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CURRICULUM & TEACHING STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Peace talks: A "dialogical ethics" model of faculty–student collaboration in the undergraduate classroom

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Abstract: At the 2015 CIDER conference on Higher Education Pedagogy, professors Abelson and Nelson discussed their intense and inspiring level of instructor–student collaboration, describing how they collaborate with their first-year students in the design of particular assignments and even overall course design at the unit level. This essay seeks to contribute to both our understanding and appreciation of such collaborative learning-centered strategies by applying a "dialogical ethics" model. The essay begins with an extended investigation of the ways in which the dramatistic philosophy of Kenneth Burke illuminates the grammatical, rhetorical, and dialogical mechanisms by which instructor–student collaboration fosters enhanced levels of student engagement in the process of education—including investment, ownership, and empowerment. In doing so, this essay explores how the notions of (i) disparate grammars and recalcitrance, (ii) consubstantiality and irony, and (iii) dialogue of motives and peace treaty can elucidate the dynamics of instructor–student collaborative learning. Applying the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, this essay then argues that instructor–student collaboration is an inherently ethical pedagogy. Finally, consistent with the general topic of collaboration and theoretical framework of dialogue, this essay concludes with a response from those who inspired it, Abelson and Nelson.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This essay offers a theoretical discussion of faculty–student collaboration, in which instructors co-construct course policies, individual assignments, or even entire units of a course with their students. The basic premise underlying such pedagogical practices is that sharing power with students, either by offering students choices about what and how they will be doing things in a course or by involving students in course design and decision-making about their own education and learning, can greatly increase student engagement and, ultimately, student success. This essay examines six key concepts in the philosophy of language of Kenneth Burke in an attempt to clarify and illuminate the dynamics of such faculty–student collaborative endeavors. The essay is itself structured collaboratively, as it begins with a summary of the collaborative teaching practices of professors Michael Abelson and Thomas J. Nelson and ends by inviting their response to the essay's theoretical investigation.

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1. Introduction

At the 2015 CIDER Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy, hosted by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (aka Virginia Tech), Michael Abelson and Thomas J. Nelson delivered a presentation entitled "Collaborative course planning in the learner-centered classroom." Their presentation was premised on the idea that "Collaborative course planning is by nature an effective implementation of learning strategies. This fact is of special importance to teachers who subscribe to learning-centered pedagogy" (Abelson & Nelson, 2015). Founded upon this commitment to learning-centered pedagogy, Abelson and Nelson (2015) described their inspiring level of faculty–faculty collaboration in *both* course planning—it is not unusual for faculty members to share ideas as they plan their courses—*and* course delivery—it is similarly not unusual for faculty to then co-teach a course, but it is quite unusual for faculty members to then deliver the same *coordinated and synchronized* lesson plans (often including both classroom activities and assignments) in *their own distinct sections* of a course. But more important for the purposes of this essay, Abelson and Nelson (2015) also described how they collaborate with their students in the design of assignments and even, to some extent, overall course design.

Their general assertion was that involving students in the process of course design and assignment design will increase student engagement, and hence student learning. Drawing upon Weimer's (2002) influential work on learning-centered teaching and advocacy for increased student engagement and ownership over the learning process, Abelson and Nelson (2015) offered correlations between her "characteristics of learner-centered teaching" and their own faculty–student "collaborative course planning"—see Table 1. Nelson (2015) describes the idea quite clearly in a handout to students, which explains how decision-making is to be shared in Unit III of the course (at an amplified level than previously): "Over the years, I've involved students in decision-making more and more, and my personal experience corroborates what numerous studies show: sharing decision-making about learning increases student engagement and enjoyment of the class, [and] improves critical thinking and collaborative decision-making skills" (Nelson).

Overall, Abelson and Nelson's (2015) discussion of faculty–student collaboration—particularly the openly dialogical nature of the interactions with and among students and the centrality of negotiation in those collaborations—reminded me of research on communication ethics in general and more specifically of Murray's (2002) development of a "dialogue of motives" model of ethical

Table 1. Correlations between Weimer's (2002) "characteristics of learner-centered teaching" and Abelson and Nelson's (2015) faculty–student "collaborative course planning"

Weimer's characteristics of learning-centered teaching	Correlation with collaborative course planning
Engage students in the "hard messy work of learning"	Collaborators debate and question key decisions. Lesson planning becomes more like learning
Accentuate skills	Academics are trained to argue about content, but collaborative problem-solving tends to center on skills
Encourage reflection on learning	Collaborative partners reflect on successes and failures in the classroom at recurring intervals
Share power with students	Collaboration by its nature decenters the singular authority of the individual teacher
Encourage collaboration among students	Collaboration becomes a familiar mode

rhetorical engagement. In that project, Murray (2002) synthesized the philosophy of language of Kenneth Burke with the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas to articulate a model of ethical communication premised upon the disparate "motivational grammars" of interlocutors. With that theoretical framework in mind, I began to wonder if, and to what extent, the "dialogical ethics" model might usefully inform our thinking about faculty–student collaboration by offering a unique lens through which to conceptualize it.

2. Literature review

Given the paucity of existing literature on the type of faculty–student collaboration being explored and tested by Abelson and Nelson, the articulation and development of a theoretical framework capable of shedding critical light on such learner-centered pedagogies seemed quite promising. Nelson confirmed that while there is considerable literature on the pedagogy of student–student collaboration, and some literature on faculty–faculty collaboration, there is little to no existing litera-ture on this type of faculty–student collaboration (Nelson, personal communication, October 2, 2015). Indeed, even in Johnson and Johnson's (2004) exceedingly valuable book on group work, there is little to no discussion of faculty–student collaboration. In their subsection on "The teacher's role in formal cooperative learning" (pp. 27–31), for example, there is no mention of collaboration between teacher and students; the role of the teacher is that of planner and orchestrator through-out. And in their subsection on "Involving students in developing criteria and rubrics" (pp. 98–107), the extent of faculty–student collaboration and negotiation is at best tempered: "Involving students in creating … the criteria and rubrics for assessing students' efforts does not mean turning over total control to students … You may wish to reach an agreement with students where you set one-third or one-half of the criteria and they decide on the rest" (pp. 98–99). On the one hand, this sort of col-laboration remains quite minimalist in comparison to the degree of power sharing being explored by innovative educators like Abelson and Nelson.

