currere*: "Who are you? Where are you? Where am I?" (p. 119). Embedding oneself in a theoretical narrative is still not acceptable in academe. Academics get very uncomfortable around storytelling theorized. Why would that be? Academics are supposed to be objective? Wrong. Can't be. Academics are supposed to be impersonal. Why? Postmodern biography in curriculum studies (see the work of Paula Salvio, 2007, on Anne Sexton, for example) embeds the personal inside the narrative of the subject of the biography.

Currere as a Community of Healing

Working as a professor is also working in a community of healers. Teaching is a healing profession. A sense of community, to me, is also embracing a sense of the spiritual. The idea of community is spiritual at root; being together as healer-teachers-in-community is also philosophical. Community suggests bridges, open endedness. There are bridges between (some) religious traditions. For instance, like Judaism, Christianity, according to theologian Walter Rasuchenbusch (1945), is about "solidarity." Rauschenbusch states:

> Among the earlier German theologians Friedrich Schleiermacher, Richard Rothe, and Albrecht Ritschl seem to me to serve the title [of prophets]. The constructive genius of Schleiermacher worked out solidaristic conceptions of Christianity which were far ahead of his time. (p. 27)

Christians, like Jews (and other traditions), have in common this sense of solidarity in doing good works.

Judaism is, at root, a culture, a community, or perhaps many communities (Reformed, Conservative, Orthodox, Hasidic, etc.). And we all have, as Robert Katz (1985) points out, "communal responsibility" (p. 47). Interestingly, Katz tells us that

> Seward Hiltner once asked me what term we Jews use to sum up the religious basis of rabbinical counseling. The closest approximation I could give is that of love, or *gemiluth hasadim*. Of course, the concept…designates justice, mercy, and communal responsibility. (p. 47)

I think Jewish people have in common with Christians (and other religious traditions) "justice, mercy, and communal responsibility." Teaching is about all of these things and more.

H. Richard Niebuhr (1951) writes about Christianity as a form of "companionship of fellow knowers…. It is not in lonely debate but in living dialogue" (p. 245) that Christians come to an understanding of the world. And so too do Jewish people. We have Jewish community centers that are open to all, for example. (in Savannah it is called the Jewish Educational Alliance, but it serves as a community center for all).

Theologian Karl Rahner (1992), drawing on the teachings of Ignatius Loyola, suggests that being religious, and I would add being spiritual, (and in his sense Catholic-Christian) one must engage in "*vita contemplatvia* and *vita activa*" or "contemplative action" (p. 94). *Vita* means life. Loyola, as Rahner points out, teaches that thinking and doing go hand in glove. Action without thought is not action at all; it is irresponsible. Being a teacher, at least for me, means acting in the world and studying the world in which one is acting.

I draw much of my inspiration not only from Rahner but again from William F. Pinar (2009)—who, recall, states in his book on cosmopolitanism that we must live "passionate lives in public service." And in order to combine passion and service, Pinar emphasizes study. Going into the world to do good things without study simply won't do. Anti-intellectual action is not action but re-action without thought—and that can be dangerous. Alan Block (2007) states "In study, we find the practice of study; in the practice of study we discover the life we want to live" (p. 39). And in that life of study, we learn to live and act in a compassionate way as teachers and scholars.

My teacher/scholar identity is bound up with my relationships with Christians, as I was formally educated in religious studies at a Catholic University (Loyola University). I took my MA in religious studies in 1993. And what I learned in that program has stayed with me all of these years. Ironically, one of the things I learned from studying Christianity historically is where anti-Semitism came from (in Christianity). As I wrote about in my book on the Holocaust (Morris, 2001), the Church patriarchs had to denounce Judaism to be considered Christian. Martin Luther was a rabid anti-Semite—and the founder of Protestantism. Both Catholics and Protestants hung Nazi flags from Churches in Europe during the Holocaust. Of course, there were Righteous Gentiles. But most Europeans went along with Nazis.

And yet…

Freud once told Moshe Gresser that

> Being Jewish in a Gentile world…is an irreplaceable source of "energy" that helps stimulate one's productivity, bringing out the best capacity for achievement. (cited in Morris, 2001, p. 67)

As a professor, I have to maneuver in a Christian culture both psychologically and sociologically. Christian professors do not have to think about this when they walk into a classroom.

Paul Ritterband and Harold Wechsler (1994) point out that, in many Ivy League universities, Jews were not welcomed, neither as students or professors. Although this is perhaps well known among Jewish scholars, what is disturbing is the unearthing of some of what respected academics were saying about why they didn't want Jews in their institutions. Ritterband and Wechsler (1994) tell us that

> Columbia College dean Frederick P. Keppel (1910-1918) postulated that the [Jewish] "problem" could be solved by distinguishing between "desirable" and "undesirable" Jews in student admission decisions and in faculty appointments. (p. 99)

"Undesirable" Jews were those mostly from Eastern Europe who were less assimilated into American culture and, thus, had "undesirable traits" (p. 99).

Ritterband and Wechsler (1994) go on to tell us that one of Harvard's most distinguished presidents, Lawrence Lowell, wanted to keep Jewish students out of Harvard because they were "clannish" and "where Jews become numerous they drive off other people" (p. 100). Of course, historically the situation in European universities was much worse for Jews even after the Holocaust. In most of the German universities after the war, Nazis resumed their professorships and were, in fact, not de-nazified. Steven Remy (2003) writes about "the Heidelberg myth," and he tells us that, even in the 1950s, professors who taught at the University of Heidelberg (and at many other German universities) who were former Nazis were never really de-nazified, even though they said they were. Think of the implications for the curriculum!

Currere and Conclusion

This essay would not have been what it is if I hadn't told my story. This essay would not have been what it is if I wasn't honest about my feelings. *Currere* is such a profoundly complex topic and one that I hope I have unpacked in my own way because of my own background.

We live in troubled times. School shootings, the Trump presidency, racism(s), and hatreds seem as if they are exploding out of pandora's box in the United States. These troubled times demand voices from below, voices from the marginalized. Change begins in storytelling. *Currere* is about storytelling. *Currere* is about change.

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