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A Better Way: Using Richard Hooker's Notion of 'Image of God' to Work Through and Past Microaggressions in the Episcopal Church

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A BETTER WAY:

USING RICHARD HOOKER'S NOTION OF 'IMAGE OF GOD' TO WORK
THROUGH AND PAST MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

To: DB and JK – Because you were there before this started,
and you will be there after this is done – all my love.

To: LK – For the challenges, encouragement, and feedback,
even when on vacation.

To: AW – For an offer of a place, and a space.

To: NE and IE – For helping enable summer in Germany 2022.

To: JP – For demonstrating intellectual humility
through your tone of voice, word choice, and attitude.

To: St. Gabriel the Archangel's Episcopal Church, Portland –
For the love, support, prayers, and opportunities.

To: The Librarians of George Fox University –
without your kindness, help, and dedication,
this dissertation would not be done.

EPIGRAPH

"I pray that none will be offended if I seek to make the Christian religion
an inn where all are received joyously, rather than a cottage
where some few friends of the family are to be received."

— Richard Hooker

"I have never known a humble person who did not have intense love
for some good beyond the self."

— Kent Dunnington

"Love is at the root of everything, all learning, all relationships,
love or the lack of it."

— Fred Rogers

"Fight for the things that you care about,
but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."

— Ruth Bader Ginsburg

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

*For the purposes of this work, the below abbreviations are used
and are accompanied by their intended meaning.*

CBT: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

CRT: Critical Race Theory

IAT: Implicit Association Test

MRP: Microaggression Research Program

SJT: Social Justice Theory

SPT: Social Perspective Taking

GLOSSARY

Appetite: A function of desire within the soul that is morally neutral. It pursues goods the senses identify and want. “Appetite seeks whatever goods are perceived by the senses and then wished for...”¹

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: “Short-term, problem-focused cognitive and behavioral intervention strategies that are derived from the science and theory of learning and cognition.”²

Compassion: “It means to ‘suffer with’ and has been defined as ‘a deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it.’”³

Critical Theory: A systems level approach of analysis developed in the sociologically-focused Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, commonly known as the Frankfurt School.⁴ A critical theory has a distinctive aim: to unmask the ideology falsely justifying some form of social or economic oppression – to reveal it *as* ideology – and, in so doing, to contribute to the task of ending that oppression. And so, a critical theory aims to provide a kind of enlightenment about social and

¹ Richard Hooker, *Divine Law and Human Nature: Or, the first book of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Concerning Laws and their Several Kinds in General*, W. Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and Bradley Belschner, ed. trans. (Lincoln, NE: The Davenant Institute, 2017), 29.

² Michelle G. Craske, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2017), 3, 4, EBSCOhost.

³ Shane Sinclair, et al., “Sympathy, Empathy, and Compassion: A Grounded Theory Study of Palliative Care Patient’s Understandings, Experiences, and Preferences,” *Palliative Medicine* 31, no. 5 (2017): 439, <https://doi.org.10.1177/0269216316663499>.

⁴ Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School Exile* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2009), xix.

economic life that is itself *emancipatory*: persons come to recognize the oppression they are suffering *as* oppression and are thereby partly freed from it.⁵

Critical Race Theory: The critical analysis of culture focusing on the legal system in relation to race in America. It was developed with the following central themes: “the call for context, critique of liberalism,⁶ insistence that racism is ordinary not exceptional, and the notion that traditional civil rights law has been more valuable to whites than to blacks...”⁷

Desire: A drive given to humans to incline them towards wanting perfection for the purpose of obtaining happiness.⁸

Disciplinarian-Puritans: A branch of the Protestant Church following Calvinism, created as a result of the Protestant Reformation, whose goal in England was to separate the power of the Crown and the Church of England.

Deconstruction: A literary critical hermeneutic employed by the Algerian-French philosopher Jacques Derrida, understood as: “A philosophical destruction of traditional categories”.⁹

⁵ A description of Amherst University course “PHIL-366 Marx & Critical Theory,” Accessed August 25, 2022, <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/courses/1314S/PHIL/PHIL-366-1314S>.

⁶ A primary critique of liberalism is: “Are you being selfish and self-serving?”.

⁷ Richard Delgado, “Introduction,” *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple: University Press, 1995), xv.

⁸ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 33.

⁹ Rev. Dominik Finkelde, SJ, “Post-Structuralism,” in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2012 – 2013: Ethics & Philosophy, Volume 3*, ed. Robert L. Fastiggi, Joseph W. Koterski, Trevor Lipscombe (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning in association with the Catholic University of America, 2013), 1246.

Divine Law: Hooker described divine law in this way: “He has opened to us with prophetic revelation the hidden mysteries that

reason could never have unlocked or shown to be so necessary for our everlasting good. Therefore, let us use the precious gifts that God has given us, for His glory and honor, seeking to know by every means possible what His will is, what is righteous before Him, and what is holy, perfect, and good in His sight so that we might truly and faithfully do it.”¹⁰

Empathy: It is a theory of emotion¹¹ and can be broken into three steps: recognize differences; understand influences; relate to another person’s perspective.¹²

Frankfurt School: The sociologically-focused Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, commonly known as the Frankfurt School.¹³ Founded in 1923 by Carl Grünberg, it moved to New York, linking with Columbia University in 1933. The school continues to function within the Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany.

French Theorists: This school of thought included Jacques Derrida, and Paul-Michel Foucault among others, but was not monolithic. Themes shared by these thinkers included analyzing and deconstructing literature via epistemological, hermeneutical, and phenomenological methods.

Goodness: An element of natural law reflecting the divine law, which guides the will to

¹⁰ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 90.

¹¹ Grit Hein, Tania Singer, “I Feel How You Feel But Not Always: The Empathic Brain and Its Modulation,” *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* 18, no. 2 (April 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conb.2008.07.012>.

¹² Christine Bruno, n.d. “Empatico Skills: Spotlight on Perspective Taking Activities,” Empatico (blog), Accessed July 23, 2022, <https://blog.empatico.org/empatico-skills-spotlight-on-perspective-taking-activities/>.

¹³ Wheatland, *Frankfurt School*, xix.

encourage humans how to be.¹⁴

Image of God: Something that no one has been able to fully quantify. It is a gift of God given to each person, connecting us with God, and with each other; it enables us to know love, give love, and receive love, in addition to all the other fruits of the Spirit. The Book of Common Prayer defines it in the following terms: “It means that we are free to make choices; to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with God...It means that all people are worthy of respect and honor, because all are created in the image of God, and all can respond to the love of God.”¹⁵

Intellectual Humility: While Hooker never uses the term he does imply it. Intellectual humility refers to how to approach thinking about your own knowledge base in relation to what it takes to understand even simple things. This perspective is taken from the following quote, “Perhaps God has given us so much trouble in sounding these depths, so that when we see how much more the least object in the world has within it than the wisest may comprehend, we might better learn humility.”¹⁶

Love of Neighbor: An expression of the image of God, thus an expression of how we are to relate towards others. Hooker described love of neighbor in this way: “....it is the root from which we derive all laws concerning our duties to our fellowman, and here too, men have naturally tended to see that it is their duty to love others just as much as themselves. For, since things that are equal must be treated equally, how

¹⁴ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 33.

¹⁵ *The (Online) Book of Common Prayer*, 2007 ed., ed. Gregory Michael Howe (The Church Hymnal Corporation, New York), <https://www.bcponline.org/Misc/catechism.html>.

¹⁶ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 10.

can I expect good from another unless I am willing to offer him the same satisfaction of his desires, seeing as we all share the same nature?¹⁷

Microaggressions: Small expressions of behavior demonstrating a lack of respect towards another person. “Microaggressions are reflections of a worldview of superiority-inferiority, normality-abnormality, and desirable-undesirable ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.”¹⁸ They are broken down into three subcategories: microassaults are conscious prejudicial attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors communicated to marginalized groups or individuals of those groups; microinsults which are prejudicial attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors and demean along racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious lines; microinvalidations are conscious or unconscious actions which “exclude, negate, or nullify” the feelings, thoughts, or lived reality of marginalized groups, and are always subtle.

Natural Law: A law all physical things follow, and by which humans are guided to help them seek after perfection, based upon the divine law. “God has given us our senses so that we might perceive those things on which our physical life depends; He has given us reason so that we might know what is necessary for both our present and future state.”¹⁹

Original Sin: Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden is understood as the original sin. The effect this choice had on humanity is also called original sin in that the ontological state of humans changed from being sinless to having a

¹⁷ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 39.

¹⁸ Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 241.

¹⁹ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 90.

natural inclination to sin instead of following the righteous will of God. “Man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil.”²⁰

Passions: An element of the appetite. Passions is Hooker’s term to express various emotions: “passions such as joy, grief, fear, anger, and so forth...”²¹

Post-Structuralism: Generally speaking, through this method French Theorists in the 1950s-1970s reevaluated language via theories of knowledge, phenomenology, and hermeneutics for the purpose of finding hidden truths. They frequently built upon Heidegger’s work, wherein Realism was rejected, and subjective, experienced-based knowledge was prioritized.²²

Reason: The *Episcopal Dictionary* follows Hooker in defining reason as follows: “One of the three sources of authority in Anglicanism, along with scripture and tradition. Reason interprets scripture and tradition and allows itself to be corrected and enlarged by them. Reason is considered in Anglican thought to be more than calculation and logic, and it draws upon the entirety of human understanding and

²⁰ *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, A User Friendly Reference for Episcopalians*, s.v. “Original Sin,” ed. Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 2000), <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/original-sin/>.

²¹ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 28, 29. There is debate about what precisely “passions” connotes during the 16th century in England. For an analysis based upon various dictionary definitions from the Late Medieval to Early Modern period, wherein the conclusion is that any clear demarcation between passion and emotion is impossible to trace see Kirk Essary in “Passions, Affections, or Emotions? On the Ambiguity of 16th Century Terminology,” *International Society for Research on Emotion* 9, no. 4 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073916679007>. See also, Providing a multidisciplinary approach see *Faith, Rationality, and Passions* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), PRIMO.

²² Finkelde, “Post-Structuralism”, 1245.

experience. Reason makes it possible to evaluate and determine what is good to be done in a particular situation.”²³

Soul: The location of human dignity and reasoning.²⁴ Hooker believed the soul was the geographical location of reason, the will, the appetite, and passions, among other things.²⁵ He also argued the soul is where human development occurs and choices are made.²⁶ In other words, the soul is the ‘agent’ making the final decision of a thing, and the elements within the soul can influence, but they individually do not make the final decision.

Social Perspective Taking: Morton defines social perspective taking in this way: “Social perspective taking is the ability to understand a social situation from another person’s perspective.”²⁷

Spiritual Practices: Behavior enabling a person to listen to and follow the will of God. Hooker described it as follows: “Our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.”²⁸

Theological anthropology: A theory articulating the concepts of and relationship between

²³ *Episcopal Dictionary*, s.v. “Reason,”.

²⁴ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 28.

²⁵ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

²⁶ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

²⁷ Imola Marton et al., “Empathy and Social Perspective Taking in Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder,” *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 37 (2009): 107-118, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-008-9262-4>.

²⁸ Jeffrey P. Greenman, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspectives: Classic Issues, Contemporary Challenges,” *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 24.

God and humanity. It helps humans ask questions about the nature of God, the nature of humans, and the nature of the relationship between these two.²⁹ In addition, theological anthropology offers space and opportunity for issues to be grounded in lived experiences because the focus is on the nature of the relationship between God and humans and what that nature tells us about ourselves and what we are to do with this knowledge and truth.

Will: An element of the soul pursuing goods that reason identifies according to Hooker, “The will seeks whatever good reason points out.”³⁰

²⁹ *Theological Anthropology: What Is distinct About A Christian View Of The Person?* (Fuller Theological Blog, September 15 2010), <https://www.fuller.edu/next-faithful-step/resources/theological-anthropology/>. For a different way to understand theological anthropology please see: “Preface,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro, ed. (New York: Ashgate, 2015), xvii.

³⁰ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

ABSTRACT

I claim behavior described as microaggressions can be mitigated via spiritual practices based in the virtue ethics of love of neighbor and intellectual humility. This is done using Richard Hooker's construct of the 'image of God', within his theological anthropology wherein the reason, will, appetite, and passions are kept in balance as they pursue perfection, understood as goodness, which is an expression of the divine and natural laws. Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy methodology to identify when these elements become too great in relation to the others affecting behavior maladaptively, we can seek a "reset" via a cognitive behavioral therapy approach. Such an approach enables social perspective taking, empathy, and compassion to demonstrate love of neighbor and intellectual humility. Developing these spiritual practices can then lead to modifications in our behavior with the result that we do not intentionally exhibit microaggressions. Instead, our behavior better exhibits fruits of the Spirit and can foster deepened relationships. These phenomena have the potential to remind us of the 'image of God' in us and in others.

INTRODUCTION

Discovering the topic driving this thesis was an exercise in determination and hope. Even though I was involved in ministry and a full-time doctoral candidate of ministry, I was not identifying any ministerial problem requiring a practical fix. Then came the summer of 2020 with lockdown and various protests. Interestingly in the midst of that chaos and social isolation I was shown the problem during a moment of divine illumination while praying about the upheaval and growing lack of civility. In this moment a term came to me like a whisper in my inner ear: microaggressions. I looked it up and realized this might be the topic. I gave it more thought, recalling microaggressions I experienced, and realized some happened within the context of my home church – a progressive Episcopal church espousing ‘All Are Welcome’. When I researched to see who else had written about microaggressions in the Episcopal church I was surprised to see little data. Affiliated subject matters, such as racism, or sexism were being examined, but microaggressions were not. Between the time of prayer and the initial research I was convinced I finally knew the opportunity I could explore and find a way to approach resolving it for use in my home church and possibly others.

The resolution I embraced to address the ministerial opportunity is another unexpected thing: the writings of Richard Hooker, a 16th century English divine known for his theo-political masterpiece *Of The Laws of Ecclesiastical Church Polity* which, is part of the bedrock of the Episcopal church. My academic background is church history. As such, I’ve had opportunity to read theological texts produced across the centuries. I was first introduced to Hooker’s thinking as an undergraduate studying abroad at Oxford University. His context and writing captured my imagination. Through the social tumult,

political maneuverings, and theological debates of the Reformation, Hooker managed to create and maintain a shocking degree of moderation in his logic and writing tone. Though a few centuries separate Richard's time from present day, there are similarities of context that I could not ignore. So, I went back, reread his writings, and realized I could call upon the writer that helped defend the existence of the Episcopal Church and use his methodology of moderation and balance to offer a way to help us move forward.

The theory of microaggressions is complex, challenging and often disputed, but I think there are two important things to figure out in relation to them: ways to mitigate microaggressions; and how to restore the relationship between the parties involved when they occur. I believe within the Episcopal Church of American exists a truth beneath and guiding the Canon Laws, the Book of Common Prayer, the Creeds, the Eucharist, Vestries, and Altar Guilds. That truth is Relationship: within the Trinity; between God and humans; and between humans. There is a vertical relationship guiding how we create and live out our horizontal relationships. Central to that vertical relationship is humility and love. Humility and love are simultaneously nouns, fruits of the spirit, character, and behavioral qualities. When engaged, they heal, make whole, and create hope. Of the two, love is easier to identify and qualify than humility.

There is nothing revelatory or groundbreaking in this argument. My core claim is we are made in the image of God. Thus, we are made to be relational and called to consciously nurture spiritual practices of love and humility in all actions, words, and intent, **especially** when confronted with social challenges, such as microaggressions. When microaggressions do occur, we can get stuck in the loop of justifying to ourselves and others why our opinion is an accurate assessment of the scenario and/or why our response

is the most just. I suggest these justifications are good to know and can help clarify why your perceptions are not going to resolve the root issue of pain and broken relationship experienced even if rudeness was not intended. Instead, the conversation can easily turn into a debate of who has the better and more accurate facts, which can lead down an epistemological rabbit hole. I believe due to the image of God a goal of loving and humble behavior is to actively listen for the purpose of maintaining the relational connection as an act of worship and obedience to God. I propose the theological anthropology and writing tone of the 16th century divine Richard Hooker offers an excellent example of how to express love and humility during a time of social change.

Hooker understood love and humility as divine virtues that can be known through divine and natural laws when we use our will, reason, and appetite and passions to seek the good. This process leads to developing the image of God into full maturity. This process is a type of spiritual practice. Using contemporary language, I believe the process of choosing humility and love requires we engage our truest selves while thinking about our neighbors as we help them become their truest selves. There is nothing easy about this process. In fact, this choice is a challenge for both parties. The psychological and emotional toll it takes to engage these experiences **and** staying emotionally present **and** react in love and humility is hard. This is true for the person who experienced the microaggression and for the person who committed the microaggression.

I seek to acknowledge the difficulties for both parties while staying focused on our capacity to live this way because we are called to this way of living by God. A goal of this thesis is to offer an approach to help prevent microaggressions from occurring in our own behavior and help when our appetites, passions, or reason may get the better of us when

we think a microaggression has occurred and the other person either did not mean to express a microaggression or does not think they did anything wrong. A second goal is to help restore relationships after a microaggression has occurred, especially when it happens in the Episcopal church. I want to emphasize the phrase “an opportunity”. I am not convinced there is any one single fix to microaggressions, and I am not convinced they will ever stop. I argue this is an expression of original sin and human frailty until Christ comes pains, evils, wounds, and microaggressions, etc., will not cease. Original sin, as understood within the Episcopal faith tradition, means “man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil.”³¹ But it is what we as Christians do in the face of those things that make us whom we claim to be. As such, this thesis is built upon an ideal of essence and being while acknowledging a need for a pragmatic, realistic, and practical approach to behavior.

The north star giving context to ‘essence’ is Christ as understood and defined by the Nicene Creed. To that end we are to have our essence resemble and reflect that of Christ. Just as Christ is the Savior of the world, so too He helps us understand how to be in relationship with others as demonstrated in the Trinity as understood in the Apostle’s Creed. The vertical relationship we are to have with Christ and the Trinity is that which is to inform and guide our horizontal relationships. When our ego, pride, hubris, and emotions get in the way of our vertical relationship with the Trinity and our horizontal relationships get damaged, such as when we engage in microaggressions. It is in these moments we deliberately need to lean into humility and love. An excellent example is found in Richard Hooker’s theological anthropology and writing tone within *On the Laws of Ecclesiastical*

³¹ *Episcopal Dictionary*, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/original-sin/>.

Polity. Admittedly, of the 8 volumes constituting Hooker's argument, none have ever really been considered a source for obtaining examples of how to change behavior via spiritual practices to my knowledge. While that may be the case, I have studied and read many theological texts from Pre-Modern to Post-Modern theologians and never have I been more struck by the humble and loving tone than I am by this 16th century divine. As counterintuitive as it might seem to some, I discovered a treasure trove of ideas in *Polity* regarding *how* to engage with someone when they are actively trying to sabotage, diminish, and denigrate you. The ideas are based upon Hooker's admonition of human frailty and consequent lack of ability in contrast to that of God, his humble writing tone, and his willing, open, and generous approach to investigating Calvinist theology. When I identified these principles in the 1st chapter of the first book, I knew this was going to be a different sort of reading experience.

Microaggressions can happen anytime, anywhere. For the purposes of this thesis, I locate them within churches and church related activities. Fundamentally it identifies microaggressions within the sacred space related to the soul and psychology of individuals who are in church. I do this because awareness of microaggressions is growing in general, but theological discussions of them, and ways to mitigate and move past them is still in development. As such, another larger goal of this thesis is to help progress that larger conversation. It also identifies microaggressions within the interactions of people in these churches and related activities. Because this thesis is focused on microaggressions in the Episcopal church, acknowledgement and credit must be given to the Episcopal church on

the work already done through various Task Forces and the subsequent reports³², and by Rev. Isaiah Shaneequa Brokenleg³³ with “Becoming Beloved Community”,³⁴ and “Racial Reconciliation in the Episcopal Church”. Through significant time and energy put forth by the various Task Force members, and Rev. Brokenleg, the identification and articulation of specific work needing to be addressed in the Episcopal Church regarding race at the national level has been started. This is excellent and should be applauded, not only for the work itself but also for the manner in which it is being done, and the uplifting of divergent voices that historically have not been heard and valued. That being said, there is still much work to do at the national, diocesan, and parish levels to unite the doctrinally linked policies, and developing curricula; and trainings to pastoral and laity by-in.