On the other hand, and perhaps more important for this investigation, Johnson and Johnson (2004) do not go on to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the nature and internal dynamics of faculty–student collaboration and negotiation. To be clear, they do provide step-by-step guidelines for the "collaborative" creation of assessment criteria and rubrics, but they do not exam-ine or theorize what "collaboration" means in this particular context. A central question is whether collaboration between faculty and students is the same phenomenon as collaboration among fac-ulty or collaboration among students? This question is worth exploring.

What follows in this essay, therefore, is an investigation of how the "dialogical ethics" model (and Burkean thought generally) can illuminate the grammatical, rhetorical, and dialogical mechanisms by which faculty–student collaboration fosters enhanced levels of student engagement—i.e. invest-ment, ownership, and empowerment—in the process of learning, and perhaps also suggest im-provements in or extensions of such collaborative endeavors. Toward that end, this essay will proceed through three sections. First, this essay will explore how the notions of (i) disparate gram-mars and recalcitrance, (ii) consubstantiality and irony, and (iii) dialogue of motives and peace treaty can further elucidate the dynamics of this form of collaborative pedagogy. Second, insofar as the underlying theory of dialogical engagement is an inherently ethical philosophy, this essay will argue similarly that faculty–student collaboration is an inherently ethical pedagogy. Third, in keeping with the collaborative and dialogical nature of this entire project, from inspiration to conclusion, this essay will solicit a response from those who sparked it: Michael Abelson and Thomas J. Nelson.

3. Part one: A dialogical ethics model of faculty–student collaboration

3.1. Disparate grammars and recalcitrance: "It's as if we're from different worlds"
Quite powerful in Abelson and Nelson's (2015) presentation was a quotation from Leamnson (1999), reproduced here:

> If it is true that many freshmen enter college believing that all schooling is a make-believe world, they will be, from the outset, at cross purposes with those of their teachers who see things quite differently. Disabusing students of their view of schooling as a game-like contrivance is a high priority goal. A pedagogy that is contrived, and therefore obvious, will only aggravate the problem. The great challenge here is to achieve a way of teaching that looks spontaneous and reactive, but which in fact is carefully designed. (p. 56)

Indeed, this is a major challenge, if not *the* major challenge, of instructors in the first-year General Education classroom. But perhaps instead of trying to "achieve a way of teaching that *looks* spontaneous and reactive" (emphasis added), we should seek to achieve a way of teaching that *is* inviting and responsive—i.e. truly dialogical. And perhaps the best way of achieving that is to engage in the sort of collaborative teaching that Abelson and Nelson (2015) endorse. As a first step in that direction, we should begin by asking in what manner, precisely, might it be true to say that students and their teachers are at "cross purposes"?

Throughout his writings, Kenneth Burke sought to provide a symbolic account of how we come to know the world. Central to that philosophy is his definition of "motives" as "shorthand terms for situations" (Burke, 1984, p. 29), which means that once a situation is read through the filter of language, it is no longer a purely material reality, but a motive. And that filter through which we interpret situations that we encounter is, for Burke, our "grammar" (see Burke, 1969a). So when a student enters a classroom, it is always already an interpreted phenomenon—through the filter of their previous experiences and expectations—and hence, according to Burke, a motivated one. For example, if a student interprets a situation as "lame," his motivation will be to put up with it. The consequent drama that is initiated by this interpretation of the situation (i.e. by this "motive") is to arrive late, pay half attention, study little. This, then, is that particular student's "motivational grammar" about the course—one which can be very difficult to change. Alternatively, if a student interprets a situation as "challenging," her motivation will be to pay attention and work hard. A very different "motivational grammar," and consequently a very different "drama" ensues. With this core understanding of the relationship between reality—i.e. a situation—and our symbolic interpretation of it—i.e. a motive— Burke reveals how the "cross purposes" that Leamnson (1999) speaks of is, at root, a difference in motivational grammars. In other words, Burke's *A Grammar of Motives* (1969a) lays the foundation for Burke's dramatism insofar as it establishes the grammar with which and through which the world is experienced.

To clarify, Burke is explaining how our very perception of the world is shaped by our existing linguistic apparatus and how that perception, insofar as it is always-already dramatistic, conditions our motivations/attitudes and our actions/behaviors:

> [T]he motive by which a situation is described contains within it an evaluative trajectory. Consider, for example, how "to call a person a murderer is to propose a hanging." Here the situation is viewed symbolically under the caption "murderer," which is a motive. This motive contains within itself both an "ethical" evaluation of the situation and its symbolic trajectory, a "hanging." (Murray, 2002, p. 31)

So when we feel that "It's as if we're from different worlds" or that "My students seem to be speaking a different language," it is, in Burkean terms, true. Our students have a different perception of the world, precisely because they possess a different grammar through which they perceive the world. And this disparate grammar means that they have not only a different perception of higher education—they see a different drama unfolding as soon as they walk in to the classroom on the first day—but also different expectations about how the course will run and what it's purpose is, as well as a different motivational framework that informs their behavior and both their level and type of engagement (or lack thereof) in the classroom.

