

• DIAMOND CEPHUS •

Rehabilitating Prejudice

FRAMING ISSUES OF DIVERSITY
IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

In 1969, as I entered my freshman year at a coed and racially mixed Christian high school in an integrated Milwaukee neighborhood, I decided to join the school's Madrigal Singers, a group of eight to ten students that sang most often at nursing homes on occasional weekends. We were a motley crew for sure, representing a broad spectrum of ethnic, cultural, and class backgrounds and a range of musical skills from the unusually talented and previously trained to those (like myself) who had never learned to read musical notation and could barely stay on key. Fortunately, the sole criterion for admittance to the Madrigal Singers was simply the love of music. As we learned to sing various musical pieces from diverse ethnic and cultural traditions, our audience of senior citizens around the city never wavered in their support or displays of affection and appreciation for our musical gifts. In fact, our performances could sometimes take on an almost mystical aura, effectively connecting us not only to one another but to an elderly generation with whom few of my youthful generation ever connected or tried to connect.

Two months later, I also joined the youth choir at my parish church. The choir director was a young Polish American woman who helped us share in the joy of singing gospel; jazz; rock (yes, we performed *Jesus Christ Superstar*); the *Bossa Nova Mass*; traditional folk tunes; early Christian hymns in German, French, and Spanish; charming American spirituals; and moving Latin motets. And when we sang, we sang mightily—all of us young people: black, white,

yellow, and brown—we, who were children of one of the most successfully integrated churches in the city of Milwaukee, would make a boisterous noise unto the Lord.

These two musical groups proved there were powerful ways to bring adolescents together to experience and witness the presence of God (and his grace) in our lives, and the creative wisdom displayed by the two choir directors was far ahead of its time. I cannot help but think that perhaps at least one reason that I spent fifteen years working in urban youth and young adult ministry in Milwaukee, New York, and Boston arose from the substantial influence of these two musical groups and the two extraordinary women who directed them, with one of whom I have sustained a lifelong friendship.

It did not matter that both my choir directors were young, European American women or that we students were black, white, Asian, and Hispanic, male and female, lower-, middle-, and upper-middle income, or that I lived at “Eleventh and Burleigh,” a predominately black and working-class neighborhood that was located adjacent to a part of the city that was easily recognizable in that era as the urban ghetto of Milwaukee. The important thing was that “I came as I was” to my church and high school communities to connect with others in a common desire to worship and praise God through our love for music and community. By the outpouring of our disparate musical voices, we connected with one another through both our individual strengths and in our particular brokenness. Through the chorus of our human experience, we entered into deeper dialogue with others in our parish and civic community, and because our church was called to be a Christ-centered community of diversity in faith (Watts 2001), we adhered to the dictate expressed by Paul in his letter to the Galatians (3:28), “In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” As people who were trying to lead a Christian life, we found common ground with one another as God’s children by ensuring that every voice was present at the altar of worship.

By retelling this old story of mine, I do not wish to imply that conditions in Milwaukee in 1969 were especially conducive to multicultural diversity. After all, it *was* 1969. The level of intolerance and prejudice was certainly more obvious and more destructive than it is today. No, my point is to demonstrate how a group of diverse people were able, at a particular point in time, to find a sense of unity in the midst of diversity. And if I portray life in my portion of middle America then as having a certain level of diversity, think of the diversity in which we live today. Back then we categorized difference around race, ethnicity, nationality, and class. Today, for better or for worse, we continue to use such categories, but we also perceive diversity as it relates to gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, religion (including denominations within

religions), and (in the case of seminaries and higher education in general) student status—full-time, part-time, residential, commuter, online.