To help quantify what a microaggression can look like I offer a personal experience from my home Episcopal church, located in Portland, Oregon. This church is 90% Caucasian, with most attendees in the middle and upper-middle socio-economic class. In the Fall of 2018, I attended a Lenten series at my church. The series was about different cultures and different faith traditions associated with those cultures. Each evening included a dinner, conversation, and then a video about one of the faith traditions. One evening I spoke with an older white man from the Southern United States of America. I learned he had a few children, one of whom married a person of a different culture and faith tradition.

³² For Reports to the General Convention for the Episcopal Church topics such as, “Task Force on Women, Truth and Reconciliation,” “Task Force on Disability and Deaf Access,” “Covenant for Reckoning with White Supremacy as a House of Bishops and as a Church,” see *Reports to the 80th General Convention*. Accessed August 22, 2022, <https://www.generalconvention.org/bluebook2021>.

³³ “Becoming Beloved Community,” The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of The Episcopal Church (New York, NY: 2021), <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community/>.

³⁴ “Becoming Beloved Community.”

The gentleman expressed being fine with his children's choices, stating all faiths lead to the same road. He then asked me "And what about your family?". I said "Oh, do you mean am I married with children?" He said "Yes." I replied "Oh, I am not married, and I don't have children. I work and am pursuing a doctorate." Immediately his jaw dropped for a few beats, he blinked once, and then his mouth clamped shut. We stood in silence. I was waiting thinking "Is he going to ask me anything? There are tons of questions he could ask me based upon what I have told him". The silence extended. The gentleman continued standing there staring at me with his mouth closed, his lips in a straight line, as if he was frozen. I realized he was not going to say anything. In response, and to honor his apparent wish to end the discussion, I said, "Well, it has been lovely getting to know you and learning about your family. I need to get some more water. Please do excuse me." I quietly walked away.

I do not know if he consciously intended to express a microaggression, but that is how I experienced his non-reply. As the definition of microaggression relates to my experience, I interpreted his behavior as a derogation and a microinsult towards me, in that he did not do the socially expected thing of continuing to dialogue with me. Instead, he broke with the rules of dialogue and literally stopped all conversation with me.

For my part, I was tired in that moment. It was the end of a long day at work, and we had all just eaten, so I was experiencing a 'food comma'. As such, I did not take the time or energy to ask him what prompted his silence. Perhaps if it had been a Sunday morning, and if I was feeling more assertive, I might have inquired what motivated the silence. This did not happen. As such, I might have missed out on learning that he was so gob-smacked and impressed by my 'modern day' approach to life that he stood in awe and

wonder. I'll be honest – a face usually looks different when a person is expressing awe and wonder: pupils dilate, micro muscle movements around the eyes are very active, there is a slight but distinct shifting of the head, neck, and upper torso. This gentleman's face was blank and his body stiff. If someone glanced over quickly, they could have mistaken him for a wax figure in Madame Toussauds³⁵ Museum.

My home church, St. Gabriel The Archangel Episcopal Church in Portland, Oregon, in many ways can be understood as a microcosm of the larger Episcopal church: predominantly white, upper-middle class, educated, aging. There is some variation, with a few members representing the LGBTQI+ group, at least one member who is differently abled, a handful of people of color, and some families with children and/or teens. When assessing my church, I immediately notice huge gaps or 'thin spots' in those who do not attend: non-white; lower economic status; people whose first language is not English; refugees; college students; differently abled; younger single people. Based upon my experience with the older white gentleman, I began to wonder if anyone else from these 'silently excluded' groups attended and left because they sensed on some level, they were not welcome.

Identifying the contours and features of microaggressions is necessary in this thesis. The rationale for this focus is found in the contrast between the church's key phrase 'All Are Welcome' and its history of discriminatory practices towards people of color, women, the LGBTQI+ community, those who are differently abled, and white people of a lower socio-economic status. It is true that attitudes have progressively changed to be more open

³⁵ Per the website, "Madam Toussauds" is the (current) correct spelling, *Madam Toussauds: Who We Are* (Merlin Entertainments.: 2021), <https://www.madametoussauds.com/>.

with the ordination of women, LGBTQI+, and more supportive of a multitude of social causes nationally and internationally.³⁶ Yet there are clearly gaps needing to be addressed. This thesis addresses the gap of microaggressions.

This is not a thesis to review historical moments of microaggressions in the American Episcopal church. The goal of this dissertation is to reduce microaggressions, and navigate past them when they do occur in the Episcopal church by helping people identify microaggressions in their own thinking and behavior and replace those habits with more ethically constructive habits in thoughts and behavior. I do not desire to chastise anyone. I think of this as a topic represented by a traditional scale, as frequently seen being held in the left hand of Lady Justice. In this context, microaggression theory is one side of the scale and unjust behavior is on the other side of the scale. This thesis should be considered a pebble added to the microaggression theory side of the scale.

The image of the pebble is chosen deliberately. It is small and easy to hold. A pebble is not overwhelming, burdensome, or distressing in most instances, unless you find one in your shoe. In the context of this metaphor, it can be seen and felt and understood, adding further evidence to the argument that we as humans have problematic behavior, and this behavior needs to be pointed out and modified. To be even more explicit, I argue this behavior is an expression of original sin and human frailty, and thus the only true way to restore and correct the behavior is to embrace intellectual humility by believing and

³⁶ For further reading on these topics please see the following: Bill Tammeus, "Episcopal Church Celebrates 40 Years of Women in the Priesthood," *National Catholic Reporter*, July 28, 2014, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/parish/episcopal-church-celebrates-40-years-women-priesthood>. See also "Stances of Faith on LGBTQ Issues: Episcopal Church," *Human Rights Campaign*, Accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-episcopal-church>. And see Thomas Strange, "Alexander Crummell and the Anti-Slavery Dilemma of the Episcopal Church," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 70, no. 4 (Oct 2019): 767-784, <https://doi.org.10.1017/S0022046919000551>.

accepting that we as individuals don't have the autonomous capacity to perfectly fix and change this behavior by ourselves and thus need to call upon the help of the Triune God who, through love and the mystery of His being helps heal and remold us more and more into the image of God given us. Thus, the calling out of unjust behavior should not be understood as a condemnation of any one group. Everyone can commit microaggressions. Rather the call-out nature of this thesis is intended to help energize people who desire to live holy and integrated lives, who seek to have their thinking and behavior reflect the values they espouse.

While researching this thesis I was reminded of times I exhibited microaggressions towards individuals. With horror and humility, I remember those moments. I realized the generous and kind perspective I held about myself needed to be reassessed. In that moment I realized God was very gently and lovingly showing me a truth about myself and my human nature – I am not as good or fantastic as I think I am. When I started to have a more realistic assessment of myself and utilize intellectual humility practices on a consistent bases, interesting results occurred. I came to see my perspective did not always 'have to win'. My approach to dialogue, how I expressed myself, and attitudes I had started to shift. I practice listening more, speaking less, asking more clarifying questions, and assuming less. I also laugh more because I take myself less seriously. Joy and delight come faster because my focus has shifted from 'being right' to being in right relationship. My sense of self is more grounded in the knowledge of God's unconditional love for me, and this helps me love others more authentically. I am not magical. These are all things that any person on earth can gain and experience. I hope this thesis helps others experience the same kind of thing.

Because the focus is on the mind and the body one thing needs to be noted. One might assume the mind/body dualism split is being endorsed. It is not. I follow in the intellectual footsteps of the Scottish Presbyterian theologian and thinker T.F. Torrance who embraced a holistic theo-philosophical approach to understanding the mind and the body as being interlinked. Purely for purposes of clarity and ease of delineation in writing do I reference the mind and the body separately.

To rectify microaggressions I offer spiritual practices which can be deployed within the Episcopal body as a whole. The practices are based upon a biblical notion of dignity within the phrases ‘image of God’, ‘love of neighbor’, and ‘intellectual humility’ – terms used by Richard Hooker. When the Church of England was getting more firmly established under Queen Elizabeth I via the Elizabethan Church Settlement she was working through her bishops and priests to shore-up the national church doctrine and polity, including the Baptismal covenant. Richard Hooker became a primary figure in this larger context. Though he wanted to be a university scholar and live out his days in the ivory towers of Corpus Christi College, Oxford as an Oxford Don and theologian, the Queen had other needs. Elizabeth needed a man who could help bridge the Protestant and Catholic divide seeming to threaten the heart of the country. Whether he liked it or not, Hooker was the person for the job. A by-product of this was his authoring *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Church Polity*.

I focus on his theological anthropology, how he understood ‘what it means to be human’. This is done by looking at his understandings of ‘image of God’, ‘reason’, ‘intellectual humility’, and ‘love of neighbor’. Fundamentally, I believe we are all image bearers of God and are called to live this out by loving our neighbor as ourselves. The

methodology utilized is textual analysis of Book I and to a lesser degree *Preface* within *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. This analysis focuses on Hooker's theological anthropology and applied ethics. I use theological anthropology because it asks questions about the nature of God, the nature of humans, and the nature of the relationship between these two.³⁷ In addition, theological anthropology offers space and opportunity for issues to be grounded in lived experiences because the focus is on the nature of the relationship between God and humans and what that nature tells us about ourselves and what we are to do with this knowledge and truth.

One might ask "Why Richard Hooker?". There is validity to this question. One can easily argue there are plenty of present-day theologians and thinkers who can speak to the issue of microaggressions, and inequalities, such as Dr. Rev. Cody J. Sanders, Dr. Rev. Angela Yarber, or Dr. Nancy J. Ramsay.³⁸ I chose Richard Hooker because his doctrine of 'image of God' and its link with 'love of neighbor' and 'intellectual humility' is explicit, while Sanders and Yarber's text implies it, but does not speak to it directly.³⁹ Furthermore, his tone within the multivolume *Of the Law of Ecclesiastical Church Polity* frequently epitomizes the humble spirit necessary for dialoguing about microaggressions. This is not to suggest others do not offer humble approaches to their writing. Rather, the combination

³⁷ *Theological Anthropology: What Is distinct About A Christian View Of The Person?* (Fuller Theological Seminary Blog, September 15 2010), <https://www.fuller.edu/next-faithful-step/resources/theological-anthropology/>. For a different way to understand theological anthropology please see: "Preface," *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro, ed. (New York: Ashgate, 2015), xvii.

³⁸ For further reading please see: Cody J. Sanders and Angela Yarber, *Microaggressions in Ministry: Confronting the Hidden Violence of Everyday Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015); Nancy J. Ramsay, "Intersectionality: A Model for Addressing the Complexity of Oppression and Privilege," *Pastoral Psychol* 63, (2014): 453-469, <https://doi.org.10.1007/s11089-013-0570-4>.

³⁹ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

of Hooker's explicit theological link, plus his humble tone, while writing as a Church of England theologian makes him an excellent example of *how* to demonstrate 'what being human means' in the phrase 'image of God'.

Regarding Richard's approach to theological anthropology, some have proposed it deeply informed by Augustine and Aquinas' and his ethics dependent upon Aristotle.⁴⁰ This thesis builds upon these findings. This distinctive approach gave specific evidence to his larger argument that natural law (as linked with Aristotelian ideas) and divine law (as linked with Augustinian ideas) were two types of truth God provided to humans as ways to make well-informed and thoughtful choices. This methodology was in direct contrast to Disciplinary-Puritans who argued the only source of truth humans should accept is biblical. There are some scholars who disagree with this claim, such as W.J. Torrance Kirby, who argues Hooker was continuing the Magisterial theological tradition from Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, and Bullinger.⁴¹

The dissertation is organized into four chapters. The first chapter focuses on microaggressions, defining the term by breaking it down into its constituent parts. I argue microaggressions can be understood as maladaptive behaviors learned over time. I highlight certain Behavioral Psychology theories, such as the Pavlovian response as evidence of this suggestion. Then microaggressions are placed in context, with a brief overview of the historical development from which it came, including The Frankfurt School, French Theorists, and Critical Race Theory. From there I discuss epistemological challenges associated with trying to resolve microaggressions using epistemological lines

⁴⁰ W.J. Torrance Kirby, "Richard Hooker's Theory of Natural Law in the Context of Reformation Theology," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 3 (Autumn, 1999): 681-705.

⁴¹ Kirby, "Richard Hooker's Theory" 4.

of logic. For this I offer three perspectives, ranging from empiricism, to sociology, to liberal Positivism.

The second chapter looks at the first volume of *Ecclesiastical Polity* containing Richard Hooker's theological anthropology which encompasses among other things the soul, image of God, reasoning, and dignity. To be more precise, Hooker argued the soul uses reason, which when developed properly, gives evidence of the image of God in a person, and the image of God in turn encompasses the Christian virtue of humility which uplifts the dignity of others, as individuals obey the command to love your neighbor. The tone used when crafting his argument gave credibility to a person living out and articulating these practices. Hooker's logical construct, and writing tone offers the principles of 'love of neighbor' and 'intellectual humility,' which we can apply in our behavior today to prevent microaggressions and use to restore relationships when microaggressions do occur in the Episcopal church.

The third chapter assesses microaggressions using the notions of 'the appetite', 'passions', and 'reason' in Richard Hooker's theological anthropology. I briefly discuss the intellectual influences of Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas in Hooker's use of the terms. From there, I discuss how 'the appetite' and 'passions' can be understood as similar to 'desire' and 'emotions' as used in present-day contexts. I argue that microaggressions are examples of either the appetite and passions, or distorted reason gone unchecked, either of which affect our behavior. Thus, microaggression theory is useful to the degree that it names objectively bad behavior. I also posit it can go too far in relation to subjective interpretations of behavior enabling unbalanced passions, appetite, or distorted reasoning. Hooker's theological anthropology, with its focus on having reason and the appetite be in

balanced, offers an opportunity for us to identify when we may be out of balance either emotionally or intellectually in our inner selves and become more willing to utilize inappropriate shame, judgement, and blame. I suggest love of neighbor and intellectual humility are key antidotes to these ‘out of balance’ moments. Furthermore, instead of shaming another implying ‘He is a misogynist’ we, can instead say ‘he expressed misogynistic behavior’ leaving room for growth and maturation. Such a simple but dramatic change in thinking enables us to focus on the truth that we are all image bearers of God, we all do wrongs, and we can learn to do better.

Chapter four looks at spiritual, theological, and behavioral psychology theories. First, I suggest the practices of love of neighbor and intellectual humility are expressions of the virtues love and humility, respectively. Second, I explain how Hooker understood them within the context of *Polity*. Third, I discuss what I mean by the term ‘spiritual practices’, arguing love of neighbor and intellectual humility can be understood as such. Fourthly, I posit these practices can be lived out in daily life through different forms of behavior that I suggest are similar to practices advocated by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which I explain.⁴² The forms of behavior I offer as ways to do ‘love of neighbor’ and ‘intellectual humility’ are Social Perspective Taking, Empathy, and Compassion. In the process of explaining each, I provide different ways they can be understood and then select the meaning most helpful for this context. I argue these practices help in modifying and addressing unknown biases, adjust internal attitudes, and create new habits of language, all

⁴² For more information on Social Perspective Taking please see the following: Bruno, “Empatico Skills,”; Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke, n.d. “Social Perspective Taking & the 5 Steps of Being With Others,” *Social Thinking* (blog), May 2022, <https://www.socialthinking.com/Articles?name=social-perspective-taking>; and *Psychology Compass* “3 Counter Intuitive Ways to Take on Another Person’s Point of View,” *Psychology Compass* (blog), accessed July 23, 2022, <https://psychologycompass.com/blog/point-of-view/>.

of which affect how we talk to, be with, and live amongst those who are ‘other’ and marginalized.

It is hoped that by providing concrete, actionable spiritual practices for developing love of neighbor and intellectual humility, we as a community of believers, both lay and ministerial, will see this as an opportunity to reduce and maybe even prevent them from time to time, because we all commit them. It is also hoped more people are enabled to truly know they are welcome in the Episcopal church. I conclude the dissertation by providing two fictional stories to demonstrate what it looks like to apply these spiritual practices, what it looks like to not apply these practices, and what it looks like when you do a microaggression, and when you don’t know if a microaggression has occurred.

CHAPTER 1:

In this chapter I explore microaggressions. They have the potential to be viewed as inappropriate learned behavior based upon the Pavlovian response within Behavioral Psychology. I further claim such learned behavior is understood as associative thinking which has the possibility of developing prejudicial, stereotypical, and biased behavior over time. I do this by explaining what the term ‘microaggressions’ means, highlighting the theory behind the term, highlighting key historical concepts aiding in the development of microaggressions, primary thinkers who contributed to the concept, and those who are critical of microaggression theory.

All of this is done in four steps. Firstly, I introduce the concept “microaggressions” by giving a systems level and a practical level definition. Second, I look at different ways microaggressions may develop in a person via associative learning and conditioned responses, such as the Pavlovian response within the field of Behavioral Psychology. Third, because microaggressions came out of Critical Race Theory, I give a brief overview of the history of western critical theories, specifically The Frankfurt School, French Theorists, and Critical Race Theory. Finally, I highlight challenges of attempting to resolve microaggressions via epistemological modalities by offering three epistemological perspectives.

The first viewpoint is an empirical critique by Dr. Scott O. Lilienfeld, suggesting the microaggression research program (MRP), developed by Dr. Derald Wing Sue, is conceptually and methodologically underdeveloped. The second viewpoint given by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt offer a sociological critique claiming MRP creates cognitive distortions in thinking. Thirdly, Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay apply a liberal

positivist viewpoint to sense experience thereby challenging arguments based upon anecdotal references. The different types of biases highlight the epistemological conundrum of how to know whose interpretation of the facts is correct. This question is significant and necessary to examine because it is part and parcel of the dialogue to help move damaged relationships forward, but it should not be the primary question of the dialogue. As stated in the Introduction, the theory of microaggressions is complex, challenging and often disputed, but I argue the important thing is to figure out how to help mitigate microaggressions and restore the relationship between the parties involved once a microaggression has occurred, however understood.

Microaggressions

To properly understand microaggressions I supply two levels of analysis, one is a general and brief perspective, a 100,000 - foot systems view. The rational is to demonstrate the spectrum of being and behavior within which microaggressions exist precisely because they are not as blatant and in-your-face as outright racism of lynch mobs, sexism via physical groping, or other explicit forms of ‘othering’. As stated in the introduction, microaggressions are understood as everyday derogations, slights, and invalidations that are often delivered to people of minority or marginalized background.¹ This is a micro-definition, a way to understand the term in relation to everyday happenings and interactions. I also offer a macro-definition, one presenting a systems level by Dr. Derald Wing Sue: “Microaggressions are reflections of a worldview of superiority-inferiority,

¹ P. Priscilla Lui and Lucia Quezada, “Microaggressions: What They Are, and How They Are Associated with Adjustment Outcomes,” *APA Journals Article Spotlight: Summaries of Recent APA Journal Articles* 145, no. 1 (April 10, 2019): 45-78, <https://www.apa.org/pubs/highlights/spotlight/issue-133>.

normality-abnormality, and desirable-undesirable was of thinking, feeling, and behaving.”² As this quote relates to the Christian faith, some might suggest this kind of thinking, specifically in relation to “desirable-undesirable ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving” is part-and-parcel to a religious way of life. To this I say there is a misunderstanding regarding what the author is trying to convey. In relation to desirable-undesirable ways of being, it is true the Trinity calls us to function and behave in certain ways and not function in other ways, but these declarations are based upon a particular type of understanding regarding superiority and inferiority, specifically the nature of God in contrast to all other entities. This is a deeply important contrast to highlight, as the nature of God is good, holy, just, upright, pure, etc. As such, the behavior we are called to demonstrate is to reflect these attributes and characteristics. In direct contrast, microaggressions are unholy, unjust, evil, not of pure intent, based in pride.

