

IN MEMORIAM

Larry Kent Graham (1942- 2017)

*No one can see the whole of anything! Everyone's vision is partial.
Seeing is always from particular and subjective
standpoints, and with preferred points of view.
"...we must accept our subjectivity and partial vision, and save
ourselves from the errors of the earlier essence-of-Christianity tradition..."
(Hamilton 1961:19). Implied is the ancient question: How shall we live?*

This tribute is written to bring honor and give thanks to Larry Kent Graham. He was a former and retired Professor of Pastoral Theology and Care at the Iliff School of Theology, Denver. It has been said that his experience and work redefined the field of Pastoral Theology, Care and Counseling. The "authority of experience" is a phrase often used by Professor Graham. I shall employ it here.

My own starting point is with particular experiences as an African-American male, a practitioner and supervisor, consultant and professor in the same field. Also, I trained as a Family therapist in London, England, trained others in different parts of the world for over 40 years, served as director of a pastoral counseling center, chaired and served on Ph.D. commit-

tees within and outside the USA. I offer my authority based on experience as a tribute to Professor Graham.

“Experience” derives from the German word, “*erlebnis*.” It means what has been lived through—by the individual. All experience represents an inescapable stream common to all living beings. It is paradoxically unique and defining, intersubjective and primary. It underlies reality and transmits a certain authority.

Therefore, one always speaks from a particular point of view and can never completely know another’s experience. Martin Buber’s book *I-Thou*, helped to establish the idea that all relations of care are grounded in experience. There is no one simple way to define experience. It varies within and across species, social and historical borders, sexual orientation, gender and ethnicity, social class, time and cultures. All are basic material for human science interpretation. What matters is that which is redefined in its many lights.

The kind of “experience” Professor Graham refers to has augmented awareness in the field of pastoral theology, care and counseling from individual to larger domains. How can we know whether, by redefining, we are not unwittingly adapting to the issues to which we then respond? Collusion?

How can we tell whether trusted socializing agents- parents, teachers and religious authorities, politicians and law enforcement, media and corporate interest groups, etc., are reinforcing, even unwittingly, the responses they want us to internalize? We may strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel (Matt: 23:24,NRV). How will this re-defining of the field of pastoral theology, care and counseling extend our partial vision, deepen understanding of our fundamental human nature, foster healing and provide moral guidance within professional practices and social orders, and outdo moral injury? Certain other problems of misplaced concreteness (ANWhitehead) may remain. Radical forgiveness is necessary.

Professor Graham gave a summary of his intellectual biography on the occasion of his retirement, November 2014. “I have found that the concepts of beauty, healing, and relational justice, and the professional practices associated with them, have anchored my theory of pastoral theology and guided my practices of educating, caring for, liberating, and transforming persons, groups, and the social order.” Again in 2017, ‘to engage the Christian moral task from a pastoral theological caregiver and psychotherapeutic perspec-

tive; and as a way to provide moral guidance and foster healing from moral injury.'

Moral Injury is the title of his last book. An idealized view of moral injury is suggested: 'if we can share our experiences and burdens, we can bear them. If we can bear them, we can change the circumstances that brought them about.' Later, he argued that moral injury refers to the diminishment of vitality that comes about in our souls and communities when we are unable to do what we believe is right or when doing the right thing results in harm to others and distress to ourselves." (95) The remedy? Explore a wide variety of moral engagements. Evaluate them in terms of moral health for individuals and communities. (96) Where does power, white privilege and the social sciences come in? Professor Graham drew upon theological, psychological and literary resources, and certain case studies to establish a pathway through the morass of moral injuries. Some pathways are personal.

Note his response to the passing of Professor Emma J. Justes 1941-2017), a pastoral theologian who was present at Professor Graham's retirement.

Professor Graham: "I first met her in September of 1970 when I began my Ph. D. work at Princeton. We trained together in pastoral counseling. She was my "feminist muse" for many years. I will be forever grateful for her place in my life and for what she has meant for pastoral theology and care. She pushed the envelope without alienating. Her gifts were remarkable, and finding unconventional ways to experience life in vital ways was something very winsome and inspiring about her. For example, in her sexuality course she asked her students to come to school for a day dressed and prepared to behave in a manner other than your own sexual orientation, gender, or identity. And her commitment as a single parent to adopt and raise two international children was simply stellar." (From a Private conversation, 2017).

Professor Graham helped to widened the lens of pastoral theology by including Feminist and Womanist, Gay and Lesbian, African American, Asian and Latino scholars. His redefining of the field of pastoral theology, care and counseling also included those living with physical and mental challenges and other voices from the margin. Near the end of his 37year teaching career he invited presentations to be made on Jonestown, Columbine and other mass murders and moral injuries, different levels of experiences and as issues for pastoral care. He was willing to learn from the expe-

riences of others and unwilling to claim lasting validity for what he alone could see. For this he is to be commended.

Thank you! Transience is characteristic of human experience. Professor Larry Kent Graham died on 19 October 2017 after a long and valiant struggle against pancreatic cancer. He took the wings of the morning and flew to the furthest horizon of human experience. His breath became one with the Eternal.

Archie Smith, Jr.
Berkeley, CA

- 1 Larry Kent Graham, *Moral Injury: Restoring Wounded Souls*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017.

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A Selected Bibliography for Supervisory CPE Training

Introduction: This resource builds on the second edition of ACPE Supervisor Donna Herrick's supervisory bibliography, first published in 2006. In the suggestions below, we drew on her work, integrated ideas from additional bibliographies from CPE centers across the country, and contributed our own ideas and expertise. In appreciating the subjectivity of putting together these recommendations, we expect individual students to refer to and expand upon what we have provided according to the uniqueness of their own learning needs. Our hope is that this bibliography will provide an excellent foundation for supervisory students as they explore these vast worlds of ideas, theories, and reflections.

-- *The CPE Supervisors at VITAS Innovative Hospice Care, 2011*

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