I believe, nevertheless, that by reaching back to my experience as a young person in Milwaukee, I can begin the process of reframing issues of diversity in theological education. But relying on personal experience alone is not a sufficient basis on which to develop a better understanding of these issues, and so I will also reach out to the hermeneutical theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer. This unlikely—though, as I hope to demonstrate, entirely appropriate—connection between interpretive theory and mundane experience suggests the kind of connections we must make in order both to draw upon our own lives and at the same time to perceive our experiences from angles of interpretation that frame and illuminate the significance of what we may know only indirectly. My aim is to help us better engage diversity in modern seminary life and redefine our understanding of prejudice and misunderstanding.

THE REHABILITATION OF PREJUDICE

The word “hermeneutics” comes from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, translated as “to interpret,” and according to Richard Palmer (1966, 13–32), the origin of the word is best portrayed in the mythical story of the Greek god, Hermes, the translator of language and writing—“the tools which human understanding employs to grasp meaning and to convey it to others.” From early in its history, hermeneutics was intended to decipher meaning in the literary classics of antiquity, legal jurisprudence, the Bible, and other sacred texts. It was not until the nineteenth century, however, that the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher pointed to ways in which hermeneutics might be applied more broadly—to interpret and clarify diverse messages and convey multilayered and textured meaning to others so that understanding between the conveyor of the message and its intended recipient would ultimately result. As Nakkula and Ravitch (1998, xix) assert, “hermeneutics, when connected to human interactions, opens up important possibilities for deeper understanding and respect in relationships.”

Schleiermacher, generally regarded as the founder of modern Protestant theology (Mueller-Vollmer 1988, 72), defined hermeneutics as “the art of understanding, an art or practice that related discourse and understanding (*verstehen*) to each other” (Gallagher 1992, 3). He also coined the phrase, “the hermeneutic circle,” through which he indicated the interrelationship between whole and part in interpreting any material of a textual nature. Shaun Gallagher (1992, 59) explicates Schleiermacher’s essential rendering of the “circularity of understanding” by stating that, “the meaning of the part is only understood

within the context of the whole; but the whole is never given unless through an understanding of the parts. Understanding therefore requires a circular movement from parts to whole and from whole to parts.” A hermeneutics of ontology (Ricoeur 1989, 197–221) translates the relationship of whole and part of circular understanding into a paradigm of meaningful human action which is rendered in the metaphor of “the person as text” (Gergen 1980, 29).

GADAMER’S “PREJUDICE” OF PREJUDICE

One way of summarizing this relationship between part and whole is to suggest that each of us is unable to be understood independently of our contextualized experience in the world at any particular point in time: We are historically situated creatures who spring from different temporal, social, geographical, ideological, and philosophical locations, and we hold firmly to the diverse perspectives and assumptions that we each bring to our relationships with others. This is where the work of the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer and his radical reframing of the concepts of prejudice, bias, and misunderstanding come into play. According to the Gadamerian perspective, one essentially *is* one’s interpretation of the world, and it is through the socializing influence of language that this condition primarily occurs.

Gadamer developed much of his early hermeneutic thinking from the philosophical influence of his mentor and teacher, Martin Heidegger,¹ for whom existence or being *is* understanding. Heidegger asserts that “the essential meaning of being human . . . is making meaning of the world and of one’s being in the world” (Heidegger 1996, 57). Heidegger’s ontology is fulfilled in the meaning-making individual who constantly interprets her place in the world and what it means to be situated in the world in particular ways (Nakkula and Ravitch 1998). Heidegger’s most profound contribution to hermeneutics is that of moving it from a primary concern for interpreting the hidden messages in written texts to understanding what it means to be human in the world in all aspects of one’s existence.

Gadamer, according to Browning (1995, 2), “accepted Heidegger’s view that all attempts by humans to understand something must necessarily and inescapably begin with, and be contrasted to, the pre-understandings, pre-judgments, and veritable ‘prejudices’ that we bring to the understanding process. Rather than pre-judgments getting in the way of understanding, as Enlightenment and empiricist epistemologies claimed, Heidegger and Gadamer held that they are essential to it. We only understand something in relation to the pre-understandings and prejudices that we bring to what we are attempting to understand.”