As this quote relates to the Episcopal Church it is helpful to keep in the foreground of our minds why microaggressions are so evil: they actively work to quietly destroy others and maintain systems of dysfunctional power. This goes against the teachings of Christ and the Episcopal belief of the dignity of all persons as discussed in the Baptism Covenant.

Not only are there different perspectives on the legitimacy of microaggression theory, but there are different ways to define the term. Highlighting these differences makes certain more than one understanding is given and to be sage in determining which is the most appropriate for the goal and context of this thesis. These descriptions are not universally accepted. Researching this topic brings forth numerous definitions. I chose the definitions because of the universality of language within them. Given our focus is on the

² Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 241.

universal notion of the soul it is imperative that a universal description of “microaggressions” is used. Other ways to define it were focused exclusively on race, gender, politics, or sexual orientation, based upon the larger context of the source.³ I will also note the definitions chosen were not selected to box any other group out. To the contrary, during the process of seeking clear and encompassing definitions, I sought to find the most respected and authoritative voices on the subject. I am certainly not trying to prevent these groups from being considered within the definition of microaggression. The fact that Sue does not include height, class, disability, etc does not implicitly mean he thinks they should not be included. By implication, ANY person or group can become the ‘marginalized who’.

Shifting from a 100,000 foot-view to a 5-foot view of the nature of microaggressions enables a clear delineation of their nuances and subtleties within human behavior regardless of who commits them. This is important because anyone and everyone has the capacity to commit a microaggression. Such a statement can be hard to take in, let alone accept, but by seeing the nature of the act we are inviting the question of ‘Is it I?’ just as the 12 disciples asked Christ at the Passover Meal when Jesus spoke of His betrayer. To be followers of Christ we need to continually ask ourselves ‘Is it I?’ regarding our motives and behavior. To help answer this question I offer a breakdown of microaggressions into a triptych for the purpose of self-examination both of motivation and of behavior.

³ For further reading please see Sanders and Yarber, *Microaggressions in Ministry*; Derald Wing Sue, “Microaggressions and ‘Evidence’: Empirical or Experiential Reality?” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12, no. 1 (2017): 170-172; and Derald Wing Sue, et al., “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice,” *American Psychologist* 62, no. 4 (2007): 271-286, <https://doi.org.10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271>.

It should be noted there are behavioral markers differentiating ignorance, arrogance, and abuse in a microaggressor.⁴ An unknown bias is an excellent example of someone demonstrating ignorance while committing a microaggression. If their action is pointed out and they are advised it comes across as a microaggression and they say ‘I did not mean to...’, or ‘It was not my intention to...’, these are expressions of ignorance in a microaggression. Arrogance is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as “The quality of being unpleasantly proud and behaving as if you are more important than, or know more than, other people.”⁵ In instances where someone seems able to only focus on themselves and unable to have anyone else receive credit, they are probably demonstrating arrogance while microaggressing, and may not change behavior even when confronted about it. I argue abuse encompasses ignorance and arrogance, among other behavior expressions⁶ but, takes the behavior to another level in that the microaggressor does not care and will not stop if confronted.

The first element of microaggressions are microassaults which are conscious prejudicial attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors communicated to marginalized groups or individuals of those groups. Microassaults are intended to attack the identity of the group or individual to make them feel unsafe and inferior in comparison to those committing the

⁴ Abusive or arrogant dynamics and relationships are outside of the scope of this dissertation. However, it is important to note there are instances when people are arrogant or abusive and do not care that they are exhibiting these behaviors. The recommendations of this dissertation may not apply to these persons.

⁵ *Cambridge Dictionary Online* s.v. “Arrogance,” accessed July 13, 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/arrogance>.

⁶ For information on domestic abusive behaviors and abusive personality indicators, please see “What is Domestic Abuse?” COVID-19 Response, United Nations (2021), <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/what-is-domestic-abuse>. See also “DV – Red Flags To Look For In An Abusive Personality,” University of North Carolina (UNC) Hospitals Beacon Program 2002, <https://www.med.unc.edu/beacon/wp-content/uploads/sites/598/2018/03/redflagabusivepersonality.pdf>.

microassault.⁷ Common phrases or words are calling women “bitch”, calling people who are Japanese “Japs”, or calling men “fags” who identify as LGBTQI+ members.⁸ Phrases used in the Episcopal church are “Spiritual eye candy” or “Lady Rector”.⁹

The next level we can utilize in assessing our behavior towards those with whom we worship, and minister are microinsults. These are prejudicial attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors, “conveying stereotypes, rudeness, and insensitivity” which demean along racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious lines. Again, this list is not meant to exclude other groups such as differently abled, economically disadvantaged, etc. Anyone demonstrating these character traits towards another is expressing a microaggression, and that is not ok. Unlike microassaults, microinsults are not normally done consciously. Microinsults are also subtle, frequently conveying “hidden insulting messaging” to the intended individual.¹⁰ “The contradictory communication starts with what appears to be a positive statement but is undermined with an insulting or negative metacommunication.”¹¹ Common

⁷ A more detailed definition is provided: “...conscious, deliberate, and either subtle, or explicit racial, gender, or sexual-orientation biased attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors that are communicated to marginalized groups through environmental cues, verbalizations, or behaviors. They are meant to attack the group identity of the person or to hurt/harm the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions. Displaying a Klan hood, Nazi swastika, noose, or Confederate flag; burning a cross; and hanging Playboy bunny pictures in a male manager’s office may all constitute environmental microassaults. The intent of these messages is to threaten, intimidate, and make the individuals or groups feel unwanted and unsafe because they are inferior, subhuman, and lesser beings that do not belong on the same level as others in this society.” Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 28.

⁸ Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 28.

⁹ “Task Force on Women.”

¹⁰ A more detailed definition is provided. “...characterized by interpersonal or environmental communications that convey stereotypes, rudeness, and insensitivity and that demean a person’s racial, gender, or sexual orientation, heritage, or identity. Microinsults represent subtle snubs, frequently outside the conscious awareness of the perpetrator, but they convey an oftentimes hidden insulting message to the recipient of these three groups.” Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 31.

¹¹ Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact*, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 9.

examples are “You are a credit to your race.”¹² Which possibly has the hidden message “People of color are generally not as intelligent as Whites.”¹³ Phrases used in the Episcopal church are: “You are too beautiful to be a priest.”¹⁴, which has potential hidden messages of “A person cannot be beautiful and educated.” Or “I can’t concentrate on the sermon because your beauty is so distracting.”

The third part of the triptych for assessing how our actions, words, and intentions express negative ideas is microinvalidations. These are understood as conscious or unconscious actions which “exclude, negate, or nullify” the feelings, thoughts, or lived reality of marginalized groups. These actions are always subtle and may potentially be “the most damaging” of the three forms of microaggressions precisely because they can seem to deny the lived reality of the marginalized groups.”¹⁵ Common phrases identified as potential microinvalidations are “When I look at you I don’t see color.” suggests being “unwilling to acknowledge or admit to seeing race, gender, or sexual orientation”; “As an employer I treat all men and women equally.” implies an inability to accept someone having a gender-bias and thus an inability to accept the lived reality of women; “Everyone has an equal chance in this society.” which supports the myth of meritocracy,¹⁶ an idea “that

¹² Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 35.

¹³ Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 35.

¹⁴ “Task Force on Women.”

¹⁵ A detailed definition is provided: “...characterized by communications or environmental cues that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of certain groups, such as people of color, women, and LGBTs. In many ways, microinvalidations may potentially represent the most damaging form of the three microaggressions because they directly and insidiously deny the racial, gender, or sexual-orientation reality of these groups.” Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 37.

¹⁶ While I do believe race, gender, and sexual orientation should not play a role in life success, I believe these elements have the potential to affect a person’s success. I also believe the idea of meritocracy

asserts that race, gender, and sexual orientation do not play a role in life successes”; “If you don’t like it here, go back to Mexico,” which implies that one is an alien in one’s own land.¹⁷ It is also possible for microaggressions to occur in progressive-dominant social circles such as within the LGBTQI+ community, and progressive churches of various faith traditions.¹⁸ These same statements apply in Episcopal circles. For example, persons of color in leadership positions within the Episcopal church have expressed being “invisible”, a “token black person”, and feeling “barred spiritually” from the church environment.¹⁹

These definitions are striking and eye-opening because they enable us to critically think about how behavior can develop within ourselves and be expressed to our family, friends, fellow church members, etc. It behooves us to know ways in which our thoughts create positive and negative assumptions that affect our comportment, because we are called to love God and with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and love our neighbors as ourselves. Identifying when thoughts help create negative assumptions about people is necessary and holy work because it alerts us to areas in our lives in which we need to humbly repent and work to counter via intellectual humility and love of neighbor. This leads to examining a few different ways thoughts develop.

is a good one and on this point I am not in alignment with Dr. Sue’s view of meritocracy reflecting a microinvalidation.

¹⁷ Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 37-38.

¹⁸ For further reading please see Duy Tran, Corrinne T. Sullivan & Lucy Nicholas “Lateral Violence and Microaggressions in the LGBTQ+ Community: A Scoping Review,” *Journal of Homosexuality* (2022), <https://doi.org.10.1080/00918369.2021.2020543>. See also Edward F. Lomash, Tabria D. Brown & M.Paz Galupo, ““A Whole Bunch of Love the Sinner Hate the Sin’: LGBTQ Microaggressions Experienced in Religious and Spiritual Context,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 66, no. 10 (2019), <https://doi.org.10.1080/00918369.2018.1542204>.

¹⁹ Luke Abdo, et al., “*Racial Justice Audit of Episcopal Leadership from 2018 to 2020: A Joint Venture of the Mission Institute and The Episcopal Church*” (January, 2021), www.episcopalchurch.org/racial-justice-audit.

Microaggressions don't just start in a person, they are a *developed* behavior, as in nurtured over time. And this is where associative thinking and conditioned responses from within the field of behavioral psychology come in. It shows *how* we learn and develop these behaviors. This type of thinking is constituted of several different parts. Due to space, a brief explanation will be provided with footnotes offering further reading. Within the field of associative learning the core principle is showing how different stimuli, usually unassociated, can create a new automatic response in a person over time, also known as a conditioned response. The responses can range from emotional to physical. A key insight from associative learning is that it claims we can *develop* ways of thinking that demonstrate stereotypes, biases, and prejudices. This means of course, that we can also *develop* ways of thinking that demonstrate love and humility.

To help narrow the focus of types of conditioned response, I look at the most well-known type of conditioned response: Pavlovian. Critically examining this method clarifies frequently unfamiliar workings of the brain that influence our patterns of behavior. Understanding such processes enables us to worship God better by seeing more of the mystery of being human and learning why dwelling on things that are good, holy, upright, and just are *so* crucial to being human. The Pavlovian response is where two different stimuli are combined to create a new response in the individual, and that new response creates a new association linked with the two stimuli. A concrete example is an "experience of discomfort associated with the sounds of a shrill dentist's drill. After repeated (or sometimes single) pairings, the sound of a drill by itself may elicit physical sensations of

pain and discomfort, because of the learned association...”²⁰ Thus with a conditioned response, two types of sensory input previously unassociated create a new response in a person. After consistent interaction with this combination a person will develop an automatic response even if they only experience one of these sensory input stimuli.

To place this in the context of the church: Imagine you are fifteen and attend a local Episcopal church. Your name is Tyler. You are an active part of the Children’s Church group and want to be cast as Joseph in the Christmas Nativity Play. You are tall, smart, kind, and a leader in the group. However, the leader of the Children’s Church group chooses to cast David, a young blond, blue eyed boy who is straight. You are a young man of color who came out to your parents two years ago. You and David are the only two boys in the group. David is painfully shy and hates speaking in public. He only attends church because his grandfather makes him come. He is not very involved and never remembers anyone’s name. This is not the first time you have been overlooked for public roles of importance at this church. In fact, this seems to be part of a larger pattern experienced over the last two years since you started coming to this church. For example, 3 months ago you asked the youth minister if you could lead up a youth canned food drive to prepare for the upcoming Harvest Festival. Without giving the matter much thought, the youth minister said “No.” and walked away, giving no reason. In another instance a year ago, you asked the youth minister if you could organize the youth to feed the houseless at the local shelter on Christmas Morning. Again, the youth minister said no, then said he was really busy planning that week’s youth talk and he needed to get back to work.

²⁰ Christine Maguth Nezu, Christopher R. Martell, and Arthur M. Nezu, *Speciality Competencies in Cognitive and Behavioral Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11.

Based upon the stimuli of asking to be in leadership roles and being told no with no reason for the rejection, you are learning you will not be viewed as a competent leader or even thought of as having leadership potential, regardless your abilities or how much initiative you demonstrate. After each request with its subsequent rejection, you are more and more frustrated. You begin to develop anger and confusion. You tell yourself if you don't get this part as Joseph, you give up and are not going to be as involved and not care.

The ubiquity of this type of learning within humans is demonstrated across multiple decades by multiple researchers.²¹ It is also important to note, just because an association is made does not necessarily imply the association is strong. By this I mean a person has the capacity to develop a reaction to stimuli. The degree to which the reaction is expressed can demonstrate the degree to which the person is affected by the associated stimuli. The factor of strength is dependent upon many variables.²² This Pavlovian response is also not always guaranteed to work, especially if at least one of the stimuli, such as the sound of the drill, was already strongly associated with something besides pain or fear.²³ Or, in the case of Tyler, it could be that having been a leader in other groups he found the situation silly and opted to speak with the church leadership to discuss the problem as he saw it, with the result that he was eventually cast as Joseph.

Even with the questions of strength and consistency, conditioned responses have been shown to be a powerful factor in the mechanistic process of how a person learns to link one thing with another to such a degree that the link eventually becomes automatic,

²¹ Nezu, Martell, and Nezu, *Speciality Competencies*, 14.

²² Nezu, Martell, and Nezu, *Speciality Competencies*, 11.

²³ Nezu, Martell, and Nezu, *Speciality Competencies*, 11.

and thus implicit. This associated linking has been confirmed to form the basis by which human biases, stereotypes, and prejudices are developed, as well as “various clinical syndromes such as anxiety reaction and addictions”.²⁴ And this leads to the subject of prejudice, stereotypes, and biases.

Regardless of whether the conditioned response is prejudicial, stereotypical, or biased, none are good, and all have subtle elements. Let us understand each type of bias before we look at how microaggressions impact interactions. I will highlight key elements to empower us as we prayerfully seek to learn if and when we reflect these in our behaviors. Unlike microaggressions, which are *micro*-‘otherings’, prejudices can be understood as *macro*-‘otherings’, more specifically “a negative attitude toward a group or towards members of the group.”²⁵ The next level down on this social psychology inverted triangle is stereotypes, which move past negative attitudes and become a bit more focused, understood as “traits that come to mind quickly when we think about the groups” and are used daily to help organize and process information about people and groups.²⁶ This is not necessarily a bad thing. Charles Stanger, Professor of Psychology at the University of Maryland, argues humans categorize for simplicity because we desire to place individuals representing different categories into different boxes. This enables us to “view individuals within categories as maximally similar.”²⁷ For example, it’s easy to assume all the biker gangs are made of conservatives who supports Trump. It’s also easy to think teenagers

²⁴ Nezu, Martell, and Nezu, *Speciality Competencies*, 11.

²⁵ Charles Stangor, “The Study of Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination Within Social Psychology: A Quick History of Theory and Research,” *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, ed. Todd D Nelson (New York: Psychology Press, 2009), 3-4.

²⁶ Stangor, “The Study of Stereotyping,” 3-4.

²⁷ Stangor, “The Study of Stereotyping,” 3-4.

looking at their phones for more than 1 hour are watching TikTok. One could believe without question a university professor will only vote for Democrats to defund police. However, these desires can distort perceptions.

Bias brings us to the third level of the inverted pyramid. Bias is broken down into known and unknown biases. For the purposes of this thesis, I focus on unknown or implicit biases because those are directly associated with microinsults and microinvalidations. Unknown biases are understood to be powerful when categorizing involves making ingroups, outgroups and having one's social identity be the basis by which this categorization is based. A good definition of an unknown bias is: "behavior that is automatically influenced by cues indicative of the social group to which others belong."²⁸ This view, put forward by Jan De Houwer, Senior Lecturer of Psychology at Ghent University, is rather new in the field of social psychology. It is selected as the way to understand the term because it removes a few significant psychological hurdles associated with other paradigms, such as the essence of a person being bad, verses their behavior, and makes testing and confirming the theory easier.²⁹

Regarding essence verses behavior of a person, as a Trinitarian and Nicene Creed confessing Christian, I believe we have a fallen nature which inclines us to commit wrongs. In contrast to that nature, we are given in an act of grace opportunity for relationship with the Triune God who helps restore us. This restoration should not be considered an

²⁸ Jan De Houwer, "Implicit Bias is Behavior: A Functional-Cognitive Perspective on Implicit Bias," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 14, no. 5 (2019), <https://doi.org.10.1177/1745691619855638>.

²⁹ For further reading on different paradigms of unknown or implicit bias see: Michael Brownstein, "Implicit Bias", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed, Edward N Zalta (Fall 2019 Edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/implicit-bias>, see also Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*.

endorsement of perfection theology, wherein we work to become perfect prior to reaching Heaven. Instead, I believe the restoration is what Hooker speaks to, progressive opportunities to practice following the will of God instead of our own will. At this relates back to essence and behavior, I believe we have a fallen nature that does not have to be acted upon. The question of the degree to which this nature impacts our behavior and choice brings forward a challenge about why we commit microaggressions. Our fallen nature inclines us toward varying degrees of bad behavior, but I will also show, using Hooker, that we are given a large capacity by God to not act upon this nature through reason, will, choice, and desire. Due to this natural complexity of reason, will, choice, and desire the potential to either commit or not commit microaggressions is always going to be a variable percentage: sometimes it is greater; sometimes less.

First, implicit or unknown bias has been viewed as a type of mental structure in the brain prompting individuals to act in unacceptable ways towards others.³⁰ De Houwer suggests associating implicit bias with *behavior* of a person instead of the *essence* as an easier way for people to accept they are capable of committing microaggressions. This perspective enables the individual to view the action as something they can change, instead of some unseen hidden structure prompting them to act in unconscious ways or predetermined, uncontrollable ways. By implication people are able to have a better view of themselves, suggesting they are not as bad as the more implicit bias theory suggests. Second, the question of testing and confirmation about how much we may microaggress is rendered easier as tests, such as the Implicit Association Test, evaluative priming tasks, and the affect-misattribution procedure, can be “used to predict the behaviors that are

³⁰ Houwer, “Implicit Bias is Behavior”; See also Brownstein, “Implicit Bias.”

assumed to be driven by an implicit bias.”³¹ A consequence of these results is we have a way of measuring our inclination towards microaggression behavior. If we combine the degree to which we are inclined with the view that we have free will to choose different behavior, we enable ourselves to adjust said behavior and help create different outcomes in relationships and society.

History of Critical Theory

With a general understanding of how microaggressions develop from a cognitive and behavioral psychology perspective it is time to look at the history of Critical Theory, out of which microaggression theory came.

As stated previously, microaggression theory is one of many theories expressing criticism of particular elements within or about society at large. To help place it within the larger framework of social critical theory, I provide a brief overview of Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory to aid understanding of the larger conversation in which microaggression theory participates. The placement should not be considered comprehensive or detailed.³² To help frame the analysis of Critical Theory I provide a definition of “critical theory” from the Amherst University website as it is the most succinct and eloquent definition I have found:

A critical theory has a distinctive aim: to unmask the ideology falsely justifying some form of social or economic oppression – to reveal it *as* ideology – and, in so doing, to contribute to the task of ending that oppression. And so, a critical theory aims to provide a kind of enlightenment about social and economic life that is itself

³¹ De Houwer, “Implicit Bias is Behavior,” 835.