Yet Burke's concept of recalcitrance is even more illuminating. As explained by Murray (2002), recalcitrance is "an account of the presencing of otherness in and through language ... [It] is the

resistance that is met by any particular symbolic framing of the world" (p. 23). For example, if one says "I am a bird," one's lack of anatomical wings will force one to revise the statement to "I am a pilot" (see Burke, 1984, pp. 255–256). According to Burke, "*a statement is an attitude rephrased in accordance with the strategy of revision made necessary by the recalcitrance of the materials employed for embodying this attitude*" (1984, p. 255, original emphasis).[1]

So, it is not simply that we experience student resistance (in whatever way we might understand "resistance"). Rather, what we experience in the undergraduate classroom is recalcitrance, in that many students do not share the same grammar about learning, education, engagement, etc. It is a mistake, therefore, to simply view resistant students as unmotivated or difficult—though there may be some of those. We should instead operate with the understanding that our students may have a different motivational grammar, which makes participating in the drama that we are scripting difficult. Students do not necessarily walk into our classrooms with the same motivational grammar; they may not perceive the situation of higher education through the same filter and they may have different expectations for the class and therefore different motivations for their behavior and performance.

3.2. Consubstantiality and irony: "Nothing I say gets through to them"

Given the disparate motives that often exist between instructor and student, and the recalcitrance that often results from that disparity, it can be very difficult for a traditional "rhetoric of motives" to bring the two parties into agreement. Attempts to persuade students to "see things my way" or to "get with the program," as is often attempted on day one when reviewing the syllabus, may fail to bring about a shared vision of higher education in general or of the course in particular. Complaints and confusion regarding "Why are we doing this?" and "I don't need this course for my major" will persist. Consequently, the move to a "dialogue of motives" may be the (far) better pedagogical option. Within such a dialogue, the instructor invites students to the negotiating table to collaboratively design the curriculum, wherein the students' expectations and desires are placed in negotiative dialogue with the instructor's own understanding of course objectives and expectations concerning effective course design. However, before moving to an extended examination of dialogue in Subsection 3, it may prove beneficial to discuss in greater detail why a (merely) rhetorical engagement may prove less than fully effective.

Following the development of his unique concept of dramatistic grammar, Burke investigates the concept of rhetoric within the same dramatistic framework, largely through the paired notions of identification and consubstantiality. Identification replaces persuasion as Burke's (1969b) definition of rhetoric: "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language … *identifying* your ways [i.e. motives] with his" (p. 55). Here, Burke describes the mechanism by which individual motives become shared. Given that two parties may possess disparate grammars, it is through the (rhetorical) identification of (the grammars of) the two parties that they become (grammatically) consubstantial. The result of identification is consubstantiality, which Burke (1969b) discusses as a rhetorical effect:

> A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their *interests* are joined, A is identified with B … . In being identified with B, A is "substantially one" with a person other than himself … [He is] consubstantial with another" (pp. 20–21).

These two concepts, therefore, provide a dramatistic account of how others are incorporated into one's own motivated drama. A rhetoric of motives achieves consubstantiality through a symbolic overcoming of difference.

However, in the presence of highly disparate grammars, as may be the case between an instructor and many of their students, identification and consubstantiality may not be a likely possibility, certainly not in the days or weeks necessary to "get students on board." Indeed, not only will a traditional (and perhaps even antagonistic) rhetoric—as in "Here's the syllabus and you will do as you're

told if you want to pass this class"—prove pedagogically ineffectual or even disastrous, but so too might a more welcoming rhetoric—as in "Let's take the day to go over the syllabus so I can explain my rationale for these course objectives and policies." This is simply because many students may not easily or quickly subscribe to, or even fully comprehend, the instructor's vision of higher education and the course.

Indeed, while the presencing of the other (qua their motivational grammar) to the self (qua their motivational grammar) is experienced as recalcitrance, our encounters with others need not always seek consubstantiality. Indeed, there is a potential violence implied by that "occupational psychosis" (see Burke, 1984, pp. 37–49). But in any case, when the recalcitrant call of another person confronts the familiar voice of oneself, the result is irony. Irony—as uniquely conceptualized by Burke—is the effect resulting from a clash of perspectives. Irony is therefore, for Burke, dialogical rather than rhetorical in nature. You cannot experience irony without a simultaneous seeing it this/my way and seeing it that/your way. According to Burke, irony offers not a particular perspective for viewing and knowing the world, but a "perspective of perspectives" (Burke, 1969a, p. 512) and it depends upon the perspectives of other symbol users with their own motivational grammars. This means that:

> Irony is the dialogical confrontation of the voices of Others with one's own way of knowing ... [I]rony is the constant reminder that the plot is still unfolding and that the final act has not yet been written. There is no single author of the human drama. Everyone has a voice, and every voice writes its own plot into the drama of life. (Murray, 2002, p. 30)

So, irony is the foundational concept for "a dramatistic theory of ethics in which the recalcitrant voices of Others generate a dialogue of competing motives" (Murray, 2002, p. 29). Moreover:

> A particular way of seeing becomes ironized when it is called into question by another way of seeing. The result of that ironizing may be that one becomes consubstantial with the Other. But one need not be already consubstantial with the Other for irony to occur. Quite often, irony arises from Others with whom one is not already consubstantial. (Murray, 2002, p. 29)

In the context of the classroom, irony is the clashing of perspectives, when the "cross purposes" that may exist between instructor and students become vocalized—if there is even an opportunity for that to happen. Too often, perhaps, instructors only confront the irony between their own and students' motivational grammars about the course when reading end-of-semester evaluations, and realizing too late that it never really clicked because of this or because of that. But irony, even if given voice early in the semester, is only a starting point, the (dramatistic) manifestation of the existence of (grammatical) difference. One can respond to irony by demanding that the other accept one's own way of seeing. This would be the coercive classroom. Or one can respond to irony by inviting the other into a discussion, with the goal of getting them to see things your way. This would be the welcoming or "invitational" classroom—see below. This essay investigates a third option, consistent with Abelson and Nelson's (2015) challenge of highly collaborative teaching, in which one responds to irony by engaging in genuine dialogue with the other, not with the goal of necessarily persuading them to see things your way but with the goal of simultaneously accepting the likely inevitability of lingering grammatical disparity while seeking to get something done.[2]