As Gadamer ([1960] 1999, 270) asserts, “‘Prejudice’ means a judgment that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined.” “Thus,” he says, “‘prejudice’ certainly does not necessarily mean a false judgment, but part of the idea is that it can have either a positive or a negative value.” Gadamer’s “rehabilitating” of these phenomena allows us to view them as unavoidable processes that should be embraced and reflected upon, rather than denied and avoided. This revised notion of these concepts is essential to understanding the hermeneutical process. This view describes prejudices, biases, and misunderstanding as events, objects, and experiences that we have come to know up to the moment and that are subject to constant revision and change. From Gadamer’s perspective, one is always *projected* into new situations with accompanying misunderstanding, but misunderstanding that is open to reinterpretation, given our access to new information and our increased self-understanding. Gadamer asserts that we encounter every situation and object through our “forestructure of understanding” of what has previously been learned and internalized in preparation for the ongoing assimilation of new experiences. He refers to this forestructure as “prejudgment, prejudice, bias, and misunderstanding,” which occurs within the context of human action and interaction as an unavoidable part of what it means to be human.

THE PLAY OF LANGUAGE

Gadamer argues that this internalization of meaning and experience occurs primarily through the socializing influence of language. He suggests that language is used primarily as a vehicle through which the world becomes less alien: it is the process by which we ourselves become “de-alienated” from unfamiliar people, places, ideas, experiences, and things in the world previously unknown to us—so as to effectively make the *alien familiar*. Gadamer (1976, 9) further argues that “prejudices . . . constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience” and that “language is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and the all-embracing form of the constitution of the world” (3). We define ourselves in the world, and our relationship in connectedness to others, through the medium of language.

Gadamer places language within the broader context of “play” and suggests that language is ultimately organized like a “game” through which a player ultimately becomes lost. But this loss, which is the result of the development of linguistically more complex functioning, is viewed as only a temporary condition until the player becomes played by the game itself because the rules have become thoroughly internalized. Through the play of language we are able to

liberate ourselves (from our earlier internalized preconceptions) and become transformed, thus re-creating our understanding of the world (and ourselves) as we move toward possibility for more authentic engagement. Gadamer asserts that we should begin with open exploration of our prejudiced assumptions about a phenomenon or experience and move from this prejudiced (or interpreted) position to explore what is unknown and less familiar to us through further reflective questioning. This process of ongoing questioning and critical self-reflection should lead to the generation (and integration) of even deeper questions, which should lead to the uncovering of more meaningful data and to further questioning of our prejudiced positions and worldview. Thus, our understanding of the world should be in a process of constant revision as we integrate new information for deeper and more complex understanding (Nakkula and Ravitch 1998).

The process of engaging this “circle of understanding” defines what it means to be human. A paramount question for us becomes, How might we encourage faculty and students to examine their natural human prejudices and thereby find opportunities to engage more fully with the diversity of the world around them?

My experience as a teenager in Milwaukee moved me toward the kind of understanding that Gadamer offers. Despite the effects of racial and class prejudices, I knew that what was paramount, though I obviously could not articulate this as an adolescent, was the fundamental truth of a shared humanity: we all sing in the same chorus. While this did not mitigate the harsh realities of racism in the society at large, it placed this prejudice within a definition that did not give the final word to the limited and partial perspective of a racist society. Through the perspective of such a personal and theoretical lens I present the particular issue of diversity in theological education.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING: THE PEDAGOGY OF CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

In their final project report to The Lexington Seminar, the faculty at McCormick Theological Seminary (2000) wrote, “[We] need to connect in a more personal way with students, recognizing the significance of personal relationships for learning and formation as well as building community.” And, in recognition of the school’s racial, ethnic, theological, and cultural diversity—while simultaneously embracing a strong desire to continue in its affirmation of its own institutional identity as a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (USA)—the faculty also remarked, “We speak often of being inclusive, yet we could do much more to understand our students and their contexts.” Faculties from other seminaries that have participated in The Lexington Seminar have

voiced similar sentiments regarding the best practices for their teaching and learning.