³² This should not suggest an explicit or implicit endorsement of Marxism.

emancipatory: persons come to recognize the oppression they are suffering as oppression and are thereby partly freed from it.³³

This definition excellently articulates the primary ethos of what critical theories claim to do: identifying ideologies within society that are viewed as oppressive and repressive, for the purpose of helping societies rid themselves of unnecessary and harmful ways of functioning. It is helpful to note not everyone agrees with this perspective. For example, Dr. Jordan Peterson interviewed two thinkers who describe Critical Theory as being built upon the Frankfurt School, which takes the Marxist theory and changes the economic principles to apply instead to social theories. From there they suggest Critical Theory claims people are either the oppressed who are good or the oppressors who are bad. As a result, they claim, there is a bifurcation wherein people can be either good, or bad, with no nuance, and the role and goal of the oppressed is to silence the oppressor.³⁴

I struggle with this topic because I have been the oppressed and wished the oppressor silenced and stripped of power. I also acknowledge anger was motivating this way of thinking due to experiencing injustice. To live out my Christian faith the goal should not be further oppression of either party, but reconciliation and renewal, while also stopping oppression. Thus, I do align with Critical Theory to the degree that it highlights

³³ A description of Amherst University course “PHIL-366 Marx & Critical Theory,” accessed August 25, 2022, <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/courses/1314S/PHIL/PHIL-366-1314S>.

³⁴ Dr. Jordan B. Peterson is a psychologist and vocal critic of Postmodernism and Marxism, which he claims helped birth Postmodernism. In this video he is interviewing Dr. David Haskell and Dr. William McNally, critics of Critical Theory, among other topics. The section of note related to this thesis starts at the 18:27 mark. Jordan B. Peterson, “*Deconstruction: The Lindsay Shephard Affair*,” Filmed December 19, 2017, in Toronto, Canada, Jordan B. Peterson, 2:04:38, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWVmDSMI30s&t=1106s>. For more information please see: Jordan B. Peterson, “*Postmodern NeoMarxism: Diagnosis and Cure*,” Filmed July 9, 2017, in Toronto, Canada, Jordan B. Peterson 33:19, <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=s4c-jOdPTN8>.

oppressive ideas and doctrine for the purpose of helping prevent it. I do not align with it at the point where it enables a group to view another as only bad, thus stripping them of their humanity and denying the image of God, for the purpose of taking power and lording it over another group. There is no righteousness or justice in that act.

To the overall assessment of Critical Theory, I add another, theological layer: I suggest these theories all have an underlying principle of human relationships being more valuable than materials produced by people. As these theories relate to this thesis and microaggressions, there is historical lineage, Critical theory was a precursor to Critical Race Theory, which in turn was a precursor to Microaggression theory. Critical Theory was a systems level approach of analysis developed in the sociologically-focused Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, commonly known as the Frankfurt School.³⁵ Its founders³⁶ developed Critical Theory to obtain “a comprehensive theory of contemporary society” of Germany.³⁷ This was done by studying German psychology, philosophy, sociology, and history “in order to formulate a philosophical position that would guide their social research and enable them to generalize from the data that they collected.”³⁸ Through this process the members sought to understand contemporary society by “showing the underlying relations between persons”³⁹. This was in direct contrast to using an empirical

³⁵ Wheatland, *Frankfurt School*, xix.

³⁶ Founders included Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Franz Neumann, and Friederich Pollock. For an excellent recounting of the creation and history of the Frankfurt School see Wheatland, *Frankfurt School*.

³⁷ Wheatland, *Frankfurt School*, 5.

³⁸ Wheatland, *Frankfurt School*, 5.

³⁹ Stanley Aronowitz, “Introduction”, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays by Max Horkheimer*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell, et al. (New York: The Continuum Publishing, 1982), xiii.

methodology to understand culture and society which placed an emphasis on human value based upon what humans produced.⁴⁰

The question of human value and worth is fundamental to this thesis. Frequently humans can get side-tracked with their priorities or discombobulated in their understanding of what is truly important. Being reminded of true priorities is a good and necessary thing, which is something the Frankfurt School sought to do. To that end a key critique held by the Frankfurt School was empiricism supplanted the moral value of human actions, consciousness and relationships to production, speed, and efficiency, etc. as seen in the Industrial Revolution.⁴¹ The Frankfurt School espoused that within an empirical approach to life, the products of human action are deemed of value and worth based upon production, speed, and efficiency.⁴² As a consequence, according to Max Horkheimer, the influential second director of the original Frankfurt School thinkers,⁴³ human relationships were now no longer the reason for things to occur. Instead, culture became the reason humans created things.⁴⁴ In other words, the culture humans created becomes the thing that created an objective value by which humans and their worth were judged. In response Critical Theory reasserts the existence, need, and value of moral notions of human behavior and consciousness. This re-replaces humans as the subjects of culture instead of the objects of

⁴⁰ Aronowitz, *Critical Theory*, xi – xxi.

⁴¹ Aronowitz, *Critical Theory*, xi – xxi.

⁴² Aronowitz, *Critical Theory*, xi – xxi.

⁴³ Wheatland, *Frankfurt School*, 11.

⁴⁴ Aronowitz, *Critical Theory*, xi – xxi.

culture, and by consequence, frees them from inaccurate constructs of existence.⁴⁵ This was done by analyzing and understanding culture in a given time and place.

When subjective standards are hoisted up as the universal method by which a person is to be assessed, problems are created. The Frankfurt School believed they could show culture and systems created by the populace were used to determine value and worth of the populace. That's like a potter creating a pot and then having that pot determine the worth and value of the potter. The Frankfurt School desired to illuminate the artificiality of these power structures by which the populace allowed themselves to be governed. The hope was the populace would understand why relationships between people was a primary reason for existence. Critical Theory sought "human 'emancipation from slavery,' acts as a 'liberating...influence', and works 'to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of' human beings."⁴⁶ I do admit that swapping one system of thinking for another does not resolve the 'desirable-undesirable ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving' elements highlighted in microaggression theory. In fact, one can easily transfer that kind of thinking from one system to another and not remove the desirable-undesirable pyramid. In the following chapters I show that love of neighbor and intellectual humility helps resolve this tetter-totter like issue.

In contrast to The Frankfurt School, which used an interdisciplinary approach to criticize culture, the French Theorists, such as Jacques Derrida, and Paul-Michel Foucault

⁴⁵ Aronowitz, *Critical Theory*, xi – xxi; James Bohman, "Critical Theory," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Spring 2021 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/>.

⁴⁶ Bohman, s.v. "Critical Theory", <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/>.

criticized language.⁴⁷ Their collective approach is known as “post-structuralism”.⁴⁸ Through this method they reevaluated language via theories of knowledge, phenomenology, and hermeneutics.⁴⁹ This approach was based upon Heidegger’s critique in *Truth and Time* of traditional philosophical Realism, such as that taught by Plato. He criticized and questioned a pivotal concept in Plato, namely traditional categories of truth (i.e. Being) “that could be determined through” universal and stable entities. He argued against “Being as a universal and stable entity that guarantees that general terms can function predicatively in a true subject-predicate sentence.”⁵⁰ In other words, he did not believe a general term could hold a stand-alone timeless concept pointing to an objective truth. More deeply, he believed truth could only be obtained via a posteriori modalities. Experiences, not concepts or theories, were vaulted into an august light, according to Heidegger. Derrida, inspired by Heidegger’s critique, took the process one step forward, arguing philosophical texts already hold this “inner-conceptual contradiction”.⁵¹ To that end, he believed “inner-conceptual contradictions invariably have to be suppressed by texts

⁴⁷ For a helpful introduction to Jacques Derrida’s writings see *Positions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). For greater specificity please see such texts as: *The Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York: Routledge Press, 2006). For a general overview of Paul-Michel Foucault’s writing see *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). For more specialized reading there are several options, two are offered here: *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

⁴⁸ Rev. Dominik Finkelde, SJ, s.v. “Post-Structuralism,” *The New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2012 – 2013: Ethics & Philosophy, Volume 3*, eds. Robert L. Fastiggi, Joseph W. Koterski, and Trevor Lipscombe (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning in association with the Catholic University of America, 2013), 1245.

⁴⁹ Finkelde, “Post-Structuralism,” 1245.

⁵⁰ Finkelde, “Post-Structuralism,” 1245.

⁵¹ Finkelde, “Post-Structuralism,” 1246.

as their authors work to establish various truth claims.”⁵² To help identify these preexisting suppressions he used a hermeneutic of ‘Deconstruction’, “his name for the art of reading by which one finds the cracks and fractures in one’s thinking and self-understanding.”⁵³ His aim was to demonstrate all the games that “can be found in human language.”⁵⁴ One purpose of this was to show Heidegger’s “call for a philosophical destruction of traditional categories” was already occurring in philosophical texts.⁵⁵ This has significant implications for interpreting any text and believing an individual grasps the basic point the author is conveying. Challenges regarding subjective knowledge, fundamentally argued for by Heidegger and Derrida, is a key epistemological issue within microaggression theory, and will be highlighted in greater detail later.

Critical Race Theory continues the critical analysis of culture focusing on the legal system in relation to race in America. It is necessary to look briefly at this theory as it helped create the environment in which the concept of microaggressions was to come forth. It developed in the 1970’s “with the early work of Derrick Bell (an African American) and Alan Freeman (a white).”⁵⁶ They noticed and were “deeply distressed” by the ever-slowing pace of racial reform gains in America after the civil rights era of the 1960s, and some of the gains were being rolled back.⁵⁷ Methods previously used in the legal system,

⁵² Finkelde, “Post-Structuralism,” 1246.

⁵³ Finkelde, “Post-Structuralism,” 1246.

⁵⁴ Finkelde, “Post-Structuralism,” 1246.

⁵⁵ Finkelde, “Post-Structuralism,” 1246.

⁵⁶ Richard Delgado, “Introduction,” *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple: University Press, 1995), xiii.

⁵⁷ Delgado, *Critical Race Theory*, xiii.

such as amicus briefs and coining new litigation strategies, had diminishing returns on investment. In response Critical Race Theory was developed with the following central themes: “the call for context, critique of liberalism,⁵⁸ insistence that racism is ordinary not exceptional, and the notion that traditional civil rights law has been more valuable to whites than to blacks...”⁵⁹ In response to CRT’s methods, such as seeking to give context to how situations developed as a method to highlight truths not previously identified by traditional analysis, there are some who challenge this approach. They suggest the use of story, or situational context and parable can be used to “mislead as easily as ordinary analysis can.”⁶⁰ Others claim CRT is too critical, leaving too little room for hope.⁶¹

A significant concept to this thesis is behavior exists on a moral spectrum. As this relates to the dignity of the person and the image of God, it is good for us to remember that minor slights enacted consistently over periods of time can be just as damaging as deeply wounding one-time-events. To that end, the term ‘racial microaggressions’ helps give evidence to that argument. At the same time that CRT was being developed, and in yet another expression of critically analyzing culture the term “racial microaggressions” was coined by Dr. Chester Pierce. This put a name to more subtle forms of racism experienced by African Americans.⁶² These forms are subtle, harder to identify, and represent particular types of slights based specifically on discrimination. Since the 1970s psychologists have

⁵⁸ A primary critique of liberalism is “Are you being selfish and self-serving?”.

⁵⁹ Delgado, *Critical Race Theory*, xv.

⁶⁰ Delgado, *Critical Race Theory*, xv.

⁶¹ Delgado, *Critical Race Theory*, xv.

⁶² For further reading on different descriptions please see: Sue, et al., “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life,” 271-286.

“significantly amplified the concept”⁶³ and now use the term “microaggressions”, such as Dr. Derald Wing Sue⁶⁴ who, in 2007 created a taxonomy to further delineate aspects of “microaggressions”.⁶⁵ As listed previously the triptych consists of “microassaults”, “microinvalidations”, and “microinsults”. This delineation addresses slights, insults, and marginalizations affecting people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, women, differently abled, immigrants, etc.⁶⁶ These groups were focused on because they historically experience prejudices, stereotyping, biases, and microaggressions.

Epistemological Criticisms

Having explored the contours of ‘microaggressions’, explained potential ways they can develop within a person via the Pavlovian response, and offered a brief historical overview of various critical theories to show how the term came to be, I now offer a few epistemological criticisms for the purpose of showing challenges in resolving microaggressions via exclusively philosophical modalities.

The primary voice in support of microaggressions is Dr. Derald Wing Sue. He is internationally recognized for his breakthrough research on “racial, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions” in helping society understand how “everyday slights insults, and invalidations towards marginalized groups create psychological harm to their mental and physical health and create disparities for them in education, employment, and

⁶³ Sue, “Microaggressions and ‘Evidence,’” 170-172.

⁶⁴ Sue, *Microaggressions and Marginality*, xiii.

⁶⁵ Sue, “Microaggressions and ‘Evidence,’” 170-172.

⁶⁶ Lui and Quezada, “Microaggressions: What They Are,” 45-78.

healthcare.” In fact, the result of a national survey identified him as “the most influential multicultural scholar in the United States”. While Dr. Sue’s contribution to the field of microaggressions does not engage morality in understanding the concept, there is a necessity in understanding how he has contributed to the larger dialogue due to the influence and significant his voice proves to be. I argue he uses behavioral psychology to help frame his approach.

In 2007 Dr. Sue published “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice”. In this article Sue argues there are systemic and subtle types of racism known as microaggressions, about which white therapists need to become aware themselves in order to better assist their clients of color. To give concrete evidence of this, Sue referenced the findings of the Clinton Administration’s Race Advisory Board.⁶⁷ This group found four systems level problems in America suggesting racism is so pervasive and endemic as to be an invisible force helping guide and create public policies and practices benefitting the dominant group.

Within the framework of behavioral psychology, I suggest he also uses the unknown bias theory to help amplify and clarify modalities in identifying microaggressions. For the purposes of his article, Sue focused on the fourth finding: “Most White Americans are unaware of the advantages they enjoy in this society and of how their attitudes and actions unintentionally discriminate against persons of color.”⁶⁸ He posits that precisely because these individuals are from majority populations and are “not immune

⁶⁷ For further reading on this please see “One America in the 21st Century: Forging a New Future.” The President’s Initiative on Race, The Advisory Boards report to the President (September 1998), <https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/media/pdf/PIR.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Sue, et al., “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life,” 271.

from inheriting the racial biases of their forebears, they may become victims of a cultural conditioning process that imbues within them biases and prejudices that discriminate against clients of color.”⁶⁹ As such, Sue believes there is a basis for holding a concern about white therapists who unknowingly commit microaggressions towards those whom they are trying to assist. In this context unknown bias is define as unconscious prejudices and stereotypes.⁷⁰

Some may balk at the notion that they hold an unknown or implicit bias, claiming the term and logic are a bi-product of victimhood culture run amuck, liberal, progressive, or the political-left taking over yet another area of people’s lives.⁷¹ For those who share this perspective, I argue there is “a mountain of evidence” proving implicit bias is real and that we all have varying degrees of it.⁷² I admit the tests used to evaluate implicit bias were created to measure *group* behavior, not *individual* behavior,⁷³ but the measuring of bias in groups, such as counties, states, or cities is very effective.⁷⁴ What this means is, if an

⁶⁹ Sue, et al., “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life,” 271.

⁷⁰ Frequently bias can be associated with a specific type of prejudice, such as racism, sexism, genderism, or based upon a faith group. Regarding racial bias Sue wrote “It is clear from our analysis that Whites are unwitting victims in a social conditioning process that imbues within them biased racial attitudes; many biases exist outside the level of awareness because they are deeply embedded in the psyche and made invisible. As a society, we have come a long way in recognizing our racist heritage and have actively sought to deal with the overt and obvious manifestations of racism. While we have success in reducing overt and explicit forms of bias and discrimination, we have been less successful in eradicating cover or implicit forms.” Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 121.

⁷¹ For further reading on victimhood culture please see Bradley Campbell, Jason Manning, *The Rise of Victimhood Culture: Microaggressions, Safe Spaces, and the New Culture Wars* (Cham, Switzerland: Pelgrave MacMillan, 2018).

⁷² Keith Payne, Laura Niemi, and John M. Doris, “How to Think About ‘Implicit Bias’: Amid a Controversy, It’s Important to Remember That Implicit Bias is Real – And It Matters,” *Scientific America* (March 27, 2018), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-to-think-about-implicit-bias/>.

⁷³ Payne and Niema and Doris, “How to Think.”

⁷⁴ Payne and Niema and Doris, “How to Think.”

individual takes the most respected implicit bias test, known as the Implicit Association Test (IAT) multiple times across multiple days, their individual scores can change.⁷⁵ This does not mean the test itself is flawed. It only means the degree to which a person expresses bias changes based upon variables – even if they don’t consciously think they are biased. And this is important to note. It gives one type of evidence that implicit bias does exist and helps demonstrate that the degree to which we express it does modify, based upon context. For Sue, the issue is not fundamental attribution bias on his part, per say, when identifying microaggressions. The issue is the need, in his perspective, for white therapists to *acknowledge* larger social truths within America, identify how these truths might create biases which might have filtered down into their everyday behaviors, and actively work at correcting them.

Sue’s method also utilizes an epistemological approach to understanding microaggressions. Briefly looking at this element is helpful to gaining greater insight into Sue’s analytics, but I remind the readers the epistemological route is not the primary focus, and as such I do not seek to bring epistemological finitude. My sole goal is to illuminate a line of dialogue about microaggressions to offer the reader a well-rounded understanding of the topic.

In addition to writing about implicit bias within one’s epistemological structure, Sue addressed the degree to which a microaggression may or may not be significant for the receiver. He argued “this contemporary form of racism is many times more problematic, damaging, and injurious to persons of color than overt racist acts”.⁷⁶ He suggested it was

⁷⁵ Payne and Niema and Doris, “How to Think.”

⁷⁶ Sue, et al., “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life,” 279.

important to study the effects of microaggressions because “without documentation and analysis to better understand microaggressions, the threats that they pose and the assaults that they justify can be easily ignored or downplayed.”⁷⁷ He suggests that if a microaggression occurs the receiver has a series of questions through which they process. Sue believes “First, the person must determine whether a microaggression has occurred. In that respect, people of color rely heavily on experiential reality that is contextual in nature and involves life experiences from a variety of situations.”⁷⁸

One issue to bring out in this analysis is the issue of intention. An example is found the terms ‘assault’ and ‘aggression’ applied to known, or intentional behavior verses unknown or unintentional behavior. We can get clarity about this distinction from the courts. To determine if someone will be tried for murder, intent must be demonstrated. In contrast, intent does not have to be proved to try someone for manslaughter. Similarly, intention needs to be determined to know if someone intentionally verbally assaults you. In other words, if there is intention in microaggression behavior, we are justified in saying such conduct is an expression of evil and swift appropriate action needs to be taken, depending on the context. With manslaughter, if there was no intention the court modifies how it assesses the behavior of the one who committed the crime. Similarly, if there is no known intention in what seemed like microaggression behavior we can say the behavior itself may not be good, but we can take steps to inform the person as to why what they did was not well received well and encourage them to no longer committee such behavior. The response needs to be appropriate to the degree of intention. Thus, to use ‘assault’ or

⁷⁷ Sue, et al., “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life,” 279.

⁷⁸ Sue, et al., “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life,” 279.

‘aggression’ if someone accidentally brushes against you, can seem an inappropriate use of language if it is a one-time occurrence. However, if it is consistent, then a pattern can potentially be identified and the term more appropriate.

For the purposes of crafting a thoughtful dialectic, I bring in the voice of Dr. Lilienfeld, former professor of psychology at Emory University, as a helpful foil to Dr. Sue. Lilienfeld addressed Sue’s article directly in “Microaggressions: Strong Claims, Inadequate Evidence” in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. His thesis, based upon psychological science, is microaggression research theory (MRT) does not yet offer robust enough evidence based upon empirical testing to be deemed a positive method for diminishing or preventing discriminatory slights. Lilienfeld does not completely object to MRT but desires a pause on utilizing it until more robust analysis and objective data can confirm it benefits society.