3.3. Dialogue of motives and peace treaty: "Let's agree to disagree"

With the likelihood that a "rhetoric of motives" may fail to bring many (or even most) students on board, one should consider how a "dialogue of motives" might prove to be a more effective pedagogical strategy. The sentiment here is not simply "Let's agree to disagree" but "Let's agree to disagree ... and then proceed to actually get something done." To do that, we must consider the role that otherness plays in the symbolic drama when it is not overcome through rhetorical identification. Sometimes, identification fails or falls short. And sometimes, consubstantiality is not the desired result. In such cases, "irony can be understood as the 'first word' in a dialogue of motives, in which the Other's own grammatical description of the world is not overcome, but continually present as a recalcitrant force in dialogue" (Murray, 2002, p. 34).

In other words, a dialogue of motives stands in opposition to a rhetoric of motives insofar as it does not seek to overcome or symbolically merge the Other's grammatical description of the world. Instead, the Other's distinct grammar of motives is continually present as a recalcitrant force in dialogue. The Other exists outside of *my* grammar of motives as its own unique and recalcitrant grammar of motives. For this reason, "[a] dialogue of motives cannot approach the Other with selfishness or manipulative intent, because that would imply that a rhetoric of motives is, in fact, operative … [T]he fundamental fact of human with human is the fundamental fact of grammar with grammar. And the coexistence of a multiplicity of grammars of motives is the dialogue of motives" (Murray, 2002, pp. 36–37).

This distinction between a dialogue of motives and a rhetoric of motives can be further clarified by contrasting it more fully with "invitational rhetoric." At first glance, a dialogue of motives may appear almost identical to Foss and Griffin's (1995) "invitational rhetoric," which is a view of rhetoric "built on the principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination rather than on the attempt to control others through persuasive strategies designed to effect change" (pp. 4–5). Their complaint against traditional theories of persuasion is that "Embedded in efforts to change others is a desire for control and domination … The act of changing others not only establishes the power of the rhetor over others but also devalues the lives and perspectives of those others" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 3). However, in the Burkean framework outlined here, traditional rhetoric can be viewed as a *monological* rhetoric of motives, aimed at coercing consubstantiality, while invitational rhetoric, by contrast, is a *dialogical* rhetoric of motives insofar as it too seeks "understanding as a means to create a relationship" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 5). Note that invitational rhetoric is still a type of rhetorical engagement, albeit a dialogical (i.e. invitational) rather than monological (i.e. coercive) rhetoric. Strictly speaking, a dialogue of motives, as distinct from either type of rhetoric, does not seek identification, whether that be through manipulation or welcoming discourse. "Its aim is not consubstantiality, but peaceful co-existence" (Murray, 2002, pp. 37–38). Hence, this Burke-inspired conception of dialogue bifurcates traditional notions of two-way communication into a (invitational/dialogical) rhetoric of motives that seeks identification and a dialogue of motives that maintains, even celebrates, difference—with both, of course, standing in opposition to the one-way communication of traditional rhetoric qua persuasion.

In this regard, a potentially useful metaphor for understanding a dialogue of motives is the peace treaty. Whereas Burke alternatively employs the metaphors of constitution and war to represent the grammar and rhetoric of motives, the peace treaty does not put forward a unified motivational grammar, as does the US Constitution, nor does it seek to coerce others into consubstantiality with that grammatical framing, as does a war. According to Murray (2002), "Whereas a constitution seeks consubstantiality through the rhetorical identification of shared motives, a treaty seeks to maintain civility through the dialogical acknowledgment of disparate motives. Rather than a rhetoric of motives' goal of unification, a dialogue of motives' goal is mutual respect and recognition of one another's right to exist" (p. 41).

The task, in world politics and in our classrooms, is to balance a rhetoric of motives that seeks symbolic merger with a dialogue of motives that tolerates difference. "Dramatistic dialogue attempts to pursue peace in the very maintenance of difference" (Murray, 2002, p. 42). A dialogue of motives is offered, therefore, as a curative to disagreement, in which dialogical engagement with others seeks "not a 'communion of souls' but the establishment of consubstantiality tempered by a respect for 'the distinctness of human beings' (Peters, 1999, p. 21)" (Murray, 2002, p. 39). By engaging in a dialogue of motives, "we can attempt to 'establish a vibrant set of social relations in which common worlds can be made' (Peters, 1999, p. 118) without annihilating difference." (Murray, 2002, p. 39).[3]

3.4. Summary to part one: The dialogical classroom
The traditional classroom (at least in its worst caricature) can be seen as operating with a coercive rhetoric. Beginning on day one, the professor "goes over" the syllabus in order to inform students of

what will be happening and what they will be doing, perhaps with the hope that students will "get on board." If students do not "get on board" and share the same vision of the course, too bad. Generally, in the (particularly first-year) undergraduate classroom, if student engagement, student success, and student retention are priorities, this sort of approach can be a miserable failure. This is the "coercive classroom."