The black feminist writer and educator bell hooks (1994, 13) asserts that “to educate as the practice of freedom” is “easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students.” Parker Palmer (1993, xi–xii) reminds us that “to teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced.” Certainly, the spaces in which faculty exercise their craft as teachers and scholars of the church lend themselves to the pursuit of truth as it is revealed to them. Faculty in seminaries and theological schools are very much aware of the vocational aspect of their work. Desiring that their work with students be somehow transformative in nature is often a core expectation of their teaching.

Therefore, based on insights gained through my experience in professional education, my reading of the literature, and my participation at The Lexington Seminar, I suggest that in order for seminaries to adapt successfully to the changing world in which they exist, they should strive to do the following things:

- Celebrate diversity and find similarity in difference.
- Employ the hermeneutics of engagement.
- Encourage critically reflective teaching.
- Make diversity a regular part of conversation among faculty, students, and administrators.

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY AND FIND SIMILARITY IN DIFFERENCE

No doubt, any one of us can find ways in which our personal and professional lives could be made easier if diversity were not, well, so diverse. Given the proper mixture of stress and circumstance, any one of us can muse nostalgically and think how reassuring it would be to turn the clock back to a supposedly simpler time when students came to seminary with similar expectations and training. But there is no going back, and rather than focus on the difficulties caused by diversity, we should think instead of the richness of experience that our changing environment ushers in and celebrate God’s grace in granting us this bountiful gift. We should explore ways to find similarity within difference.

For a very individualized example, consider that I am a middle-aged African American male with no children and strong ecclesiastical roots in Roman Catholicism and have lived for twenty-five years in fast-paced Manhattan and Boston. Therefore, I may never know exactly what it means to be Mark, the fictional character in the narrative of the United Theological

Seminary of the Twin Cities (2001),² who is described as a “white, middle class, United Church of Christ student. He is married with teenage children and serves as a student pastor in a rural setting. He is approximately 40 years old, moderately liberal theologically, and has experienced ‘positive stretching’ but minimal struggle in his time at seminary.” But were Mark and I ever to cross each other’s paths, I believe a necessary starting point for our interaction would be those characteristics of our life experience that, though different in form are indeed quite similar at their very core: We are both native-born American men who are of middle age and who share a belief in the relevancy of the Christian faith and a strong love of the church. I would also imagine that Mark and I could commune around our respective understandings of what it means to be men who have now crossed over into middle-age, with all the concomitant realities, concerns, issues, and responsibilities that define who we are at this unique juncture in our lives, though these things may express themselves differently for each of us. It is in the similarities of our individual experiences through which we reach common ground as persons made in the image and likeness of God.

In a more institutional context, teachers should look for ways to connect with the diversity of experience in their classrooms. For example, this might involve

- A restructuring of the classroom experience in light of student diversity,
- The discovery of ways to democratize the classroom experience to make space for student voices previously not heard, or
- Dramatically changing the actual format for teaching content in light of recent research in brain neuroscience and students’ diverse learning styles.

Because so many of the students in seminary today are adult learners who bring with them a wide array of talents and experience, it is vitally important to create sufficient time, space, and opportunity within the classroom to draw upon this fund of rich experiential knowledge. This might take the form of students (either singly or as teams) leading a portion of seminar classes in which they present a theological topic and offer their own fund of experiences as a starting point for applying their understanding. Or, for example, a teacher might build into a course on preaching opportunities for students to reflect on the way in which their personal and cultural experiences affect the way in which they are inclined to approach preaching. For instance, a teacher might set aside the first several sessions of a seminar to allow students to introduce themselves, describe their background, and identify what they hope to gain from the

course. Such a strategy would give the students (as well as the teacher, who should also participate) opportunities to name their differences (and prejudices) but also to see the similarities in their experiences and gifts.

