

*A Response to Bennett's Practicing Integrity:  
Advancing the Argument*

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John Bennett's efforts to expand the concept of academic ethics in our article are commendable. Bennett encapsulates academic ethics in the framework of hospitality and suggests that embedded within the notion of hospitality are the values of trustworthiness, sincerity, and honesty. Bennett is correct in trying to establish the relational context within which we frame the misalignment of espoused theories and theories-in-use. His argument provides the bases for the further expansion of the theory advanced in this paper. We do not argue with Bennett's assertion that hospitality should undergird the relational aspects of ethics in the academic setting. In fact, if hospitality were practiced as Bennett suggests, academic settings would become more humane and more human. As a result, academia would become less fragmented and more relational and open to connectivity. Hospitality, as defined by Bennett, acts as a launching pad for the operational aspects of the social contract that exists between the university and the community.

We propose to extend Bennett's argument in two ways. One, the concept of hospitality has its geneses in dialogue; and two, the movement from theoretical agreement on ethical principles and their practice requires an act of will driven through strength of character. Dialogue, according to Bohm is at the heart of improving the human condition. As he says,

Dialogue is a way of observing, collectively, how hidden values and intentions can control our behavior, and how unnoticed cultural differences can clash without our realizing it is occurring. It can be seen as an arena in which collective learning takes place and out of which a sense of increased harmony, fellowship and creativity can arise. Dialogue requires the parties to put aside preconceived opinions and become open to the gift of the other. When this occurs in a spirit of mutuality, the generativity of new ideas is possible. Common ground, once thought impossible, is discovered. Hospitality, framed within the context of enhancing dialogue, can create an environment in academia where ethics and integrity thrive and where greater awareness of the extent of the social contract the university has with the community evolves. (Bohm, Factor, & Garrett 1991)

As with all theory, Bennett's arguments, as well as those Calabrese and Barton propose, remain a cognitive process until applied in praxis. The application of theory to praxis requires an act of human will. The commitment to actions that constructively benefit others requires more than the belief in an ethical system or the espousing of beneficial values. It requires strength of character. People, who have strength of character, move from the intent of doing good to the practical application of doing good. The word character is derived from the Greek word *charakter*. The Greek word refers to the set of assets and failings of a human being. In this sense, the willingness of a person to put into practice the notion of hospitality and dialogue tells us as much about the person as it does the person's character. Josephson (1998) describes good character as exhibiting the characteristics of honor, integrity, duty, kindness, fairness, and other ethical values inherent in the relational nature of mutuality. Our character is not fixed as Frankl (1969) informs us. Instead, as Frankl states, we are "capable of choosing [our] attitude toward [ourselves] .... In this light, a person is free to shape his own character, and man [sic] is responsible for what he [sic] may have made out of him [sic] self" (p. 17).

Whether or not we act ethically and with integrity, choosing hospitality as a basis for such action, is a matter of human choice. This choice is shaped by our character and our character is shaped by our choice. Consideration of ethical behavior must take

into account the notion of character. As such, character acts as an essential element to the creation and sustenance of an ethical environment in academia that finds a way to express itself through the notion of hospitality.

#### REFERENCES

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