Better is what might be called an "invitational classroom" insofar as it employs an invitational rhetoric that welcomes students into the conversation. For example, instead of simply presenting students with the syllabus, such a course might begin with the professor discussing salient aspects of the course with students: What should the attendance policy be? What should the late work policy be? What sort of behavior should be expected in the classroom? What are the primary goals of the course? and so on. But note that these topics are relatively "safe" insofar as students tend to generate the same sorts of policies and goals as the instructor. At its least invitational, the instructor might conclude such a discussion with a presentation of the actual policies and goals—i.e. the syllabus—irrespective of any points of meaningful disagreement, as in "That was a very good discussion, but now here's how it's gonna be." At its most invitational, the instructor might incorporate policies generated by students into the actual syllabus for the course. But even here, instructors typically do not bring much to the discussion—i.e. the negotiating table—because they consider most everything non-negotiable. And so the classroom continues to operate, for all practical purposes, as a rhetoric of motives, albeit a more invitational and less coercive one. The instructor's own grammar is maintained as dominant, either inviting student input on issues that can be reliably predicted to reaffirm that dominant grammar—i.e. issues for which there is pre-existing consubstantiality—or inviting student input on a few minor issues that the instructor feels can be "given away." It is therefore only dialogical on the surface. On issues the instructor is unwilling to negotiate—and does not need to negotiate, given their authority, just as a conquering power does not need to negotiate points that they do not wish to surrender—the "conversation" remains fully rhetorical in the sense of unilateral/one-way communication.

By contrast is the more genuinely "dialogical classroom." Here, at least in theory, the instructor would bring *everything* to the negotiating table. In reality, any instructor needs to insist on some very basic pre-conditions, such as expectations of the department or university that a course titled "Twentieth Century American Literature" would not be renegotiated into a yoga class or a course on Italian Renaissance art. This is just as postwar peace negotiations would need to focus on disputed territories and not someone else's country entirely, as if the United States would negotiate with its allies after World War II not only about how to carve up Germany but also about how to carve up Canada or Guatemala. That would be to start a new war, not to negotiate a peace for the existing one. Similarly, neither the students nor the instructor are free to renegotiate binding university policies. Any "negotiation" is always already constrained by overarching university regulations and by the department's existing curriculum. So, it would be within those constraints that an instructor and their students would enter into a collaborative negotiation about the design, assignments, and daily operation of the course.

In the case of Nelson's (2015) faculty–student collaboration, the handout he gives to students at the start of his most collaborative unit identifies such non-negotiables, including the department's uniform attendance policy and the parameters of the core assignments of the course's common curriculum. Nelson (2015) quotes from the department's shared curriculum guidelines:

> Unit 3 Paper: Students will produce an Ethical Reasoning Argument (1250–1750 words). [An ethical reasoning argument is a formal essay that employs ethical reasoning and a synthesis of reliable sources to make an argument.]

So, the major assignment of Unit 3 cannot be a diorama or an essay that uses no outside sources. But there is no reason that students could not, in negotiation with the instructor and themselves, assign themselves a diorama project as a "draft" stage toward the final essay. And while the

instructor might prefer an oral presentation over a diorama, they might surrender the oral presentation in order to preserve a peer feedback workshop, for which the students may have little interest. The point is that a "dialogical classroom" would expand the collaboration between instructor and students far beyond even the most invitational of "invitational classrooms."

Why? Why would an instructor willingly give up this much? After all, they are the one in charge, so why not simply tell students how it's gonna be? Because doing so can transform the classroom into a true dialogue of motives in which the disparate grammars of instructor and students do not continue to exist in an (potentially or partly) agonistic relationship but are brought into genuine conversation. Recall from Table 1 above how power sharing is a key principal of learner-centered teaching. According to Cullen (2012):

> Choice is a key feature of learner-centered pedagogy. Learner-centered practices offer learners control over their learning and create a sense of relevance to learning tasks, thus supporting motivation. Learner-centered pedagogy fosters the sharing of power between students and teachers, offering students choices and responsibility, and contextualizes learning to increase the sense of relevance–both of which serve to create intrinsic motivation for learning and to create learning environments that are conducive to creativity. (p. 68; see also Weimer, 2002 and Abelson & Nelson, 2015)

This means that students will be more invested in and more engaged in their own education, with both investment and engagement being prerequisites for maximal learning and success.

But more important, and perhaps most important of all, the dialogical classroom acknowledges the legitimacy of the students' own motivational grammar. They are not stupid for not agreeing with the instructor about course design. They are less experienced and less knowledgeable about effective course design, but that does not mean that the experiences which have shaped their expectations and motivations are unworthy of open and respectful conversation. The primary benefit of the instructor bringing (most) everything to the negotiating table is that it makes the process fully transparent and promises good faith between both parties. Imagine if your students saw that you were in this together, working with you instead of against you. Nothing can guarantee that, but a dialogical classroom promises that more students will be more likely to view their education (or at least your class) in a different and potentially transformative way. Bringing everything to the table means explaining why some things—i.e. university regulations and departmental mandates—remain non-negotiable, and arguing fervently for your own priorities, explaining to students why this or that assignment or policy is in their best interest. And it means being willing to discuss *any* of the students' expectations or motivations, not just the ones that arise in a discussion that had been constrained at the outset.

4. Part two: Faculty–student collaboration as inherently ethical

Having explored how the Burkean and Burke-inspired notions of (i) disparate grammars and recalcitrance, (ii) consubstantiality and irony, and (iii) dialogue of motives and peace treaty can collectively elucidate the dynamics of faculty–student collaborative learning—and before turning to a response from Abelson and Nelson—this essay will briefly argue that such collaborative learning is an inherently ethical pedagogy. Building on Murray's (2001) related work on the concept of "acknowledgment"—itself built upon the philosophy of ethics of Emmanuel Levinas—this essay affirms that the dialogical classroom is an inherently ethical pedagogy insofar as it is premised upon "acknowledgment of the Other."