EMPLOY THE HERMENEUTICS OF ENGAGEMENT

Gadamer's rehabilitation of prejudice embodies a less-threatening perspective on a word that is often imbued with existential discomfort and personal unease. By construing prejudice as a regular and necessary part of everyday human functioning as opposed to a stigma of personal failing or a point of moral attack, we develop ways to become more fully engaged in the world. It is important that individuals be allowed to give voice to their concerns about diversity as they understand them to be, for only through a process of self-questioning do we arrive at a deeper understanding of the issues about which we critically reflect.

Each of us is the product of our cumulative history. There is no such thing as a value-free or neutral individual; we are the composite of both our unique biological makeup and the social contexts and backgrounds that help create who we are as individuals. And it is from the starting point of our own particularity in the world that we come to understand our prejudices. Faculty can be quite instrumental in class by exhibiting a willingness to share some of their own particular experience in the world and thus help students formulate a context for reflecting on their own prejudices and misunderstandings and develop relationships with one another and with faculty. By admitting to students, at the outset, his or her particular strengths and weaknesses, a teacher sets the context for mutually transformative exploration. Encouraging students to interact socially outside of class (with one another and with the course instructor) is yet another excellent way to encourage the development of our own hermeneutical skills.

Gadamer's view on prejudice also necessitates that we recognize that understanding is never final or complete. Our everyday engagement and activity in the world is subject to ongoing interpretation and revision that come to represent who we are and what we will become. When we open ourselves up to embrace the possibilities for learning, we broaden our worldview and help to shape the kingdom of God on earth. But embracing possibility does not negate the fact that we are also embedded and steeped in our individual traditions—the assumptions that help to shape who we are up to a particular point in time. Given this, it is important that faculty help students understand that interpretation is our continuing project. Faculty should be encouraged to help students engage this interpretive task. For example, planning classroom exercises in which students might name aspects of their own thinking, perspec-

tives, or recently modified behaviors can help facilitate this type of learning. Students may also be encouraged to think about differences in these very same attributes as observed in other individuals, such as their parents, spouses, partners, coworkers, fellow students, or children.

In my work in the Boston Public Schools, I often conduct workshops to help teachers engage more effectively with challenging children and adolescents from diverse cultural backgrounds. The reality is that most of the teachers in the Boston school system come from different racial, ethnic, and social class backgrounds than the majority of the student population, which often leads to tension and conflict. In my workshops, therefore, I usually ask teachers to reflect momentarily on the specific challenges they face in working with urban students. These are students whom the teachers generally perceive as a “problem” to be addressed rather than as developing individuals with young minds to be intellectually engaged through transformative learning. This attitude held on the part of many teachers who are otherwise quite capable individuals in their respective disciplines unfortunately sets the stage for a limited capacity to engage with students from diverse backgrounds.

In my workshops, I ask teachers to name the assumptions they hold about their students. I help them interrogate the reasons for which they hold these assumptions and encourage them to challenge themselves through critical self-reflection. They spend an extraordinary amount of time talking with one another, not about these students *per se*, but about themselves as individuals, as spouses, partners, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, friends, and educators. They spend time looking at where they come from, exploring why they decided to become teachers and why they believe in the things they do. I help teachers explore the ways their beliefs and attitudes help to facilitate or hinder their capacity to work effectively with their students each day. We discuss what they would like to accomplish with students, and I invite them to name ways of getting to “there from here.” We brainstorm about different ways to teach their subjects, issue grades, and manage student classroom behavior while still meeting curricular deadlines, administering standardized tests, and, ultimately, facilitating student academic success. I help teachers give voice to their own particular strengths and help them see the diverse assets and talents of their students.

