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How will our teaching help equip ourselves, our students, and our world to meet the unprecedented challenge facing humankind in the early twenty-first century — forging a sustainable relationship between humankind and planet Earth and doing so in ways that build social justice within and between societies?

Climate change may be the most far-reaching manifestation of white privilege and class privilege yet faced by humankind. Caused overwhelmingly by the world's high-consuming people, climate change is wreaking death and destruction first and foremost on people of Africa, Asia, and low-lying Pacific Islands, as well as economically impoverished people in nations of the Global North — largely people who are not white. Economically privileged people (who are disproportionately white) have benefitted materially from the fossil fuel-based industrialization and global economy responsible for the eruption of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. In addition to climate change, other links between ecological degradation and structural injustice based on race/ethnicity, class, and gender are also fierce. Earth's degradation is inseparably linked with pernicious forms of social injustice that go largely unseen by people on the upper side of power and privilege.

In this context, something new is asked of humankind: to forge sustainable earth–human relations and to do so in ways that reduce rather than increase the existing gaps in wealth and power within and between societies. When something new is asked of humankind, so, too, is something new asked of religion. Religion, arguably, is a source of the motivation, inspiration, spiritual fortitude, moral wisdom, and hope that can enable humans to meet the moral challenges of each new time and place. Contemporary religious traditions worthy of that name will rise to the challenge of sustainability with justice.

How will we as educators in theology and religious studies respond? How will we generate hope and moral–spiritual power for the work of justice-making and earth-keeping? How, to be more blunt, will we guide and enable students to go where we have failed to go, to construct knowledge and moral agency that we have not? *This is the pedagogical challenge staring us in the face.*

I will reflect on what I have learned about this challenge from three sources: First, I turn to the work of colleagues steeped in feminist antiracist pedagogy, particularly the work of social ethicists Mary Hobgood and Laurie Cassidy. Second, I draw upon my experience organizing and leading or coleading three colloquia for theology/religious studies faculty, whose teaching on ecology focuses on the social justice implications of ecological degradation. (These workshops were sponsored by Seattle University, Serampore University, and the National Council of Churches of India, as well as the AAR.) Finally, I reflect on my years of work in Central America during its revolutionary wars and extreme paramilitary violence.

The obstacles to teaching toward ecojustice in theology and religious studies are formidable. Many remain largely unacknowledged in the discourses of environmentalism, theology/religious studies, and pedagogical theory. A crucial initial step in theological education for ecojustice is to identify and analyze the obstacles we face — and our persistent failures to recognize the problem.

The Dynamics of Moral Oblivion

Daily life in advanced global capitalism:

- Hides the actual impacts of climate change
- Normalizes environmentally deadly lifeways

- Rationalizes the ideologies and worldviews that disguise these lifeways as good
- Obscures more sustainable and socially equitable ways of life

These four processes feed moral oblivion. Moral oblivion and the moral inertia that accompanies it are fierce guardians of “the way things are.” They are crucial to the ongoing operation of fossil fuel-based, politically unaccountable, corporate-and-finance-driven economic globalization.

For years I have struggled to better understand the specific dynamics that foster moral oblivion. I have come to identify several factors that impede “seeing” the ecologically deadly consequences of our lifeways and “seeing” that the first to suffer are those on the underside of power and privilege. Consider the following four points:

- We may turn away from current and future ecological devastation (and the pathologies of power behind it) because we feel — consciously or not — powerless to do anything significant to change it.
- We might not look because we sense that seeing would be too terrible. Like some mourners, we may distract ourselves from engaging the grief of a loss because the emotions are simply too raw, too anguishing. It is painful to recognize our implication in profound and widespread suffering, and painful to recognize the threat posed to the life of the world today.
- The dominant society in which we swim normalizes deadly lifeways, glorifying material acquisition and consumption while dissociating actions from their consequences. Media, advertising, and endlessly expanding consumer choice conspire to convince us that “the way things are” is “the way things will be.”
- Our definitions of the Earth crisis, modes of inquiry, landscapes of reality, and visions of a desired future are shaped by the very cultural ethos that generated the problem. Our teaching is done within and is shaped by the structures of power and privilege that gave rise to the Industrial Revolution, and advanced global capitalism and the resulting Earth crisis. Our epistemological moorings may not bear the requisite transformative potential, for they are the projects of the culture that produced the crisis. We may need to turn to sources of perception and religious wisdom outside the boundaries of power and privilege in advanced global capitalism to forge a future not governed by it.