According to Levinas (1969), Western thinking (i.e. ontology and metaphysics) has been "not a relation with the other as such but the reduction of the other to the same" (p. 46). As an alternative, Levinas offers a unique view of ethics in which the Other is the source of ethical responsibility. Wild (1969) summarizes Levinas's starting point as follows:

> I find myself existing in a world of alien things and elements which are other than, but not negations of myself … In general, these objects are at my disposal, and I am free to play with them, live on them, and to enjoy them at my pleasure … There is a strong tendency in all human individuals and groups to maintain this egocentric attitude and to think of other individuals either as extensions of the self, or as alien objects to be manipulated for the advantage of the individual or social self. According to Levinas, neither of these egocentric views does justice to our original experience of the other person, and the most fundamental part of [*Totality and infinity*] is devoted to the description and analysis of this experience— *the phenomenology of the other*. (pp. 12–13)

That phenomenological investigation reveals that the Other is (experienced as) a summons to responsibility, the ethical relationship into which the self is called. In Levinas's (1989) own words, "the Other becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question … Responsibility for my neighbor dates from before my freedom in an immemorial past" (pp. 83–84). Ethics, therefore, occurs precisely as "an unsettling of being and essence … it disrupts the entire project of knowing with a higher call, a more severe 'condition': responsibility" (Cohen, 1986, p. 5). Accordingly, the Other "is not a mere object to be subsumed under one of my categories and given a place in my world" (Wild, 1969, p. 13) "The other is not an object that must be interpreted and illumined by my alien light" (p. 14). Rather, the Other "shines forth with his own light, and speaks for himself" (p. 14).[4]

Applying Levinas's ethical philosophy to Burke's dramatistic philosophy, recalcitrance is thereby understood as "a *symbolic-phenomenological* account of the encounter with the otherness of the world … [and] with the otherness of Others" (Murray, 2002, p. 28, original emphasis). The appearance of the Other to the self, in language, is experienced as a form of recalcitrance—recall endnote 1. Similarly, and by extension, irony is thereby understood as "the groundwork of a dramatistic theory of ethics in which the recalcitrant voices of Others generate a dialogue of competing motives" (Murray, 2002, p. 29). Irony is the central and necessary characteristic of the reality of self and Other in dialogue.[5]

More generally, "acknowledgment of the Other" can be understood as the most primordial pre-condition of ethical communication. In Levinas's philosophy, "The other … obligates the self prior to *what* the other says. It is this obligation, this responsibility to respond to the other that is, paradoxically, the unspoken first word prior to the first word spoken" (Cohen, 1986, p. 5). Expanding on the work of Jurgen Habermas, Murray (2001) argues that:

> acknowledgement of the Other is the one necessary discursive event that precedes the deployment of any conventional/normative commitments. Insofar as the Other is the source of ethical obligation, the acknowledgement of the Other has always already implicated human communication in the domain of the ethical. (p. 16)

Therefore, an Other-centered discourse, such as the highly collaborative pedagogy practiced and endorsed by Abelson and Nelson, can be understood as one "committed to the acknowledgement of the Other as the one necessary precondition of ethical discourse, and to the acknowledgement of the Other as the goal of ethical discourse" (Murray, 2001, p. 17). This entails both "recognizing the Other as a participant in the human symbolic dialogue" as well as "recognizing that the Other may continue to exceed my 'understanding' of him or her" (Murray, 2001, p. 17). Consistent with Levinas's foundation, "[t]he questioning glance of the other is seeking for a meaningful response" and "[r]esponsible communication depends on an initial act of generosity, a giving of my world to him with all its dubious assumptions and arbitrary features" (Wild, 1969, p. 14). Then, and only then, "an escape from egotism becomes possible" (p. 14).

5. Part three: Response from Michael Abelson and Thomas J. Nelson

To begin with, we will admit to some uncertainty over the generic conventions expected of a response embedded within the article it is responding to. We have chosen to write this as a direct response to

the author, though in a more explanatory mode than might otherwise occur among colleagues, so that the reply might be open to a wider audience as well. So in that spirit, let us—Michael Abelson and Thomas Nelson—thank you—Jeffrey Murray—for your considered analysis of what has become an essential aspect of our shared teaching practice, and let us also thank you for the invitation to reply. In conversation, we have applied lenses to (what you call) this "highly collaborative" project. As might be expected, different aspects come into focus when considered as a meta-cognitive exercise, or in terms of self-regulated learning, or as a kind of collaborative game. What we are gratified to see in your dialogic/ethical analysis is that it so well illuminates the deliberative and democratic nature of the project. Nevertheless, in this response, we will express some of our initial thoughts on and reservations concerning the dialogical ethics model. The bulk of our reply will focus on Part One of your article, though we will close with some brief comments on the ethical dimension of the project.

Before going further, we think it may be useful to discuss how our department culture, which is not just collegial but collaborative, nurtured this particular project. For eight years, we have jointly planned our courses, and other collaborative partnerships of varying scope have occurred as well. In part, this collaborative ethos has grown from our focus on teaching—while faculty members may be carrying on individual research in their home disciplines, the faculty is united by the shared mission of teaching our common classes. But we also want to give credit where it is due. The initial idea for the project under consideration originated from the type of faculty–faculty collaboration that is most frequent: the "water cooler" sharing of ideas. Another colleague, Dr. Kristin Reed, ran an expanded version of the collaborative planning exercise the same semester as our first iteration. Reed presented her students with a longer span (two units) and required even wider collaboration (requiring students in multiple sections to collaborate on a single plan). Reed will join the two of us in a panel discussion on the range of student–faculty collaboration in the coming academic year; we suspect that her version is the most radical of all.

We developed the presentation which you quote in order to evangelize for collaborative course planning. Our initial focus was on teacher–teacher (as opposed to teacher–student) collaboration, but as we developed the presentation (with the assistance of several other colleagues), the teacher–student collaboration came to appear as the logical outcome of our argument. Initially, the intent of the presentation was to describe how instructor collaboration is appropriate for learning-centered classrooms because collaboration among faculty members engenders the same ends as learning-centered pedagogy—recall Table 1, for example. And while it is a fortunate bonus that faculty members can both enjoy and benefit from the collaborative process, the next step was obviously to turn to where the learning by rights should be focused: the students themselves. We both latched onto Reed's use of student–faculty collaborative planning because it so clearly resonated with one of our primary objectives in teaching college students: to teach them how to exercise agency within institutional frameworks. This is one of the shared principles that has allowed our extensive collaboration to persist over the span of several years. A variation of this objective manifests itself in a slogan to "teach yourself"; while students come to university with many different goals and expectations, they will not achieve the greatest benefit until they understand that, as an active process, learning requires that they make decisions and take action in pursuit of their individual goals.