A key epistemological question that needs to at least be asked is ‘Does a person’s perception of reality equate to what is real and true?’. This is asked by Lilienfeld about microaggression theory and is necessary to ask because, per Dr. Sue, an individual is going to determine if a microaggression occurred based upon *their* interpretation of the situation. Lilienfeld’s belief that microaggression theory is “scientifically problematic, largely because it has not consistently exposed its core presuppositions to adequate scrutiny”⁷⁹ is a valid one. How does a person know if their interpretation is real and true.⁸⁰ By ‘scientifically problematic’ he means empirically problematic. Lilienfeld suggests the core

⁷⁹ Scott O. Lilienfeld, “Through a Glass, Darkly: Microaggressions and Psychological Science,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12, no. 1 (January 11, 2017): 178, <https://doi.org.10.1177/1745691616669098journals.sagepub.com/home/pps>.

⁸⁰ Lilienfeld, “Through a Glass, Darkly,” 178.

assumption is “naïve realism”⁸¹ addressing an epistemological concern, which he describes as “the belief that people’s perception of the world reflect a direct, veridical representation of reality that is uncontaminated by their preconceptions. If the field of psychology has taught us anything over the past several decades, it is that naïve realism is erroneous.”⁸² By this he means the field of psychology has successfully argued no one person has an unbiased, imperfect, or unlimited grasp of reality. I posit Lilienfeld understands the core assumption driving microaggression research is that people *can* believe what they perceive to be a valid and accurate assessment of reality even when they might be wrong and without all the facts, thus they are going to exacerbate a situation or create a problem where there might not be a problem.

Lilienfeld’s questioning of Sue’s methodology is good in that it helps bring forth areas of research that need more time and attention given to them. For example, Lilienfeld’s critique builds upon the issue of correct interpretation through the phrase “subjective appraisal”⁸³ highlighting the cognitive concern. By this he questions how we can be certain the person experiencing the microaggression is not influenced by a dominant personality trait such as a predetermination to depression, projecting, being overly sensitive, or perhaps lying. Through a desire for empirical objectivity to properly quantify and qualify a microaggression, Lilienfeld is calling for a clearer mechanism than the receiver’s interpretation to know that a microaggression is happening. Another point he calls out is

⁸¹ The American Psychological Association definition of “naïve realism” as follows: “In social psychology, the tendency to assume that one’s perspective of events is a natural, unbiased reflection of objective reality and to infer bias on the part of anyone who disagrees with one’s views.” *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, s.v. “Naïve Realism,” 2022, <https://dictionary.apa.org/naive-realism>.

⁸² Lilienfeld, “Through a Glass, Darkly,” 179.

⁸³ Lilienfeld, “Through a Glass, Darkly,” 178.

one of “ambiguous situations” and deals with social and racial implications.⁸⁴ I believe he means there is unknown intent in situations which microaggressions are said to have occurred. He seems to believe microaggression theory ascribes negative intent in these situations.⁸⁵ Lilienfeld questions the appropriateness of attributing a negative nature to them. He writes of concern about increased social and racial tensions due to the potential clash of realities existing within the ambiguity of the situations and the ascription of a negative intent within microaggressions.⁸⁶ *It appears* he proposes the term “prejudice reduction efforts”⁸⁷ as a possible way to help resolve some of the concerns.

Addressing the need for additional research, Dr. P. Pricilla Lui, associate professor of Psychology at Southern Methodist University, and Lucia Quezada, a doctoral candidate of psychology at the University of Georgia, confirm the taxonomy of microaggressions was only provided in 2007.⁸⁸ Thus, the very lack of data about this topic is evidence that more research needs to be done to offer more texture and depth. In other words, the lack of evidence is not justification enough to dismiss the notion of microaggressions, but it might require giving caveats or greater nuance to the theory.

While the idea of utilizing empirical process would seem to help in the clarification of objectivity of interpretation, I suggest there is a need to question if the empirical method is the best method to use, which is a question Dr. Sue asks when responding directly to Dr. Lilienfeld in the article “Microaggressions and ‘Evidence’: Empirical or Experiential

⁸⁴ Lilienfeld, “Through a Glass, Darkly,” 178.

⁸⁵ Lilienfeld, “Through a Glass, Darkly,” 178.

⁸⁶ Lilienfeld, “Through a Glass, Darkly,” 178.

⁸⁷ Lilienfeld, “Through a Glass, Darkly,” 178.

⁸⁸ Lui and Quezada, “Microaggressions: What They Are,” 45-78.

Reality?”.⁸⁹ This article claims there are methodological limits of psychological science in assessing and dissecting “microaggressions” as a legitimate psychological phenomenon. An aspect to Sue’s argument in response to Lilienfeld relates to psychological science. This field is dependent upon empirical evidence, by which is meant results based upon clinical lab tests and trials.⁹⁰ Sue argues empiricism represents the dominant Western culture’s approach to understanding reality. He claims this requires shifting the data from lived experience with all the variables life provides and moving the data to a sterile lab environment. For Sue, such a shift allows the individual pieces of errata to be examined independently and questioned thereby weakening the larger argument. A challenge presented by this macro approach is microaggressions are most easily identifiable within the larger context. Context implies multiple variables such as time and human systems. Requiring multiple variables to identify a thing means a laboratory environment is not as conducive to identifying the variables and the truth of those variables. I agree with Sue’s argument in that the underlying Positivist epistemology of empiricism cannot provide answers to all questions. However, I break with Sue in relation to dismissing the empirical approach completely in relation to microaggression research because there are instances when a clinical approach is more appropriate. I don’t think it’s an either/or equation. I believe both approaches are necessary, depending upon the issue being investigated. I also note Sue’s argument does not appear to address Lilienfeld’s other criticism in that he does not address the epistemological challenges associated with ‘lived experience’, such as an individual having their own bias or incorrectly misreading social cues, etc.

⁸⁹ Sue, “Microaggressions and ‘Evidence’,” 170-172.

⁹⁰ Sue, “Microaggressions and ‘Evidence’,” 170-172.

While not explicitly brought out in Sue's argument, I also suggest another challenge to the empirical method is implied within tacit communication. Using the example of my experience provided in the Introduction, the individual pieces of data that could be examined in an empirical manner as follows: white woman; white man; conversation; church building; evening; eating; questions; answers; stopped conversation; various facial expressions, etc.⁹¹ This does not tell us a great deal. As stated earlier much of the communication is done tacitly, by which empiricism is greatly challenged precisely because the data is implied or understood without being stated or explicitly indicated.⁹² Due to tacit communication, it is profoundly challenging to provide *all* the individual pieces of data to explain why a conversation was awkward. Frequently, to include *all* the data a person needs to reference previous situations, with the result being a literal knitting together of multiple contexts that lead up to one conversation. In other words, using the dominant western culture's empiricist approach and teasing apart the individual elements leaves the individual with random bits of information that have no meaning by themselves. But again, to help keep from tetter-tottering from one position to the other, while still unintentionally maintaining a desirable-undesirable dynamic, I highlight the continual issue of epistemological interpretation of the data, which can be skewed by biases, assumptions, ideology, etc.

Greg Lukianoff, President of the Foundation for Human Rights and Expression, and Johnathan Haidt, professor of Ethical Leadership at New York University, offer a

⁹¹ This list is not exhaustive, one could also include lived experiences on the part of both individuals, interpretive assumptions, etc.

⁹² For further reading on tacit knowledge see, Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1962).

sociological criticism of Sue's concept of microaggression in their book *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting up a Generation for Failure*. The premise of this book is collegiate students born around 1995 were raised with well-intended theories to help protect and keep children safe, but these theories (called 'Great Untruths' by the authors), resulted in the belief that children are too fragile to be challenged, pushed, or forced to deal with opinions different than their own. Consequently, the authors argue, this younger generation is not developing inner strengths and resiliencies necessary for life and do not have inner resources to manage themselves or their emotions. The three 'Great Untruths' are: what doesn't kill you makes you weaker; always trust your feelings; life is a battle between good people and evil people. To address these untruths, Lukianoff and Haidt offer three counter-opinions, acknowledging their approach is pragmatic, not moralistic: "Whatever your identity, background, or political ideology, you will be happier, healthier, stronger, and more likely to succeed in pursuing your own goals if you..." seek out challenges, free yourself from cognitive distortions, and take a generous view of other people and look for nuance.⁹³ They acknowledge problems and challenges facing young people are not minor or 'all in their heads'. What they suggest is "what people choose to *do* in their heads will determine how those real problems affect them."⁹⁴ In other words, microaggressions can occur, but the single most important thing is how a person who experiences a microaggression deals with it internally.

Though the authors speak of three untruths, I focus on cognitive distortions because of the focus on epistemological modalities in this section of the thesis. As this relates to

⁹³ Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting up a Generation for Failure* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), 15.

⁹⁴ Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 14.

microaggressions the authors express concern about *how* microaggression theory and the ways to identify it can *itself* create ‘cognitive distortions’ within a person. Cognitive distortions come in a variety of forms such as “‘catastrophizing’ (If I fail this quiz, I’ll fail the class and be kicked out of school, and then I’ll never get a job); and ‘negative filtering’ (only paying attention to negative feedback instead of noticing praise as well.)”.⁹⁵ Lukianoff and Haidt criticized Dr. Sue’s 2007 article.⁹⁶ They argued Sue’s definition of microaggression actively encourages individuals to interpret actions “entirely in terms of the *listener’s* interpretation”, including potential unintentional slights. In so doing, these authors believe Sue encouraged his therapy participants to “engage in emotional reasoning – to start with their feelings and then justify those feelings by drawing the conclusion that someone had committed an act of aggression against them.”⁹⁷ They were careful to state these feelings can be based upon correct inferences and it is good to investigate, but they balanced out their argument by saying “it is not a good idea to start by assuming the worst about people and reading their actions as uncharitably as possible.”⁹⁸

I argue one practical implication of these philosophical differences is when these instances occur and what each person has the option to do. What these authors would call an uncharitable interpretation, psychologist and Distinguished Professor of Psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, Kevin L. Nadal calls “The clash of realities”. By this he means “the conflict

⁹⁵ Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 8.

⁹⁶ Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 40.

⁹⁷ Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 40.

⁹⁸ Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 41.

that arises when people interpret situations differently. Although perpetrators of microaggressions presume that their behaviors are innocuous or well-intended, targets of microaggressions perceive perpetrators' behaviors as biased or malicious.”⁹⁹ It is in these moments when Lukianoff and Haidt are calling on the receiver to use cognitive modifying practices to help themselves not overreact to a potentially innocent and unintentional slight and to act from a place of charity and presume the best in the other person's motives. In calling for cognitive modifying practices based in charity and positive presumption they could be understood as arguing for loving your neighbor and intellectual humility. These are two very good and healthy options to pursue and can be actively utilized in addressing microaggressions. In contrast to that, in a perfect “clash of realities” Dr. Sue and Dr. Nadal use microaggression theory to argue that even if someone did not consciously know their comment was offensive, they were still participating in behavior that points to a larger systemic issue needing to be addressed and stopped. These opposing perspectives, held by highly educated individuals in their respective fields is precisely why I argue an epistemological approach to resolving microaggressions will not prevent them or heal broken relationships once they occur. I suggest the parties can resolve a deeper and far more important issue, namely loving each other, by practicing love of neighbor and intellectual humility. I will speak to this in greater detail in the following chapters.

A third type of critical theory is offered within *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity – and Why This Harms Everybody* by Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay. Pluckrose is a British author and

⁹⁹ Kevin L. Nadal, *Microaggressions and Traumatic Stress: Theory, Research, and Clinical Treatment* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2018), 42.

cultural writer focusing on grievance studies, and Lindsay is an American author and cultural critic most known for this book. Their purpose for writing the text is to “present a philosophically liberal critique of Social Justice scholarship and activism and argue that this scholarship-activism does not further social justice and equality aims.”¹⁰⁰ The underlying premise is to send a warning that modernity¹⁰¹ and philosophical liberalism¹⁰² are under threat by the far-right and far-left.¹⁰³ They argue both sides are attempting to take ownership of these terms.¹⁰⁴ Due to this ideological tug of war, they suggest philosophical liberalism and modernity¹⁰⁵ “are at great risk on the level of the ideas that sustain them”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity – and Why This Harms Everybody* (Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020), 20.

¹⁰¹ The authors do not provide an explicit definition of “modernity” but do offer various descriptions throughout. The clearest, and closest to a definition is “seeing objective truth as something that exists and that can be provisionally known (or approximated) through processes such as experimentation, falsification, and defeasibility – as Enlightenment, modernist, and scientific thought would have it...” They also do not clearly distinguish “modernity” from “Modernity” or “Modernism”, creating a challenge in correct and precise analysis and interpretation of their work as a whole. Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 32.

¹⁰² In this context philosophical liberalism is understood as “political democracy, limitations on the powers of government, the development of universal human rights, legal equality for all adult citizens, freedom of expression, respect for the value of viewpoint diversity and honest debate, respect for evidence and reason, the separation of church and state, and freedom of religion.” And “This philosophical liberalism is opposed to authoritarian movements of all types, be they left-wing or right-wing, secular or theocratic. Liberalism is thus best thought of as a shared common ground, providing a framework for conflict resolution and one within which people with a variety of views on political, economic, and social questions can rationally debate the options for public policy.” Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 11, 12.

¹⁰³ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 11, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 11, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Pluckrose and Lindsay do not offer an explicit description of “social justice.” Instead, they place the term next to opposing or antithetical terms as a way to describe their meaning: “These liberal values developed as ideals and it has taken centuries of struggle against theocracy, slavery, patriarchy, colonialism, fascism, and many other forms of discrimination to honor them as much as we do, still imperfectly, today. But the struggle for social justice has always been strongest when it has cast itself as the defender of liberal values universally, insisting that they be applied to all individuals, not just to wealthy white males.” Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 11.

¹⁰⁶ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 12.

based upon “complicated....overwhelming pressures” from the far-right and far-left.¹⁰⁷ To help the reader understand their argument they spend the rest of the text discussing problems, as they see them, resulting from the far-left tug.¹⁰⁸

For example, one challenge they seem to suggest is that philosophical liberalism was justified by modernity to understand the world, and the problems from the left came when philosophical liberalism was linked with Postmodernism. As I understand them, the authors appear to argue the resulting shift has a net negative influence on the larger culture: “The progressive left has aligned itself not with Modernity but with postmodernism, which rejects objective truth as a fantasy dreamed up by naïve and/or arrogantly bigoted Enlightenment thinkers who underestimated the collateral consequences of Modernity’s progress.”¹⁰⁹ Pluckrose and Lindsay offer several points in their critique of Postmodernism. I focus on “the postmodern political principle” and “the power of language” as they are key to my dissertation.¹¹⁰

In the process of their critique, they mention problems on the left and right, but do not speak further to problems on the right. Their rationale for such brief engagement is because they are “experts in the nature of the problem on the left”, not the right. In leaving

¹⁰⁷ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ In this context liberalism is understood as “political democracy, limitations on the powers of government, the development of universal human rights, legal equality for all adult citizens, freedom of expression, respect for the value of viewpoint diversity and honest debate, respect for evidence and reason, the separation of church and state, and freedom of religion.” Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 12, 13.

¹¹⁰ The authors break their critique into two principles and four themes: “The postmodern knowledge principle: Radical skepticism about whether objective knowledge or truth is obtainable and a commitment to cultural constructivism; The postmodern political principle: A belief that society is formed of systems of power and hierarchies, which decide what can be known and know; The four major themes of postmodernism are: the blurring of boundaries; the power of language; cultural relativism; the loss of the individual and the universal.” Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 31.

out further reading of any sort, it could leave the less careful reader the impression that the right is off the hook in the eyes of the authors – which is not their point at all. In point of fact, towards the end of the Introduction they explicitly state the book “is born of our commitment to gender, racial and LGBT equality and our concern that the validity and importance of these are currently being alarmingly undermined by Social Justice approaches.”¹¹¹ To me it’s like a weird love letter to the far left saying ‘Um, we endorse these concepts, but not in the way you are trying to support them. Please stop. Thank you.’ To keep the argument balanced, another option would be for this text to be volume 1 of 2, with the second volume examining the problem on the right. Perhaps this might be considered in the future, but they do not speak to this option.

Regardless of this concern, I find their argument compelling. They suggest Social Justice Theories (SJTs going forward) argue knowledge is manipulated to feed and perpetuate systems of power. By this they mean the following: SJTs came out of postmodern notions questioning the verifiability and existence of absolute truth (as implied by the French Theorist Derrida via Deconstructionism), *AND* the individual meanings of words used to express knowledge about these truths do not hold stable meaning. This is because SJTs are dependent upon highly contextualized utilization of language. This contextualization is not inherently wrong for moments in time. But SJTs use the Postmodern philosophy to suggest that only contextual truth is real, and no universal truths can be known. As an epistemological consequence, applying truths from one context to another becomes impossible. Thus, the very idea that a written or spoken word is to be a universal reference point for a truth is challenged. While some truths are highly contextual,

¹¹¹ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 19.

some truths are universal, which Hooker argues in his writing. For example, one can give the contextual truth statement “In this moment, you are acting obnoxiously.” One can also make a universal truth statement, “I know you to seek after the will of God and consistently desire to live in a way pleasing to God.” Both statements are true. The first statement locates the emphasis of truth in the framework of ‘In this moment’, a key indicator of contextualization of behavior. The second statement locates the emphasis of truth in the framework of observed behavior over a period of time through various contexts. These qualifiers are indicators of universal statements about someone’s behavior.

I argue this chapter demonstrates a challenging potential inherent within microaggression theory: one oppressed group can use microaggression theory to justify and oppress another group who had previously been the oppressor. In consequence, there is a tetter-totter effect, where two groups are linked in a perpetuating pattern or circle of seeking and striving after power over the other. This reminds me of West Side Story.

In this fictional world, based in New York City, a key plot point is two groups of young men fight each other over who ‘owns’ the remaining West Side neighborhood. Block by block the neighborhood is being demolished. Whoever ‘owns’ the neighborhood has the power of the community, according to the thinking of these groups. Unfortunately, in their fighting they are not addressing the root problem – the New York city planners and developers who decide which block gets demolished next. As a result, the two groups are pitted against each other in an unresolvable battle because their energy is directed at the wrong thing.

Similarly, I believe microaggression theory is not going to be fixed based upon which philosophical logic is sounder, which thinker has a better argument, or which school

of thought has more adherents. Instead, I argue the problem is sin in our inner life, and the resolution comes via mirroring divine truths that teach us about relationship restoration and behavioral prevention and modification. I believe it is vital and necessary to know the history of an idea, enabling one to understand why a concept came to be. As such I am not advocating a cessation of reading and research into these topics. What I am arguing for is shifting to a theological, behavioral, and moral framework to address the prevention and working through of microaggressions. This shift is thus away from an historical, cultural, sociological, empirical, or epistemological viewpoint. While I use the term ‘away’ I don’t want to imply a whole-sale rejection of these other fields. Theology and ethics need to be engaged with other fields, and vice versa. We humans don’t live and function in a vacuum. As such, fields of research are not always benefited by focusing on a single topic of analysis. So too with microaggression theory. This is why I have chosen to study this topic and see what my faith and my chosen denomination teaches while also having a clear grasp on the history of the term and its nature.

In this chapter I explained what constitutes microaggressions, articulating its tri-fold nature. From there I argued microaggressions can be understood as maladaptive learned behavior based upon the Pavlovian response within Behavioral Psychology. I suggested this type of associative thinking can help develop prejudicial, stereotypical, and biased behavior over time. Following that, I highlighted the historical development of key schools of critical theory from which microaggression theory developed. Finally, I introduced three different epistemological interpretations of microaggressions. Through this critique I illuminated concerns some had that microaggression theories’ premises were flawed, how it might enhance problems between different culture groups, or how it might

distort cognitive processes. Such concerns helped highlight why exclusively using epistemological modalities to resolve relational issues will not resolve microaggressions.