We spend little time talking about the negative behaviors of students or reflecting on trouble spots. Rather, I try to help teachers use the rich experience of the students’ lives in their classroom teaching and see their experiences as substantive material for engaged classroom teaching and learning. The goal in my professional work is to help teachers transcend boundaries of all types and explore new ways of being with their students and, ultimately, with themselves. This task is often a slow process because most teachers are generally

grounded (as are we all) in their own particular ways of teaching, doing, and being—their own particular prejudices. It is often hard to break out of old habits and learn how to incorporate fresher ways of being in the world.

I believe similar strategies that I use in my workshops with Boston educators can be used in workshops for seminary faculty. Such faculty workshops might include having small groups of three or four faculty meet together to accomplish the following:

1. Generate a list of faculty questions and concerns about issues of diversity in theological education.
2. Engage faculty in a discussion that focuses on the kind of challenges that diversity presents in the classroom.
3. Encourage faculty to acknowledge and name some of their assumptions about issues of diversity and comment on how these assumptions may have developed.
4. Help faculty identify the kind of skills and knowledge needed in their classrooms to meet the challenge of diversity.
5. Direct faculty to the appropriate educational and community resources that provide the necessary skills and knowledge needed to effectively work with diversity.

After faculty have had an opportunity to reflect and learn from one another in these small groups, they may serve as consultants to each other, suggesting ways to respond to the challenges raised during their discussion. Later, in a larger plenary session, faculty could report back to the larger group on some of the learning and insights gained in the small groups.

BECOME A CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE TEACHER

According to Stephen Brookfield (1995, 1), “We teach to change the world.” Doing critically reflective teaching, though, is not simply a matter of thinking deeply about issues in education or the specific subject areas of our own academic disciplines. Critical reflection, according to Brookfield (8), involves “[understanding] how considerations of power undergird, frame, and distort educational processes and interaction” and “[questioning] assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interest.” Classrooms are not politically neutral spaces but contested locations that exist to support the forces that seek to maintain ideological hegemony and power. Working to interrogate and understand these conditions within educational practice should be an ethical imperative for each of us and a central part of our educational practice.

MAKE DIVERSITY A REGULAR PART OF CONVERSATION

Across the country many schools have embarked upon efforts to deal with issues of diversity. For some schools this has included the sponsorship of small-scale initiatives, such as faculty colloquia during which invited guests offer various perspectives on cultural competencies and other aspects of diversity and engage faculty in conversation on these important issues. Other institutions have undertaken large-scale and longer-range projects that focus on concerns about diversity that have included assessing the consequences of racial, ethnic, class, and gender issues within the classroom and across the institution itself. One institution that has exercised extraordinary leadership in promoting diversity at its school, in part as a response to new and increased expectations among concerned students of color and others, is the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE),³ which should be especially acknowledged for its commitment to “examine how the institutional culture affects, and the learning environment supports” its increasingly diverse student body (Mapp and Johnson 1997, 3).

Former HGSE Dean Jerome Murphy established a five-year Faculty Recruitment Committee, from 1992–1997, which was charged as part of the school’s faculty recruitment initiative with the responsibility of bringing faculty of color to the school to be visiting professors. This effort was underwritten by a \$2 million endowment given to the School of Education by former Harvard University president Neil Rudenstine. The Faculty Recruitment Committee was subsequently extended from 1997–2003. In addition, in 1996, HGSE began a series of “faculty diversity seminars” in which faculty met each month to discuss their teaching in light of issues of diversity. This effort was also spearheaded and supported by the Dean’s Office at HGSE.

Other schools have become involved in large-scale efforts to address diversity issues by sponsoring occasional daylong “diversity retreats” for faculty and students alike, or by involving all areas of the institution in publicly held “diversity dialogues” and roundtable discussions in which institutional issues on diversity are discussed and explored in greater depth. Focus groups have been used in some schools to solicit students’ views on diversity as they experience it. Several schools have sponsored faculty papers on topics related to diversity.