Our collaborative unit, then, highlights this fact but with one caveat the students don't teach themselves individually, but collectively. Nevertheless, we present the concept to students in individualistic terms. In writing up documentation for his own class, Nelson (2015) described the project in terms of a metaphor more familiar to our generation than to our students, that of the "Choose-Your-Own-Adventure" book:

> When I was a kid, I read a lot of these "Choose Your Adventure" books in which you'd read a chunk of story and then were given a choice of what "you," as the main character in the book, wanted to do. So you might be exploring a dark cave, and if you wanted to go to the left toward the dim light of a lantern you'd turn to page x, while if you wanted to go right toward where you heard screaming, you'd turn to page y. Though the story lines were all really basic, I was drawn toward the idea that I could participate in the story.

This is not a perfect metaphor, for the simple fact that individual choice is shaped and constrained by classroom deliberation. But we similarly have some reservations with the dialogical model's metaphor of "peace treaty." Even with the modifications you express, the metaphor still inevitably implies not only a potential antagonism (that doesn't exist on our side of the equation and we hope not too much on the other end) but also wider gaps between grammars than may actually exist. Granted, first-year students speak somewhat different languages than us and have different conceptions of education than faculty members (though we're not sure we can make a blanket statement about faculty members' conceptions of higher education). Nevertheless, they understand that education has value, though the understanding of value might be different. When presented with the learning outcomes of the course, some students might be puzzled by the jargon in which they are couched, but few actually argue with them.

A second potential reservation about the metaphor is that the role we have played in this planning has not necessarily been as a negotiator. The learning outcomes provided to students have been known in department parlance as "non-negotiables"—i.e. individual faculty members may teach what and how they please, so long as the learning outcomes are achieved. The project therefore centers on which goals to prioritize and how to achieve them. Neither of us has taken a large role in these discussions. After reading the project documentation, students make assumptions about the "rules" beyond what we provide to them—they often don't strive to include us at all on the first day of planning. Instead, we spend the time making notes for the class website on what takes place. The primary locus of negotiation has tended to be among the students rather than between students and teacher. So the metaphor may ultimately be more useful if seen as a negotiation that occurs between students, as they sort out their own "disparate grammars" about the course's utility to their own education, with the instructor serving as peace moderator, rather than as a confrontation of sorts between the instructor and students.

While Burke has not been foremost in our minds in planning and executing this unit, he is a frequent presence in our classes. Specifically, we provide a short excerpt from *The Philosophy of Literary Form* for discussion with our students:

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (Burke, 1973, pp. 110–111)

In our classes, this quotation provides a fundamental metaphor for writing with (and in response to) sources. But thanks to the framing you provide, we also see it as a description of the collaborative unit under discussion. It is an invitational and dialogic dynamic which the students not only take part in, but also initiate and, when the course is complete, terminate. Yet though this instantiation of the conversation comes to an end, they see that it is an open-ended conversation that extends the decisions and conclusions represented by the learning outcomes. At the end of the unit, the discussion is still vigorously in progress. Students enumerate frustrations and victories, and almost all have recommended that we continue the practice for future classes.

The fact that students identify problems and frustrations with the unit yet still think it should continue in part mollifies our biggest concern: is this responsible behavior on our part? After all, as teachers we are in a better position to plan and teach the class than our students. The primary mode of the unit (provided by the shared curriculum), is, appropriately enough, ethical reasoning, so as a sort of "proof-of-concept" we introduce the ethics of student-planned and student-led as an open

question. Students come to a similar conclusion as you do (though with less theoretical rigor): it is not only ethical, but more ethical than the traditional coercive classroom.

6. Conclusion

After reading Abelson and Nelson's response, I must confess that my initial reaction was frustration that they had not done what I had wanted them to do. I had anticipated a more point-by-point discussion of the Burkean and Burke-inspired concepts of disparate grammars, recalcitrance, consubstantiality, irony, dialogue, and peace treaty. That is to say, I anticipated, and desired, a more direct engagement with *my* ideas, *my* essay. I do not know why I thought that they'd write that, and I do not know why I wanted them to do that. To be honest, I hadn't thought about it that carefully. In any case, I did not ask them to write a point-by-point critique of my essay. I extended an invitation for them to write a response. That is what they did. And it is better than what I had anticipated and better than what I had desired, precisely because it is a genuine moment of dialogue rather than a mere reflection of my own ideas.

Ironically, Abelson and Nelson's response creates a moment of irony (for me) and does precisely what the essay is describing. By not asking them to write this or to write that, I (unwittingly, in fact) created a space in which they could engage with me in genuine dialogue, to express their own concerns in their own way. I suspect my open invitation was subconsciously inspired by the nature of the work they do in the classroom. I trusted that they would have something valuable to contribute and provided them with a space in which to do it. Unfortunately, this isn't something we typically do with our students. Rather, our curricula, syllabi, and assignments are perhaps too often too prescribed to allow for much genuine dialogue. To be sure, there is a time and a place for rigidly defined curricula, course objectives, and even individual assignments. But there should also be adequate time and adequate place provided for more genuine dialogical moments to occur.