Teaching in theology and religious studies is called to counter moral oblivion with moral vision. Moral vision must enable our students and ourselves to see that life as we know it does not need to be life as we live it. We seek moral vision to forge societies in which humankind is not toxic to its planetary home and in which the material goods of some are not bought by the blood of others.

Learning from Antiracist Feminist Pedagogy

To begin to counter moral oblivion and cultivate moral vision in the classroom, I draw on the practice of feminist antiracist pedagogy. This approach is grounded in a deep, critical analysis of the power alignments through which a small segment of earth's people are disproportionately:

- Responsible for climate change
- "Beneficiaries" of the fossil-fuel political economy causing it
- Protected from its worst consequences

The approach makes connections between different forms of oppression, such as racism and environmental degradation, and probes the role religion plays in both perpetuating and resisting ecological degradation and social oppression.

By bringing together theory and practice, feminist antiracist pedagogy aims to connect the material-embodied realities of students' lives to local and global political struggles for justice and sustainability. It insists that social structures are humanly constructed and thus subject to human agency — and recognizes moral agency as collective, not just individual. It guides students toward "new worlds in the making," highlighting the visionary and practical organizing of countless groups around the world who are working for ecojustice.

Feminist antiracist pedagogy dares to attempt new ways of knowing — learning from the earth itself and learning through humble engagement with communities whose lives are endangered by our ways of life and whose voices are systematically silenced.

Teaching for Moral Vision

Guided by these insights, I use two assignments that aim at engendering moral vision and, with it, moral agency. One assignment calls students to:

- Recognize the ecological and social justice impacts of a particular product or activity common in their lives
- Conceptualize viable avenues toward dismantling those impacts though action at four levels — household, institutional, corporate, and public policy
- Practice moral agency at all of those levels

- Explore the role of religious conviction or practice in that action for change

Working in groups of four over the course of several weeks, students choose a familiar product that has adverse environmental and social justice impacts — from a laptop to a shampoo, a brand of jeans to a bag of corn chips. Students research and present the chain of adverse impacts, highlighting the links between ecological damage and social injustice. One source of information must come from people who experience the damaging consequences and who are organizing for change.

Students choose one instance in the chain of adverse impacts and unravel the power alignments by responding to a set of "reality-revealing questions." They develop a set of proposals for change and engage in one action at each of the four levels, usually delegating different actions among the group members. They map how actions at one level open doors to change and action at other levels, and identify a religiously based group working to dismantle the chain of adverse impacts.

A second assignment I use is an "Earth Life-force Journal." Each student chooses one piece of earth's web of life with which she/he will sit and spend contemplative time at least twice each week. It may be a tree, a patch of soil, a bird's nest, a spot in a creek, etc. Students are charged with noticing the energy of life at work within this piece of earth or at work on its behalf elsewhere on the planet. They journal their observations and their experience of encounters with this tiny speck of earth's life systems which, like them, is a descendant of ancient stardust. At the term's end, students write a brief reflection paper using concepts learned in the class to describe how this experience has or has not been a "religious" experience and how it might contribute to social structural change.

Three Lenses for Moral Vision

For people on the upper side of environmental privilege, learning to recognize its brutal consequences — especially on the world's most marginalized people — is an act of moral courage. Yet to lead students into deeper knowledge of such realities without also leading them to resources for hope and change would be a moral travesty. I ask students to consider the notion that morally empowering vision has three lenses:

- Seeing "what is going on" in whatever situation is at hand, and especially unmasking systemic evil that masquerades as good
- Seeing "what could be" by attending to more just and sustainable alternatives already in

the making, but ones that are under the radar of dominant public discourse

- Seeing, ever more fully, a sacred Spirit of life coursing throughout creation and leading it — despite all evidence to the contrary — into abundant life for all

These three lenses are the key ingredients of agency for radical social structural change. Each alone is inadequate. Daring to engage the first is an invitation to despair, unless one also engages the other two. Together, they speak of hope. Through this framework, I aim to better prepare myself and my students to meet the moral challenge of our era — forging sustainable earth–human relations marked by social justice within and between societies.