Also, at HGSE, the dean’s office established a Teaching Curriculum Quality Fund that provides diversity grants for faculty to identify readings with more diverse points of view for use as part of the course syllabus or to develop case studies that center on issues of diversity for use in the classroom. These occasions have enabled faculty to discover more effective ways to bring diversity issues directly into the curriculum and to enrich the overall educational experiences of students.

In 1996, a special assistant in the HGSE deans' office, Karen Mapp, researched the experiences of diversity at seven other academic institutions and was later assisted in reporting her results by Susan Johnson. According to Mapp and Johnson (1997, 3):

The reports from these schools confirmed that our experience at HGSE is by no means unique. A more diverse student body brings new perspectives that inevitably reveal shortcomings in current curricula and teaching practices. Faculty members at various institutions have learned that, although they have made changes in their courses and are committed to effectively serving diverse groups of students, their efforts often are not initially successful and students find them inadequate. This process of inquiry and review is often unsettling, even painful, and faculty members who believe that they are making real progress often discover that they still have much to learn and much to do.

Mapp later convened seven focus groups of students at HGSE to assess their experience of diversity at the school. Six of the focus groups comprised students who represented diverse racial and ethnic groups; the seventh group represented international students. These focus groups included a total of five master's students and thirty students enrolled in the several doctoral programs at HGSE. A Working Paper on Diversity, which summarized the results of the students' responses in the focus groups and comments by faculty, was subsequently made available to the HGSE community in 1997. This document proved pivotal in facilitating HGSE to move forward with plans for the school's diversity initiatives. Diversity projects emanating from this initial investigative inquiry included the establishment (in 1997) of the Diversity Innovation Fund, which has supported, with small grants, student-initiated ideas that are designed to broaden the diversity conversation at HGSE.

Other projects and programs that resulted from this initiative included the following:

- The Teaching Fellow Training on Diversity in which the director and the teaching assistants of the Student Writing Center explored ways to incorporate issues of diversity in student assessment and ways to provide helpful feedback on student writing.
- A Standing Committee on Diversity (SCOD) was also established not long after publication of the working paper to respond to two questions: Where should HGSE be in five years? How do we get from here to there?
- The Harvard Education Forum, a series of public guest lectures on topics of relevance to education, sponsored numerous sessions in which issues of diversity were the main focus. The sessions included panels on ethnicity, gender, race, and language-based learning, to name just a few.

- The Inter-Area Research Study Group used a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to learn about the experiences of various research-based groups engaged in exploring diversity as it relates to various aspects of education.

CONCLUSION

Because of the increased diversity of experience and learning skills among today's seminary students, theological institutions are challenged in myriad ways to meet the needs of this growing constituency while also, somehow, finding ways to remain true to their own sense of mission and tradition. Fortunately, despite our own perceptions of our students' biases, misunderstandings, and prejudices (different in form but similar in kind to our own), students continue to come to seminary to engage in theological reflection and achieve a better understanding of their Christian faith and heritage. By joining them in the chorus of human experience, we give ourselves the opportunity to embrace a new student-constituent reality, a reality that is truly reflective of the goodness of God from whom we have all been similarly blessed by the awesome love and grace expressed in the gift of our own diverse and prejudiced humanity.

NOTES

1. One is still left in much pain and amazement in trying to understand how one of the foremost intellectual pillars of our time allowed himself to diminish his contributions and credibility to twentieth century philosophical thought through his sympathetic affiliation with fascist Germany's Nazi Party. Heidegger was a self-ascribed member of the Nazi party during World War II. It is a paradox of our times how someone like Heidegger could exhibit such absolute genius in one aspect of his life and yet become a participant in moral corruption of such monumental proportions as his undisputed involvement in this part of history demonstrates.
2. All narratives cited in this book can be found in the Archives section of the Seminar's Web site: <http://www.lexingtonseminar.org/>.
3. I wish to thank Rosemary Downer of the dean's office at Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) and Dr. Nancy Nienhuis of HGSE's Office of Student Affairs for making available to me documents on the school's diversity initiatives.