Even as I write, I am *still* tempted to rebut or challenge some of their reservations about the peace treaty metaphor, as if in a formal debate. And I will surely seek an opportunity to do that with Abelson and Nelson. But here, it seems more appropriate to let their voices be heard and to continue to facilitate ongoing dialogue by resisting the urge to bring the "debate" back onto my terms—especially as I have already provided a summary of the main ideas of the essay in Subsection 3.4. Consequently, please allow me to respond very briefly in that same spirit, to offer not a (traditional) summative conclusion to *my* essay but a (dialogic) next word in our conversation.

What strikes me most powerfully about Abelson and Nelson's response is how they bring the discussion back to students in order to not only further clarify their collaborative strategies but to also emphasize the ultimate goal of undertaking such an approach in the classroom: student empowerment. At the end of all this, it would seem that what we are discussing is not only whether and how collaborative learning strategies can enhance student learning, but also what kind of learning is occurring ... and ultimately whether we should be prioritizing learning of specific course content or the empowerment of students to learn for themselves and to become agents. As one of my colleagues expressed her philosophy of teaching recently:

> This is why I teach Focused Inquiry. To transform my students from pinballs into flippers, from pawns into players, from residents into citizens, from watchers into doers, from complainers into solvers. (Ellis, personal communication, April 9, 2015)

Abelson and Nelson (2015) reflected this same sentiment above: students "will not achieve the greatest benefit until they understand that, as an active process, learning requires that they make decisions and take action." Giving students more decision-making power over what they do and how they do it in a particular class—and, in the Burke-inspired metaphor, a place of equal standing at the negotiating table—promises to be a very effective, and inherently ethical, pedagogical strategy to accomplish this goal.

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Notes

1. While recalcitrance is discussed by Burke as the manner in which the physical world places limitations upon our statements about the world, he offers no example in which recalcitrance arises from one's encounter with another human being. Murray (2002) observed that:

   Even when considering the pseudo-statement "Milton was an Eskimo," [Burke discusses how] the statement "Milton was a Nordic" results from the abstract "recalcitrance of your material" (Burke, 1984, p. 258). Would not the most obvious instance of recalcitrance be if Milton himself said "No, I am not an Eskimo"? (p. 27).

   In other words:

   Burke's discussion of recalcitrance does not attend to the potential recalcitrance of Others ... Along with the reliability of gravity and the fragility of the human body necessitating the addition of "with the aid of a parachute" to the pseudo-statement "I can safely jump from this high place" (Burke, 1984, pp. 255–256), we also have examples such as Adolf Hitler's racist ideology meeting the recalcitrance of Jesse Owens's four Olympic victories, or a dismissive attitude about the handicapped meeting the recalcitrance of the autobiography of Helen Keller. Extended in this way, the notion of recalcitrance offers a description of the initial phenomenological encounter with the Other rather than a description of the rhetorical strategies available to incorporate or eliminate that otherness. (Murray, 2002, p. 27).

2. Before moving on to Subsection 3, Murray's (2002) illustration of irony in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* may prove useful.

   This work of satire is the ironizing of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The perspective of the events of Shakespeare's play that is familiar to us is that of its main character, Hamlet. The perspective of those same events in Stoppard's play is that of the less familiar, minor characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The irony results from putting their telling of the story up against the perspective of Hamlet. The audience is now able to see the world simultaneously through two perspectives: through the familiar eyes of Shakespeare's Hamlet and through the unfamiliar eyes of Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The events of the play, including the eventual death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are now seen quite differently. The result of Stoppard's play may be that the audience finds itself more consubstantial with these characters, but the irony that may lead to such consubstantiality is itself the result of the symbolic-phenomenological presencing of these two Others. Their voices, which compose Stoppard's play, exist as recalcitrance against the voice of Hamlet in Shakespeare's play. (pp. 29–30).

3. In closing Subsection 3, allow me to return to the example of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* to illustrate the principles of dialogue and peace treaty:

   In the example of Stoppard's play, the obvious danger is of having to choose between Hamlet's grammar of motives and the ironized framing of that grammar through the eyes of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The problem is that in both versions of the drama, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern die. There needs to be an alternative to Hamlet's constitution, in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are mere pawns, and the recalcitrant ironization of that constitution. Stoppard's ironization of the play ... is the announcement of ethics in the human drama. The next act, however, must advance beyond the voice of recalcitrance to a dialogue of motives. What is needed is a dialogue that includes the voice of Hamlet and the voices of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and that, absent the achievement or desire for consubstantiation, seeks peaceful terms of co-existence rather than the perpetual battlements of conflict. (Murray, 2002, pp. 42–43).

4. Similarly, Bernasconi and Critchley (1991) summarize Levinas's philosophical project as follows:

   For Levinas, the predominance accorded to ontology by the Western philosophical tradition from Parmenides to Heidegger has had the effect of suppressing alterity and transmuting it into what he calls the Same (*le Même*). Philosophy is the assimilation of otherness into sameness, where the other is digested like food and drink. Levinas finds in the face of the Other (*autrui*) a point of irreducible alterity which resists the philosophical logos. The self finds itself put in question by and obliged to respond to the Other. (xi).

5. More fully:

   It is here that irony can be viewed as inherently—as structurally—ethical. According to Levinas, ethics originates in the call of the Other. It exists as a commandment, as a summons to responsibility that calls the self, and its projects, into question. But for Burke, the call is only heard in and through language. Hence, the symbolic-phenomenological coming into presence of the Other to the self is experienced as recalcitrance ... And when the recalcitrant call of the Other confronts the familiar voice of oneself, the result is irony. Irony, then, is a dialogical trope. Irony is not ... a rhetorical strategy for coming to know the world. Irony is instead the dialogical confrontation of the voices of Others with one's own way of knowing the world. To

use Burke's own metaphor of human life as a drama, the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche are techniques for acting in the world. The trope of irony, by contrast, is the constant reminder that the plot is still unfolding and that the final act has not yet been written. There is no single author of the human drama. Everyone has a voice, and every voice writes its own plot into the drama of life. (Murray, 2002, pp. 110–111).

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