This chapter lays the conceptual foundation from which following chapters will launch. Chapter two introduces Richard Hooker's conception of the 'image of God' wherein he utilizes a theo-centric epistemology to explain the divine and natural laws which informed all else, including how humans are to behave. In so doing, a shift of epistemological focus is offered, from the interior life of a person to an objective perspective by which we can compare and contrast our behavior to that which God calls us towards. Chapter three uses Hooker's rendering of 'the appetite', 'the passions', and 'reason' to explain how unchecked desires, or reason can turn into maladaptive behaviors which may lead to microaggressions. Chapter four proposes Richard's conception of 'love of neighbor' and 'intellectual humility' can be viewed as spiritual practices. These spiritual practices can be thought of as types of Cognitive Behavior Therapy, "refers to a collection of therapeutic techniques that have been developed by mental health professionals over the past 50 years to help people with depression, anxiety, and stress."¹¹² To quantify how to actually practice love of neighbor and intellectual humility I offer verbal, physical, and emotional exercises via Social Perspective Taking, empathy, and compassion. The goal is to help lessen microaggressions and aid in reconciliatory methods once they do occur in the Episcopal church.

¹¹² Valerie L. Gaus and Tony Attwood, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder*, 2nd ed. (Guilford Publications, 2018), 152, ProQuest.

CHAPTER 2:

“Challenge”, “struggle”, “effort” – these words can be used to describe the experience of talking, working, living, or being around people who express microaggressions. Sometimes those words don’t seem adequate. Some days the phrase ‘Herculean effort’ is more appropriate. How to acknowledge the behavior but not lose sight of them as people? By keeping the focus on the person, an image bearer of God, we enable ourselves to talk, work, live, and be around people in more constructive ways. I use Richard Hooker’s understanding of ‘image of God’ to clarify this term for the purpose of helping us find a better way to be with each other, especially when microaggressions do occur. The ‘image of God’ is understood as something bestowed upon humans at Creation. The Episcopal church defines it in the Book of Common Prayer in the following terms: “It means that we are free to make choices; to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with God.”¹ It goes on to say, “It means that all people are worthy of respect and honor, because all are created in the image of God, and all can respond to the love of God.”²

In this chapter I argue Richard Hooker’s notion of “image of God” is a theological anthropology offering a progressive development of behavior in the person leading to the reflection of Christ in the behavior. I further argue as a person listens to and actively chooses to follow the divine law and law of reason, as given by God, their behavior is going

¹ Howe, *The (Online) Book of Common Prayer*.

² Howe, *The (Online) Book of Common Prayer*.

to be good, holy, and right, enabling them to love their neighbor. I suggest this is Hooker's understanding how we were created to exhibit the image of God.

As stated in the Introduction, my core claim is we are made in the image of God thus we are made to be relational and called to consciously nurture spiritual practices of love and humility in all actions, words, and intent, **especially** when confronted with social challenges, such as microaggressions. When microaggressions do occur, we can get stuck in the intellectual loop of justifying to ourselves and others why our opinion is an accurate assessment of the scenario and/or why our response rooted in emotion is the most just. I suggest these justifications are good to know and can help clarify why you believe what you believe, but are not going to resolve the root issue of pain and broken relationship experienced, even if no rudeness was intended. Instead, the conversation can easily turn into a debate of who has the better and more accurate facts which can lead down an epistemological rabbit hole. If we rather recognize the image of God in one another, the goal of conversation is to actively listen with love and humility to others for the purpose of maintaining the relational connection as an act of worship and obedience to God. I propose Richard Hooker's writing tone and theological anthropology, offers an excellent example of how to express love and humility.

As this chapter relates to the overall goal of this thesis, I examine Hooker's theological anthropology to identify applications for spiritual practices. I show how Richard Hooker's meaning of 'image of God' within his theological anthropology, and its link with 'love your neighbor' and 'intellectual humility', creates opportunities for change in the face of microaggressions within the Episcopal church. As stated in the introduction,

I argue Richard Hooker's utilization of the Christian virtues, specifically love and humility infused all aspects of how he arrived at his understanding.

In pursuit of developing spiritual practices that foster the moral virtues of intellectual humility and love of neighbor, I offer an interpretation of Richard Hooker's theological anthropology that, when lived out, helps us adopt these character traits for our daily use. Hooker's meaning of 'image of God' is understood as God implanting within humans a soul inherently bestowed with dignity and the capacity to reason and choose. He viewed the soul's capacity to exercise reason, choice, and emotion was the expression of 'image of God'. According to Hooker, all knowledge comes from God, whether from the divine or natural laws. Thus, as a person develops their reasoning abilities, those abilities are inherently infused with a moral nature as long as the individual does not rely exclusively or excessively upon their emotions or reason to develop their thinking. If they seek to balance their emotions with reason and vice-versa they will develop virtuous behaviors, such as humility and love. When a person chooses to love another, that outward manifestation of an inner choice is called 'loving your neighbor' and 'intellectual humility'. This choice is also understood as an applied ethic, and an expression of Trinitarian thinking and living. Hooker's applied ethic is demonstrated in his communication style.

Many approaches to developing spiritual practices of the virtues of humility and love can be sought out. I explained why I chose Reverend Hooker out of the numerous voices across the centuries and theological perspectives previously. For example, Hooker used a remarkable blending of intellectual sources to guide and inform his argument. Three of the most important of those sources will be specifically referenced multiple times: Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas. While these sources were significant intellectual

influences on Hooker's developed thought, I will not be debating the accuracy of his interpretation of these sources. In addition, I will not be analyzing these thinkers work beyond the point that it serves my purposes in this thesis. I argue Hooker's distinctive approach to theological anthropology provides a template for how we are to be as humans and why objective microaggressions are so destructive. In my research I have not yet come across this line of logic by any other Hooker scholar. Some of the world's current Richard Hooker scholars such as W.J. Torrance Kirby, W. Bradford Littlejohn, and Philip B. Secor write of Hooker's historical context, or theological and political insights, to name a few, but to date I have not identified anyone who sought out Hooker's specific notions of 'image of God' for application in spiritual practices. Admittedly 'image of God' is a massive topic within the field of theology, covered by numerous theologians, anthropologists, and historians over the centuries, as such other voices are offered in the footnotes for further reading.³

Before delving into Hooker's understanding of 'image of God' it needs to be placed within the context of *Polity* and the larger historical framework in which Hooker was writing to help identify important elements. The framework of *Polity*, as Paul Dominiack, Senior Tutor at Jesus College, University of Cambridge, put it, "intends to structure the *Lawes* such that every former part might give strength unto all that follow, and every later

³ For a Literary Critical perspective see G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God: Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans, 1962); for a Reformed perspective see John T. McNeill, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, trans., *The Library of Christian Classics Volume XX CALVIN: Institutes of the Christian Religion; In Two Volumes (vol. XX: Books I.I To III.XIX)* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), and T.F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans, 1957); for a contemporary and liberal perspective see Catherine L. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden: The Creation of Humankind in Genesis 2:5-3:24 in light of the mīs pī pīt pī and wpt-r rituals of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015).

bring some light until all before.”⁴ In other words, Hooker’s argument is like a Fibonacci sequence, having one topic be the foundation for the next. He discussed the nature of law, what constitutes it, how it functions, from where it originated, etc. Beyond how he framed his logic there is the question of his audience and the purpose of the text. On these topics there is much debate. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to nail down precisely Richard’s core motivation and audience, for the purpose of this study it is necessary to gain clarity on the numerous variables, people, and ideas important at the time.⁵

Of the multitudinous interpretive options for why Hooker wrote as and what he did, I offer two. The first, *Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism*, focuses on a metanarrative involving, among other topics, the question of law and where its power is sourced. The author and former professor of political science at Duke University, Philip B. Secor argues Hooker was answering two questions: Why is the Church of England the true Church? Why should we as a nation continue to follow the Church of England doctrine and its polity?⁶ Secor posits Hooker’s answer was the *via media*, i.e. an answer half way between Geneva and Rome.⁷ Secor argues Hooker’s reply in *Polity* was a rebuttal to the Disciplinary-Puritan ministers and Bishops within the Church of England and members

⁴ Dominiack, “Hooker, Thomism, and Scholasticism”, 108.

⁵ For further reading see: *Richard Hooker and Reformed Orthodoxy*, Vo. 40, eds., W. Bradford Littlejohn and Scott N. Kindred-Barnes (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017); Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Confirmist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); W.J. Torrance Kirby, *Richard Hooker’s Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990); John F. H. New, *Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of Their Opposition, 1558-1640* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964); F.J. Shirley, *Richard Hooker and Contemporary Political Ideas* (London: Published for the Church Historical Society by S.P.C.K., 1949); A.J. Joyce, *Richard Hooker and the Anglican Moral Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁶ Philip B. Secor, “Chapter 15, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,” *Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism* (Toronto, Canada: The Anglican Book Center 2000), 254 - 277.

⁷ Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 254 - 277.

of Parliament who argued the only true law was within the Bible, and any true church needed to follow church polity as prescribed within the Bible.⁸

Disciplinarian-Puritans believed correct worship a key component of eschatology and the returning of Christ, and correct worship can only be done with correct church governance. Due to the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura* they believed all these elements were found and modeled exclusively after biblical text.⁹ Puritans viewed the Church of England's ecclesiastical polity as unbiblical expression of idolatry and Christ would punish the nation as a whole.¹⁰ To fix this issue that was deeply worrisome they sought to reshape and reform the church from the inside out to fit their interpretation of biblical polity.¹¹ Their motivation was obedience to God. Their method was, in part, to question and challenge those within the Church of England who upheld the English Reformation and the Elizabethan Church Settlement¹² – Hooker being one of those challenged.

In contrast to this interpretation the second perspective comes from W.J. Torrance Kirby, professor of Ecclesiastical Church History at McGill University, argues Hooker was attempting to demonstrate to these Disciplinarian-Puritans the Reformation of the Church of England already occurred, thus the Church and the State were in union with the Bible.¹³ In his article “Richard Hooker’s Theory of Natural Law in the Context of Reformation

⁸ Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 133.

⁹ Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 133.

¹⁰ Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 133.

¹¹ Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 133.

¹² Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 133.

¹³ Kirby, “Richard Hooker’s Theory,” 681-705.

Theology” Kirby posited Hooker “frames his discourse as an irenical appeal to the hearts and minds of the ‘moderate puritan’ critics of the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559. Hooker addresses his discourse directly to the disciplinarian but nonseparating puritans who seek reformation of the ecclesiastical law of England.”¹⁴ Kirby believes if one reads Hooker’s “Introduction” carefully it is clear Hooker was a proponent of “principles of magisterial reform in England”.¹⁵ By this is meant Hooker aligned with the Lutheran, Genevan, and Zurich branches of the Reformation who supported, to various degrees, the magistrate having some authority within the church “and the church could rely on the authority of the magistrate to enforce discipline, suppress heresy, or maintain order.”¹⁶ This, Kirby argues, is in contrast to the Radical Reform Group who believed in total separation of church and state.¹⁷

To help frame Reverend Hooker’s context a bit, other details are provided that will not be debated. For example, on the Universal Catholic Church spectrum with Puritans on one side and Catholics on the other, the Catholic-leaning Bishops - installed by Mary, Queen of Scots, who was a devout Catholic - also had strong opinions of the Church of England. They completely opposed the English Reformation and the Elizabethan Church Settlement for not being Catholic enough and thus in their own manner not being holy, in great part because neither acknowledged the power or authority of the Pope. In addition, changes to the service, location of the altar, and doctrinal teachings regarding the eucharist

¹⁴ Kirby, “Richard Hooker’s Theory,” 684.

¹⁵ Kirby, “Richard Hooker’s Theory,” 683-684.

¹⁶ Kirby, “Richard Hooker’s Theory,” 159.

¹⁷ Kirby, “Richard Hooker’s Theory,” 683-684.

were deemed worthy of excommunication.¹⁸ And then there was Queen Elizabeth, understood as attempting to thread an extremely dangerous and deadly needle between warring religious factions, with the goal of leading a nation to a similitude of peace. In the midst of all this Richard Hooker was selected by Queen Elizabeth to help steer the church through often turbulent waters.¹⁹ He was elected Master of the Temple Church in London by Queen Elizabeth I. To add to tensions, his brother-in-law Walter Travers, who had been working there and was expected to be given the rectorship even though he had not received Anglican Orders, was one of the Presbyterian leaning Puritans. He was kept on when Hooker was installed but was under the leadership of Hooker. Part of his goal was to help undermine the authority of the Church from the inside out. To do this he would have someone listen to Richard's sermons in the morning, take detailed notes and then bring those notes to him for the purposes of crafting a sermon that day in rebuttal to Hooker and give the sermon that night. This lasted the entire duration of Hooker's installment at The Temple Church.²⁰ Being that Hooker was a committed Church of England priest, and Travers a committed Puritan "it was said that the Temple congregation heard Canterbury in the morning and Geneva in the afternoon."²¹

¹⁸ Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 138.; As Secor explained, Walter Travers, a Radical Reform Preacher, wrote *Ecclesiasticae Discipline at Anglicanae Explicatio* explicating key points such as, "the Bible is to be taken...literally..., Holy Scripture is the sole authority for determining the correct form (discipline) for church organization; the presbyterian polity, in which clergy are elected by congregations first and later ordained, if at all, by bishops, is the only correct form of governance; each congregation is independent of the others and of any central authority, save a national system of councils with no binding authority; all ministers in each order of ministry are equal to one another." Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 133.

¹⁹ Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 151-161.

²⁰ Secor, *Richard Hooker*, 151-161.

²¹ John S. Marshall, s.v. "Richard Hooker: English Theologian," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago, IL: Jan 05, 2020), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-Hooker>.

Rather than trying to discern Hooker's motivation, I seek to identify areas of tension that most likely influenced his context. By reviewing the opinions of Secor and Kirby, I have identified rather different perspectives offering opposing goals and foci. Secor's overall goal is to create an updated biography using the metanarrative framework within the question 'Where does the power of law come from?'. To that end Secor was not analyzing Hooker's writing from an exclusively theo-political perspective, in contrast to Kirby. On the other hand, Kirby's goal looks specifically at "Hooker's justification of the authority of natural law in matters of religion". Once Kirby answered that he determined where this places Hooker "with respect to the continental reformers".²² However, and in contrast to Secor, because of that narrower examination, Kirby did not engage to the same degree the power and influence Queen Elizabeth's role may have had on Richard's motivations.

One concern I apply to both authors is attempting to interpret the internal motivations and attitudes of an another, especially if a few centuries sit between oneself and the author. I am unable to clearly identify locations in the "Introduction" to *Polity* giving evidence to Kirby's assertion of Hooker aligning with Magisterial Reformers. In addition, I do not see throughout *Polity* an argument supporting what could be described as Magisterial Reform over and within the church. This could be due to my focus on Hooker's theological anthropology and reading everything through that lens. Given Kirby's deep familiarity with this topic, it is possible this author may have missed cues given by Hooker on this topic. While one could successfully argue Hooker was in-line with the Continental Magisterial Reformers, as Kirby suggests, I theorize we cannot ignore the

²² Kirby, "Richard Hooker's Theory," 684.

relatively gentle tone of his writing which could have been used to help placate, to varying degrees, Catholic sympathizing priests and bishops in the Church of England and continued Hooker's fealty to the Queen. As such, at the very minimum, a potential influence on his writing was the need to maintain a moderate tone on things theological, ecclesial, and political as warranted and necessary - things for which Hooker is known.²³

Understanding Richard's contextually tumultuous timeframe and potential motivators for writing equips us with greater empathy and insight while assessing his writing. As discussed earlier, I am examining his theological anthropology, the applied ethics within his communication style, and his utilization of humility. The benefit to us is observing *how* a person communicates concepts about law, church, and worship. To execute this task, I apply a textual analysis of Book I of Richard Hooker's historic *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Church Polity*. This concentration is due to Hooker's discussion of the nature of God, the nature of humanity, and how the two interact – exactly the content within theological anthropology. Of the multitudinous versions of *Polity*, I employ the Davenant Institute version for the following reasons: utilization of modern spelling and language; the primary editor and translator, W. Bradford Littlejohn, is a Hooker scholar having deep familiarity with the author's writings and context; I have read, compared, and contrasted this version with the older Folger edition, widely considered to be the most authoritative version of Hooker's text and find the updated version an excellent option (though far less interesting in terms of sentence structure).²⁴ The reader should also note

²³ W. Bradford Littlejohn, "Introduction", *Richard Hooker and Reformed Orthodoxy: Reformed Historical Theology*, Vo. 40, ed., W. Bradford Littlejohn, Scott N. Kindred-Barnes (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprech, 2017), 19.

²⁴ W. Bradford Littlejohn, "Primary Sources", *Richard Hooker Annotated Bibliography*, accessed March 3, 2021, <https://bradlittlejohn.com/richard-hooker/richard-hooker-annotated-bibliography/>; Richard

all texts and referenced materials are either originally written in or translated into the English language.

Richard Hooker's Theological Anthropology

Richard's construct of theological anthropology tells us why Hooker thinks we are here, how we are supposed to behave, and his understanding of the nature of God, humans, and the relationship between the two. This is important because later we can compare and contrast Hooker's construct of behavior to that of microaggression theory and apply the clues to our own lives for better methods of behavior in contexts of microaggressions and reconciliation.

Hooker's view has God simultaneously immanent and transcendent in relation to divine and natural laws to guide and inform humans. It describes our nature, what it means to be human, and who we are to become, including the image of God.²⁵ Though Hooker

Hooker, *The Folger Library Edition of The Works of Richard Hooker, Volumes I and II: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity; Preface and Books I-V*, ed., George Edelen, W. Speed Hill (Princeton, NJ: Belknap Press, 1977). Accessed March 3, 2021, <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674632059>; Fredrica Harris Thompsett, *The Folger Library Edition of The Works of Richard Hooker, W. Speed Hill, General Editor, Volume 3, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Books 6, 7, 8*, ed., P.G. Standwood (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), LXXVII 644, *Church History* 52, no. 2 (1983): 215-216. Accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/church-history/article/abs/folger-library-edition-of-the-works-of-richard-hooker-w-speed-hill-general-editor-volume-3-of-the-laws-of-ecclesiastical-polity-books-6-7-8-edited-by-p-g-stanwood-cambridge-harvard-university-press-1981-lxxvii-644-pp-6500/20E0A5A2C7C92FD9B7063ADF8D4776F2#access-block>.

²⁵ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 10, 11; For an exceptionally thorough, analytical, and deeply researched perspective on the notion of Participation in Hooker's epistemology, moral theology, and intellectual influencers on said topics in Polity see: Paul Anthony Dominiak's text *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2019). For further reading on Hooker's volunteerism, epistemology, moral theology, and intellectual influencers on said topics see: W.J. Torrance Kirby, *Richard Hooker, Reformer and Platonist* (Burlington, CT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005); *Richard Hooker and Reformed Orthodoxy*, W. Bradford Littlejohn and Scott N. Kindred-Barnes ed. (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017); W. Bradford Littlejohn, *The Peril and Promise of Christian Liberty: Richard Hooker, The Puritans, and Protestant Political Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014); Nigel Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003).

never uses the exact phrase ‘image of God’, he points to the concept: “Man in his perfection has been made in the likeness of His maker and he resembles Him also in how he acts.”²⁶

Though his statement is brief, it is dynamic, ascribing a process by which humans can grow into the image of God. The process is important because it shows, to varying degrees, the mechanism by which Hooker understood our potential to develop the character of God and interact with God. According to Hooker’s theological anthropology, the law of reason and divine law are the primary ways God instructs humans how to be. Hooker claims the law of reason and the divine law assist our souls, which he believes is the location of human dignity and reasoning.²⁷ This line of thinking is taken from Augustin who believed “the human personis a rational soul using a moral and earthly body.”²⁸ Because his overall focus is on church polity, he is brief regarding the mechanism of how the soul learns and is guided by the law of nature and divine law. He uses an ontological construct, placing God as the source of the process. He wrote:

God has given us our senses so that we might perceive those things on which our physical life depends; He has given us reason so that we might know what is necessary for both our present and future state; and He has opened to us with prophetic revelation the hidden mysteries that reason could never have unlocked or shown to be so necessary for our everlasting good. Therefore, let us use the precious gifts that God has given us, for His glory and honor, seeking to know by every

²⁶ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29. In Hooker’s time it was common practice to use the term ‘man’ to refer to humans or humanity. In addition, it is clear Hooker believes **humans** are made in the image of God. Furthermore, Hooker does not speak to the issue of race or ethnicity. While it is true slavery was a well-established industry in England at the time Hooker was writing, he does not speak to it in any of his writings so we cannot know for certain his opinions, or if those opinions informed this text. What we can do is acknowledge the historical context in which he wrote while remembering Hooker’s focus was on the nature and origination of law, thus he was not trying to rectify race relations. He was attempting to help prevent the internal demise of the Church of England and defend its construct. As such, it is important for us to ask these kinds of questions, but not be distracted by them.

²⁷ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 28.

²⁸ Brian E. Daley, SJ. “Chapter 6 Augustine of Hippo: Christology as The ‘Way’” in *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* Oxford Scholarship Online (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 150-173, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199281336.003.0006>.

means possible what His will is, what is righteous before Him, and what is holy, perfect, and good in His sight so that we might truly and faithfully do it.²⁹

In this quote Hooker clearly articulates his theological anthropology by bringing together multitudinous lines of logic woven through Book I. It links up his theory of sense perception with his theory of the body; his theory of human reason with free will and choice; his theory of divine law with the soul's eternal life. Once he articulates these theories, which he believes are all gifts from God, he shifts from the voice of an Oxford don to a church minister and encourages his reader into a new way of living. Minister Hooker appears to try and motivate his audience to understand this list of human attributes and reasons for them are gifts from God and as such, use them to glorify and honor Him. The suggested process for how to glorify and honor God with these gifts is holistic. Here is where Hooker shifts back a little into the theoretical language of an Oxford don but maintains an implicit pastoral element. He does not offer specific behaviors using these gifts to exemplify what is holy, perfect, and good because he frames the basis of these behaviors on God's perspective. In other words, Minister Richard is guiding his readers into remembering that God's being and character is the basis by which any and all attitudes, assumptions, and action are to be judged and assessed.³⁰ As such he is implicitly advising those who are reading his words to cast their mind's eye upon who God is, and what He has revealed about Himself. In so doing, we are able, based upon reason given us, to know what specific behaviors meet these specific qualifiers using the gifts given us.

²⁹ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 90.

³⁰ I will speak further on this topic in chapter three.

Hooker weaves his themes together, building upon each other, including what appears to be a progressive notion of human development. If I am interpreting him correctly, Hooker's claim is helpful to know because it demonstrates a core truth about the relationship between God and humans, namely the patience and love God has for us as we learn how to become humans. By implication, we are called to demonstrate love and patience towards others as we assist them in their respective periods of learning. An example of this is his statement that the capacity to reason, choose, and behave in a godly way is not fully expressed from the start of a human life, attributing to humans a blank slate of knowledge when we are born.³¹ Later in *Polity* he expands and qualifies the epistemological process, saying human reason enables us to gradually learn and follow the divine and natural laws given by God.³² Hooker's notion of "reason" should be understood as one part of the soul's way of engaging information provided by divine and natural laws.³³ Hooker believed the soul was the geographical location of reason, the will, the appetite, and passions, among other things.³⁴ He also argued the soul is where human development occurs and choices are made.³⁵ What he does not say, either explicitly or implicitly, is whether or not the soul is 'the agent' the one leading these elements, or the elements leading the soul. What he does state, clearly, is reason, will, knowledge, the appetite, and passions reside within the will. He also explains what each element does when following the divine and natural laws, and when not following these laws. I suggest this opacity is due to his

³¹ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 25.

³² Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

³³ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

³⁴ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

³⁵ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

ultimate focus being on church polity and not anthropology. The mechanism of the soul was not the focal point of his attention. As such, it seems appropriate to limit the degree of detail given to which elements control which elements. What is important to note in Hooker's perspective is that humans are gifted souls and within our souls lay our capacity for personal growth and development of character. The capacity is based upon an interrelational dynamic between the elements within the soul. In addition, I posit Hooker also viewed our souls as having the capacity to error and make incorrect choices depending upon how the elements affect each other.

As individuals learn proper behavior through following the divine and natural laws they start to act in Christlike manners, leading people to show love of neighbor and intellectual humility. The knowledge of God's law is the link between reason and charity. This is confirmed later when he wrote, "The goods which provoke us to action cannot do so unless we first apprehend them as good and so desire them, and once we see them as good, we cannot help but prefer doing them over not doing them."³⁶

In another section he clarifies the concept of the "good" is based upon the nature and character of God. Thus, any human action that is good is following the law of God.³⁷ When we develop the image of God, we are growing in dignity and choosing to do the good based upon following the laws of God that our soul's reason helps us understand and obey. As humans develop their reason and meditate upon the natural and divine laws, moral attributes form, known as an ethic, such as humility and love.

³⁶ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 22.

³⁷ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 28.

Hooker believed our capacity for understanding, and the struggle to understand even simple things should induce an attitude of intellectual humility.

...man has never achieved, nor perhaps ever will, full understanding of their ways. Perhaps God has given us so much trouble in sounding these depths, so that when we see how much more the least object in the world has within it than the wisest may comprehend, we might better learn humility.³⁸

Here Hooker used an applied ethic in his gentle communication style as he softly speculates that God deliberately created the nature and ways of humanity to be so perplexing that when humans query even the simplest things of this world the process turns out to be a lesson about human limits and the need to develop humility. Because all knowledge is rooted in God, humans grasp knowledge to a certain degree permitted by God. In fact, Hooker makes clear the impossibility of fully understanding God or humans, and by implication, the image of God.³⁹ In this moment he is softly suggests the theological and ecclesial topics causing unrest in the nation are not as important to God as character traits, like intellectual humility and love of neighbor. While it is true Hooker only mentioned humility, I believe the context implies these specific attributes. This ethic mirrors the spirit and behavior of Jesus Christ, by way of the Holy Spirit⁴⁰ developing the image of God. It is a holistic transformation. This is what Hooker thought ‘being human’ meant.

³⁸ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 12.

³⁹ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 5.

⁴⁰ Hooker *Divine Law*, 28-29.

If a person does not follow the divine law or law of reason, Hooker appears to give a gentle warning using a Medieval spiritual allegory⁴¹ when he wrote, “Appetite seeks whatever goods are perceived by the senses and then wished for, while the will seeks whatever good reason points out.”⁴² If a person does not follow the divine or natural laws, either in total or in part, their reason according to Hooker will develop, but improperly.⁴³ Their reason will be guided more by “passions such as joy, grief, fear, anger, and so forth...”, than by divine or natural laws given by God to help form the soul into a Christlike reflection.⁴⁴ Their reason will be influenced by impulses based upon immediate needs and wants.⁴⁵ I suggest this is one location where Hooker demonstrates being intellectually influenced by Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas. In “Revolted Passions”, Thomas Dixon argues all three thinkers viewed the passions as a lesser, or inferior form of functioning in contrast to reason. He argues that all three viewed the passions with suspicion. I believe Dixon’s assessment is correct and Hooker utilized this perspective to a degree. Hooker qualifies any suspicions or negative association with passions by suggesting that if the passions are the only things to rule or guide a person, then the person is not following the

⁴¹ James L. Smith, “‘So the satiated man hungers, the drunken thirsts’ The Medieval Rhetorical Topos of Spiritual Nutrition,” *Lumina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies* 20, no. 3 (2015): 1-17, <https://doi.org/10.17613/M6VV28>.

⁴² Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

⁴³ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 28-29.

⁴⁴ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 28-29. There is debate about what precisely “passions” connotes during the 16th century in England. For an analysis based upon various dictionary definitions from the Late Medieval to Early Modern period, wherein the conclusion is that any clear demarcation between passion and emotion is impossible to trace see Kirk Essary in “Passions, Affections, or Emotions? On the Ambiguity of 16th Century Terminology,” *International Society for Research on Emotion* 9, no. 4, (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073916679007>; Providing a multidisciplinary approach see *Faith, Rationality, and Passions* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), ProQuest.

⁴⁵ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 28-29.

divine or natural laws. And that fact is what makes passions by themselves inferior. However, he claims the will is present to help corral the appetites and passions, and thus, by implication, if they can be controlled, are not harmful. “Appetite coaxes the will, and will controls the appetite, and what one desires, the other often rejects. The will, properly speaking, comes into play whenever reason and understanding tell us (or at least appear to tell us) what to desire.”⁴⁶ It is important to note Hooker also viewed reason acting autonomously as a problematic way of functioning.⁴⁷ He seems to seek a balance between reason, will, the appetite, and passions, which I expand upon in chapter three.

By implication if these impulses are not controlled by the soul using reason, will, the appetite, and passions to grow into the image of God, a person has the potential to develop mutated or maladapted ways of being. This can turn a person’s way of functioning into pride, arrogance, malice, etc, and manifest as microaggressions in everyday life – an antithesis to fruits of the spirit and in no way reflecting a Christlike life. A person still retains the image of God within their soul, but the image is muted, dimmed, and challenging to see. I will speak in greater detail on this in Chapter three.

Hooker’s Writing Ethic and Style

With a greater understanding of Hooker’s context, potential motivators for writing, and his theological anthropology we can explore his writing style. Here is where we can investigate any applied ethic in his writing tone and see if he did in fact honor the image of God in the Puritan leaning Presbyterians, the Catholic leaning Bishops, the Queen, and

⁴⁶ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 30.

⁴⁷ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 30.

other Church of England supporting priests he exemplified the moral implications of honoring the image of God in others by the tone he used in engaging his opponents. It is in his writing tone where we also most clearly see his pastoral side shine through. Due to the numerous and powerful voices at play during the Reformation, the time-period in which Hooker lived and worked, his tone stands out. As Littlejohn put it “Calvin and particularly Luther were fearless and occasionally intemperate combatants in the disputational arena, unafraid to speak their minds plainly and confident that they could prevail.”⁴⁸ In contrast, Hooker is known to have a “rather more reserved disposition”.⁴⁹

From the very start of *Polity*, intellectual humility is a silver thread weaving its way through Hooker’s approach to analysis, assumptions, the conveying of ideas, and descriptions of those with whom he disagrees. In relation to spiritual practices, such as humility and love, one normally seeks out mystics such as Hildegard von Bingen, Julian of Norwich, or Aelred of Rievaulx, to name three. Richard Hooker is never listed as a mystic. I do not claim to make him one. Julia A. Lamm observes that ‘mystic’ “is a modern construct that scholars have employed in order to identify, explain, and categorize certain perceived ways of being religious or expressing religiosity.”⁵⁰ These “perceived ways of being religious or expressing religiosity” are usually, but not exclusively associated with contemplative prayer, reaching a particular state of consciousness, or having a supernatural experience. The spiritual practices identified within *Polity* are not identified with any one type or way of being with God. Hooker’s construct of *Polity*, the spiritual practices are

⁴⁸ Littlejohn, “Introduction,” 19.

⁴⁹ Littlejohn, “Introduction,” 19.

⁵⁰ Julia A. Lamm, “Chapter 1: A Guide to Christian Mysticism,” *The Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Religion*, ed. Julia A. Lamm (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 29.

listening to and following the will of God both in divine truths, and in the law of reason. In other words, the obeying of God's will *is* a spiritual practice. Practicing intellectual humility and loving your neighbor are two examples of that practice. It is just that simple. The challenge is choosing to follow the will of God, or our passions, appetites, or misguided reason.

From the start of Richard's writing we can see him following the will of God through the spiritual practice of intellectual humility. For example, in the second sentence of the first paragraph of the first chapter of "Preface" introducing *Polity*, he writes:

I know I have little reason, beloved, to expect from you anything but your usual harshness and bitterness toward all who disagree with you, but this bitterness will never drown the love which we have for all who claim the name of Christ. Man is naturally impatient when it comes to insults and slanders, but we hope that the God of peace will give us the grace to be patient, for the sake of the work which we desire to complete.⁵¹

In this quote, we see Hooker refusing to meet bitterness with bitterness. He is not applying an "us versus them" approach to his tone. Instead, he acknowledges the attitude some of his audience had towards those who oppose them, such as Hooker. He then looks past his own ego and how it might be affected by the bitterness of others and focuses on the community of saints through the shared belief in Christ, which he and his opponents espouse. Some have suggested this is pure rhetoric with "bewilderingly complex rhetorical posturing and jockeying for position vis-à-vis both theological and political authorities."⁵² I disagree. Hooker actively sought to communicate and engage with them. If Kirby is

⁵¹Richard Hooker, *Radicalism: When Reform Becomes Revolution; Or, a Preface for them that seek (as they term it) the Reformation of Laws and Orders Ecclesiastical in the Church of England* Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and Bradley Belschner, ed. trans. (Lincoln, NE: The Davenant Press, 2017), 1.

⁵² Littlejohn, "Introduction," 19.

correct that Hooker was writing in opposition to the Disciplinary-Puritans in support of Magisterial Reformers, then he would very much want to write in as gentle a manner as possible because they were absolute in their desire to break apart the Church of England and strip the Crown of any and all authority over the church. Given the religious and political significance of Hooker's potential audience, it is remarkable that he maintained and sustained such a gentle, humble, and loving tone. However, if we are to believe that Hooker lived what he argued, and I do believe we are, then I understand why his tones of humility, gentility, and love were woven through eight books about defending law, church doctrine, and church polity. He truly believed that to be human one needs to listen to and follow the law of God, which means in part, loving your neighbor as yourself and applying intellectual humility when talking with people or thinking about things, or constructing an argument.

In summary, Hooker's theological anthropology has a person listen to and actively choose to follow the divine law and the law of reason as given by God, so they may progressively grow into reflecting Christ in their entire way of being and demonstrate the image of God. By direct consequence of following these laws, individuals exhibit good, holy, and right behaviors, enabling them to love their neighbor and live out intellectual humility. This is Richard's template for developing and growing into the image of God. The next chapter assesses microaggression theory using Hooker's contrast of 'the appetite' and 'passions' to help us understand it as a resource and identifying its limits.

CHAPTER 3:

In this chapter I assess microaggression theory using Richard Hooker's theological anthropology focusing on his construct of 'appetite' and 'passions' for the purpose of identifying where microaggression theory may be helpful and where it may be potentially problematic. As a reminder, I argue theological anthropology offers us an account of how we as humans got here, why we are here, how we are supposed to act, and what we are supposed to do while we are on earth. I assess microaggression theory via theological anthropology, specifically focusing on how we are supposed to act, by showing a similarity of function between Hooker's construct of appetite and passions and present-day accounts of human behavior. I illuminate this similarity by arguing Hooker believed growing into the image of God required a balance wherein reason, the appetite, and passions are appropriately utilized and demonstrated in our actions. Identifying when our passions or reason start to takeover enables us to recognize how and when our behavior can demonstrate microaggressions and thus take us out of alignment with the will of God. Similarly, when microaggression theory is focused on highly subjective actions, people can draw incorrect inferences about another person's behavior being associated with negative motivations. In addition, Hooker's focus brings to the fore times when microaggression theory can go too far in relation to subjective interpretations of behavior. Within microaggression theory there is potential epistemological difficulty in general associated with how a person knows a microaggression is occurring, and difficulties specifically associated with shaming offenders if or when they do commit a microaggression by targeting their identity or essence.

In short, microaggression theory does have beneficial theological and ethical truths within it, as long as the theory is engaged in objective truth claims about behavior. Once it gets into the murky, and often problematic realm associated with narratives of “lived experience”, the theory is a challenge to accept. To be clear, I am not attempting to ‘blame the victim’ during moments – which can be frequent – where the interactions between two people express extremely subtle social nuances; so subtle that it can be hard to know how to tell if someone is truly exhibiting a microaggression, or not. Having been the recipient of objectively bad but very subtle microaggressions, I do not seek to minimize the annoyance, confusion, pain, or anger caused in such times. My goal here is to say that when an objective microaggression does occur, we can employ cognitive behavioral methods, drawing upon Hooker’s construct of image of God, reason, and passions, to help us identify root causes and modify behavior patterns.

I am also not claiming a one-to-one correlation between microaggressions and ‘the appetite’ and ‘passions’ as understood by Hooker. That is reductionistic and does not do justice to the complex and different traditions of thought that birthed each. The field of psychology and microaggression theory did not exist in Hooker’s day. That being said, as Dr. Mary Garrison, a Professor of History at the University of York argued “To assimilate evidence about medieval behavior to our categories is invariably reductionist, but to use situational similarities to throw differences into relief is not.”¹ I seek to draw parallels between the situational similarities of Hooker’s ‘appetite’ and ‘passions’ with those of

¹ Mary Garrison, “The Study of Emotions in Early Medieval History: Some Starting Points,” *Early Medieval Europe* 10, no. 2 (2001): 248, <https://www2.ulpgc.es/hege/almacen/download/29/29452/historiaemocion4.pdf>.

microaggressions, and use the fields of cognitive and behavioral psychology to address them.²

I argue both sets of concepts are similar inasmuch as both focus on attitudes, which behavior exhibits, and can be used across the ages in the acceptance of basic standards of behavior and attitudes. We can use these standards as ways to assess and guide ourselves and help remind our neighbors of who we are called to be as humans, just as the Baptismal Covenant charges us to do in the Episcopal Church.

One final point of clarification needs to be made at the outset. I am not claiming there are objective standards of behavior that can be applied universally in all cultures across the millennia. Rather, I am arguing the nature and character of God can be taught and understood across all cultures throughout time. Building upon that premise, I also suggest this character is that which we are called to emulate through the example of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit and help of tradition. Furthermore, just as Hooker had shown, I posit this character is developed over time internally through our attitudes and assumptions, and externally through our behavior. We can know if we are living well by comparing our attitudes and behaviors with the nature and character of God. The process for this, also known as virtue ethics, is something to which Alisdair MacIntyre, a moral and political philosopher, wrote in *After Virtue*, his seminal text on virtue ethics.³ In it he

² For further reading on different opinions about whether or not we can extract theories of psychology from Ancient or Medieval authors please see the following: Fernando Vidal, *The Sciences of the Soul: The Early Modern Origins of Psychology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 8-10; Kurt Danziger, "Long Past, Short History: The Case of Memory," *Problematic Encounter: Talks on Psychology and History*, accessed July 12, 2022, <http://www.kurtdanziger.com/Paper%2010.htm>; and Kurt Danziger, "Psychology and Its history," *Theory & Psychology* 23, no 6 (2013): 829-39.

³ "Phil103: Moral and Political Philosophy: Alasdair MacIntyre 'Virtue Ethics'," *Saylor Academy*, accessed August 10, 2022, <https://learn.saylor.org/mod/book/view.php?id=30520&chapterid=6459>.

argues from a Aquinian perspective that, among other things, living “the good life” is not about following certain socially constructed rules but practicing particular behaviors due to a teleological pull within humans. MacIntyre does not use the phrase ‘teleological pull’. That is a term I apply to his construct of virtue ethics based upon his understanding of Aquinian teleology.⁴ He defined virtue in the following way: “A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.”⁵ In this context virtue is not explicitly related to spiritual or Godly virtues per se, but it absolutely applies to the argument of this thesis. I explore further on the development of virtues in chapter four.⁶

Finally, as stated previously, God’s character is the external standard by which we are to assess our attitudes and assumptions, and these are expressed via different behaviors in different cultures.⁷ Being that my immediate context is the West, specifically the west coast of America, I am writing from that socio-historical context. I am not trying to imply

⁴ For further reading see Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), ProQuest.

⁵ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 169.

⁶ For a critique of his perspective please see Thomas F. O’Meara, O.P. “Virtues In The Theology of Thomas Aquinas,” *Theological Studies* 58, no. 2 (1997), [https://doi.org.10.1177/004056399705800203](https://doi.org/10.1177/004056399705800203).

⁷ In her article *The Study of Emotions in Early Medieval History: Some Starting Points*, Mary Garrison gives a thoughtful argument to “the value of nuanced cross-cultural comparisons.” In the text she examines the inner life of a medieval individual, a process frequently thought either impossible or highly challenging. To do this she uses Jonathan Shay’s text *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* as an example of using a second culture to highlight key points in a first culture. She states he wrote about being a psychiatrist “working with Vietnam veterans, initially turned to the *Illiad* because, in his words, ‘the epic gives center stage to bitter experiences that actually do arise in war’; further, he ‘makes the claim that Homer has seen things that we in psychiatry and psychology have more or less missed....in particular Homer emphasizes two common events of heavy, continuous combat: betrayal of ‘what’s right’ by a commander, and the onset of the berserk state.’ The book juxtaposes the experiences of Achilles with that of Vietnam vets, highlighting both similarities and differences. What happens when the survivors are silenced, as in the case of vets?” Garrison, “The Study of Emotions,” 6.

the West is a monolith of culture, but I do think there are known behavioral patterns that the population agrees are expressions of kind, humble, and loving attitudes, and they base assumptions of good behavior upon this. Charles Taylor, professor Emeritus at McGill University, speaks to this in his concept of the social imaginary. A key element of this concept is “The social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy.”⁸ For example, as the list featured in the book *All I Really Need To Know I learned in Kindergarten*, I offer the second paragraph:

Share everything.
 Play fair.
 Don't hit people.
 Put things back where you found them.
 Clean up your own mess.
 Don't take things that aren't yours.
 Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.
 Wash your hands before you eat.
 Flush.
 Warm cookies and milk are good for you.⁹

In ten simple lines the author, Robert Fulgham, a Unitarian Universalist minister, clearly expresses basic behaviors adults teach children to help guide them into becoming active and beneficial participants in American society. These behaviors, and the underlying attitudes associated, give evidence to the concept of godly behaviors that translate into socially accepted behaviors which quantify the social imaginary. For example, he lists sharing, fairness, no hitting, and apologizing. While these seem simple on their face, this

⁸ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 2003), 24. ProQuest.

⁹ Robert Fulgham, *All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten* (Villard Books: New York, 1990), 6.

quote has been used frequently with adults because we easily forget the rules. The rules are those things by which we are assessed, and by which our larger society is guided.

Hooker's Notion of 'Appetite' and 'Passions'

To demonstrate how Hooker's notions of 'appetite' and 'passions' can offer a theological anthropological assessment of microaggression theory we need to examine how they were understood during the Medieval time period, during which they developed significantly.¹⁰ The concepts have been around since the times of Plato and Aristotle,¹¹ but in the Medieval era shifts occurred regarding how they functioned and were understood.¹² Hooker's theological anthropology is highly informed by Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas, thus identifying how they influenced his line of thought is necessary. As stated in chapter two, this line of query seeks to give a general outline to the topic.

Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas all used the terms 'appetite' and 'passions', but in slightly different ways. In Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy's *Medieval Sciences of Emotions During the Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries: An Intellectual History*, they argued the way in which emotions were thought about changed significantly during the second half of the Middle Ages.¹³ Boquet is a professor at Aix-Marseille University, and Nagy is a visiting professor at the London School of Economics. They admit the term 'emotion'

¹⁰ Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy, "Medieval Sciences of Emotions During the Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries: An Intellectual History," *OSIRIS* 31, no. 1 (2016): 21-45, <https://doi.org.10.1086/688041>.

¹¹ Loren Kerns, *Platonic and Stoic Passions in Philo of Alexandria*, Dissertation, Kings College London (London: 2013), 3.

¹² Boquet and Nagy, "Medieval Sciences," 21-45.

¹³ Boquet and Nagy, "Medieval Sciences," 21-45.

did not exist in the Medieval period, but the term does refer “to a phenomenon that is both cognitive and affective – an idea that has always been present in medieval reflections about affectivity”.¹⁴ Furthermore, Boquet and Nagy demonstrate the variegated nature of medieval language used to articulate ‘emotions’ including, but not limited to “*motus animi/animae* to *perturbation*, from *affectus* and *affection* to *passion*, from *inclination* to *primus motus*.”¹⁵

They argue not only did the terms change, so too the way emotional terms were understood to function within a human. “A fundamental transformations of the concept of affectivity...led to the birth of a science of the soul where emotions are central to the definition of humanity.”¹⁶ The evidence for their argument is how different thinkers, such as Augustine and Aquinas categorized and articulated the mechanics of emotions in relation to the soul and sin. For example, they argue Augustine believed that “while the body possessed natural appetites like hunger or thirst, all feeling involving the soul entered the realm of the will. Thus, the pleasure felt while tasting a drink, for instance, potentially contained a sinful dimension, even though the fact of drinking was a natural, pressing need.”¹⁷ In this construct, the appetites and passions are not divided in any way, a small but deeply significant point. An implication of this construct was a direct link between “emotional perturbation and sin” because *any* desire could potentially cause sin.¹⁸ In

¹⁴ Boquet and Nagy, “Medieval Sciences,” 24.

¹⁵ Boquet and Nagy, “Medieval Sciences,” 23-24.

¹⁶ Boquet and Nagy, “Medieval Sciences,” 45.

¹⁷ Boquet and Nagy, “Medieval Sciences,” 26.

¹⁸ Boquet and Nagy do an excellent job at tracing the centuries’ long process of separating the emotions from sin. For further details see: Boquet and Nagy, “Medieval Sciences,” 21-45.

contrast, by the 13th century, they suggest Aquinas among others, divided the appetites and passions into two parts: the animal and the rational. In this construct the animal, (i.e., physical needs) could have appetites and passions associated with physical needs and not cause sin, whereas the rational (i.e., rational soul) could sin if the will did not take over.¹⁹ Boquet and Nagy argue Aquinas made the animal “passions natural movements of the soul, which expressed no moral value in and of themselves. As a consequence, the value of passions came from the way reason and will took charge of them, as the rational powers had the functioning of commanding passions.”²⁰

It is clear the development of terms associated with emotions and the human is complex with theories from different thinkers being interwoven, then modified to fit new understandings and interpretations. Hooker got his lexicon, structure of logic, and general concepts from Aristotle,²¹ his method of integrating theology with anatomy and physiology from Augustine,²² and a division between morally neutral and potentially sinful appetites (desire) and passions (emotions) from Aquinas.²³

I believe he used a line of demarcation between the appetite and passions, viewing the “appetite” as above individual “passions” but with “passions” collectively being part of the “appetite” as shown in Appendix A. I also argue “appetite” is understood here as a very close proximity of meaning to the present-day term desire. For example, when Hooker wrote “Appetite seeks whatever goods are perceived by the senses and then wished for...”

¹⁹ Boquet and Nagy, “Medieval Sciences,” 43.

²⁰ Boquet and Nagy, “Medieval Sciences,” 43.

²¹ Vidal and Brown, *The Sciences of the Soul*, 32.

²² Vidal and Brown, *The Sciences of the Soul*, 32.

²³ Vidal and Brown, *The Sciences of the Soul*, 32.

the activity of the appetite is to search and wish for something. As such the proximity between the medieval notion of “appetite” and the modern notion of desire is quite close.²⁴ Likewise, “Passions” is understood here as a present-day synonym to emotions. Hooker wrote “Passions such as joy, grief, fear, anger, and so forth are different aspects of the appetite.”²⁵ This clearly speaks to the idea of the medieval term “passions” being a close linguistic relative of “emotions”. Furthermore, I see another line of demarcation wherein he viewed the appetite and passions as morally neutral (with the potential of leaning towards positive), as long as humans consistently utilize their reason as guided by the character of God when analyzing and willing a particular choice.²⁶ This is where his theological anthropology speaks to how we are to behave. When a person stops following God’s will when reasoning, and follows their ‘appetite’ and ‘passions’, or when they stop using their ‘appetite’ and ‘passions’ and *only* follow their distorted reason, sinful behavior occurs. In other words, when either their reason or their ‘appetite’ and ‘passions’ take over and do not balance the other out, people no longer live up to the potential of the image of God. People always have the potential to be sinful because humans are lazy, as Hooker declared, but humans don’t always act upon this potential.²⁷

With the deconstruction of Hooker’s notions of reason, will, appetite, and passions, I outline the mechanics of how he understood a person to experience and navigate the use of their reason, will, appetite, passions, and how bad attitudes, behaviors, and reasoning

²⁴ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

²⁵ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29.

²⁶ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29-30.

²⁷ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 32.

(i.e., sinfulness) is understood in relation to each. To help frame that process we must locate humans in relation to God and the rest of the created order as that is integral to Hooker's theological anthropology: God made creation; within creation exists the divine and natural laws; both laws call out to all created things a way to live and function perfectly; all creation seeks goodness as goodness is an expression of perfection and thus God; perfections are a type of goodness; when anything changes, it changes because it seeks goodness, which in turn reflects God; desires help drive a thing to seek change; there are two types of desires, external and internal; external desires are things such as virtues, knowledge, conformity with God, and the will; internal desires are appetite, and passions.

Humans have the capacity to grow into perfection, understood by Hooker not as a continual sinless state, but as a lived-out way of continually seeking obedience to the divine and natural laws, thus emulating God. This capacity resides in the soul, the geographical crux of Hooker's anthropology within the human. The soul is the location of all gathered knowledge, both sensory based (*a posteriori*) and theoretical (*a priori*).

Hooker appears to believe there are two areas of tension creating a push-pull environment within a person leading to goodness (the will of God), or, either purely appetite or purely reason-based functioning (i.e., sin). The tensions are between the reason and will, and between the will and the appetite. Depending upon how the person wills, or does not will, these tension loci can either help lead a person to seek change leading to perfections and seeking goodness, thereby reflecting the image of God – or not. These areas are the core of how a human chooses and feels, according to Hooker. These tensions do not appear to have a hierarchy distinguishing one as superior to the other.

Regarding the reason and will, Hooker wrote: “In short, the will acts in pursuit of whatever good the understanding perceives, grounded on the senses – unless, that is, some higher reason overrules it. And whatever our reason judges rightly that something is good, still, so long as there is any uncertainty, there is room for the will to choose otherwise.”²⁸ In other words, the will is supposed to seek good, based upon how the senses inform the understanding and knowledge. However, the will can choose something different if a divine reason overrules the sensory based reason provides. During times when there is uncertainty about divine reason, the will can choose a sense-based good, which brings us to the second tension, between the will and the appetite.

He described tension between the will and the appetite in the following terms: “The appetite coaxes the will, and the will controls the appetite, and what one desires the other often rejects.”²⁹ Here is where Hooker seems to believe sin has the opportunity to enter into the context. I think Richard located sin at the moment in time when we will to **not** use reason in conjunction with the appetite and passion directed towards divine or natural laws in thinking through a thing and instead are guided exclusively by appetite, passions, or reason – as in we use one (appetite and passion), or the other (reason), not both. Thus, in and of themselves the appetite, passions, and reason are not the sources of sin or evil. Instead, the source of sin and evil in the lives of humans is when we choose to become consumed by and live for the appetite and the passions, or reason – when they dominate.

Directing these two ropes of tension is an underlying phenomenon within Hooker’s writing, namely humans seeking goodness. Through this seeking they have an objective

²⁸ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 31.

²⁹ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 30.

standard of attitude and behavior by which they can compare themselves. “For we must note that we seek knowledge of the world not merely so far as is useful for survival, but also for....the understanding of nature” which “gives us rules, principles, and laws by which human action can be properly directed.”³⁰

Reverend Hooker provides an excellent example of this process through the writing of *Polity* itself. The weekly sermonic battles and theo-political pamphlets put out by the Disciplinary-Protestants – including his brother-in-law - created a desire stirring Hooker’s appetite and passions. He chose to engage the knowledge, reason, and will in his soul more than his appetite as his knowledge informed him differently about the state of the Church of England, in contrast to the Disciplinary-Protestants. In response to his ego, brother-in-law, and the larger debate of justifying the theological soundness of the Church of England, he sought particular knowledge to reason through the claims made against the church. In choosing this focus he appears to have deliberately not allowed his ego, appetite, or passions to over-take his will and deafen his reason. In addition, by framing his argument in such a deliberate manner and writing his words in a humble, loving, thoughtful, and conscientious tone, he exhibits (i.e., lives out) how to have his soul choose reason *and* be informed by the desires of his appetite and passions *and* in the process change to enable greater perfections towards goodness to reflect the imago of God in himself and those around him.

Hooker was most influenced by Aquinas’ construct of ‘appetite’ and ‘passions’ in that he does make a distinction between ‘goods’ that tempt the body via emotions or appetites verses ‘goods’ that reason identifies. Hooker also does something very different

³⁰ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 37.

in his construct. He allowed voluntary and involuntary movements of the will to be a factor. Through this involuntary element, he appears to make space for a sinless desire affecting our physical experiences, in contrast to choices we voluntarily make using our will.³¹

Hooker's Assessment of Microaggression Theory

Now that we have a far clearer picture of Hooker's construct of the reason, will, appetite, passions, and how sin engages with them, we can look at microaggression theory and identify where this theory matches up with Hooker's perspective of behavior within his theological anthropology and where it separates from his construct. Again, the goal is not to say one is an updated version of the other. The goal is to use Hooker's theory of behavior to identify where objective oppressive behavior can be identified as microaggression behavior.

At first glance it may not seem like microaggression theory is in alignment with Hooker's theory of behavior. Microaggression theory seems focused on what people do wrong in small moments and then calling them out for every wrong committed. While in contrast Hooker appears to be seeking similarity of being and purpose. To this I argue microaggression theory and Hooker are facing the same concepts from different directions. By this I mean, I believe an underlying goal of microaggression theory is to encourage equality of behavior by highlighting problematic behavior. To the degree that microaggression focuses on promoting and supporting equality I argue it aligns with Hooker's theory of behavior in that it too seeks to encourage and teach equality. The basis by which microaggression theory and Hooker defend equality is different. As explained

³¹ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 29-30.

previously, microaggression theory is based upon sociological and psychological principles. Hooker's theory of behavior is based upon the soul listening to the divine and natural laws. Thus, there is divergence between microaggression theory and Hooker's perspective about equality, yet the hoped-for result, namely consistently positive behavior towards your neighbor, is the same.

Another point in which there is alignment is respect of person. Microaggression theory is used to remind people what respect of person does not look like, by focusing on choices and behavior that don't demonstrate it. From the opposite angle Hooker's theory of behavior also directs people to methods and reasons for respect of person. Again, there is a significant difference between the rationale used by each. Microaggression theory is built upon the receiver identifying subtle and minor actions of another and trying to determine if those actions are malicious or not. In contrast, Hooker's theory is construct on the character and nature of God, which is to inform and guide the behavior of the individual. Yet again, there is difference in epistemological method but similarity of a goal.

Another goal is to identify where interpretations go too far in claiming microaggression behavior is proof of someone being fundamentally bad, a key element of shame, instead of just their behavior. Such an accusation is an inappropriate type of shame statement, something Hooker would never endorse as that perspective makes a declaration about the nature of an individual instead focusing on their behavior. Hooker is very clear regarding using intellectual humility and love of neighbor as the way to view another person. Shame statements and methods fall outside of those categories and have us lean into inappropriate uses of our appetites and passions and turn away from the divine and natural laws.

Inappropriate shame is an unintended consequence of microaggression theory gone too far when applying microaggression theory to the nature of shame as distinguished from the nature of guilt when described by Dr. Brené Brown. Dr. Brown is considered a world expert on shame theory.³² She defines shame as “the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”³³ She shows that shame needs secrecy, silence, and judgment to flourish.³⁴ Dr. Brown also claims, “Shame is about fear, blame, and disconnection.”³⁵ She distinguishes shame from guilt in the following, significant manner: “Shame is ‘I am bad.’ Guilt is ‘I did something bad.’”³⁶ As these relate to microaggression theory, I believe there is a possibility during moments of behavior that are interpreted as bad when people imply and project shame upon a person committing an act that is perceived to be a microaggression. In that moment there can be a projection of shame onto the offender’s essence wherein the person projecting believes the doing the act is only bad.

In these moments Hooker’s theological anthropology highlights a negative of microaggression theory. By this I mean men are often accused of ‘being a misogynist’

³² For further reading please see the following, which is a sampling of Dr. Brown’s work: *I Thought It Was Just Me: Women Reclaiming Power and Courage In a Culture of Shame* (New York: Gotham, 2007); *Connections: A 12-Session Psychoeducational Shame-Resilience Curriculum* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2009); *Men, Women, and Worthiness: The Experience of Shame and the Power of Being Enough* (Benton Harbor, MI: Lakeside Books, 2012); *Daring Greatly: How the Courage To Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York, NY: Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2015).

³³ Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You’re Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* (Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishing, Ebook, 2010), 39.

³⁴ Brené Brown, “Listening to Shame,” Filmed July 19, 2013 in New York, NY, TED-ed video, 20:38, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jtZdSRst94>.

³⁵ Brown, *Gifts of Imperfection*, 47.

³⁶ Brown, “Listening to Shame.”

based upon microaggressive behavior towards woman. While it may be true that they are demonstrating misogynistic behavior in that moment, the statement ‘men are misogynist’ engages in an ad hominem argument. Microaggression theory can enable a person to rely purely upon their appetite and passions or reason in interpreting behavior and the essence of a person. Such an approach is problematic because it does not encourage the one using microaggression theory to thoughtfully analyze whether or not they are projecting onto someone else the inability to change. This type of cognitive activity, when practiced over and over slowly diminishes the capacity for viewing someone as able to change, thereby ignoring the way Hooker understood the image of God to function. The more accurate assessment is that each man is a human who has a fallen nature and has the potential to develop a misogynistic behavior pattern, but his essence is not exclusively misogynistic. He has the potential to change. By only viewing him in these terms, the person accusing him mentally and emotionally strips their view of him as an image bearer of God, and by consequence diminishes the image of God in themselves. They are both damaged.

I also argue not only is an overly aggressive practice of shaming a negative byproduct of microaggression theory in practice, so too is the associated judgement of the essence of the person. I believe Hooker argues judgement of the essence is an incorrect response because we are of the same nature as taught us by the divine and nature laws, thus one does not have the power or authority to judge the essence of another. The only way this could happen is if one is superior in nature in contrast to the individual being judged. Intellectual humility calls out this erroneous line of thinking. Love of neighbor teaches us a different way to function in these moments. Chapter four speaks to the process of how

love of neighbor and intellectual humility as spiritual practices helps mitigate these behaviors and benefit reconciliatory processes.

I want to be very clear: shame, judgement, and blame are biblical. Shame appears starting in Genesis when Adam and Eve hid from God because they knew they were naked.³⁷ Judgement and blame follows immediately, when Adam judges and blames Eve, Eve judges and blames the snake, and God judges and blames all three of them.³⁸ As such I believe these activities are necessary attributes of living. *However, shame, judgement, and blame can be taken too far.* In those moments in life when, we are overcome by our emotions or are too dogmatic in an intellectual perspective, that is when Hooker's theological anthropology can help us navigate inner turmoil and remind us of Whose we are, who we are, and who we are called to be – image bearers of God, and relational creatures.

³⁷ Genesis 3: 7-11, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Great Britain: International Bible Society, 1984).

³⁸ Genesis 3: 11-19, *The Holy Bible*.

CHAPTER 4:

This chapter focuses on the virtues of ‘love of neighbor’ and ‘intellectual humility’ as understood by the 16th century divine Richard Hooker. I show how developing these virtues into personal spiritual practices can help diminish microaggressions from occurring in the American Episcopal Church. I posit using spiritual practices can be thought of as a type of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, used to change and improve thinking and behavior. For some, such as myself, knowing how to actually *practice* spiritual practices can be a challenge in that the mechanics (i.e., what different kinds of things to think, body movements to do, emotions to feel) are opaque. To provide concrete steps, I propose practicing Social Perspective Taking, empathy, and compassion can be useful ways to execute love of neighbor and intellectual humility. I am not suggesting interpretive challenges will stop, but I think Hooker’s approach for developing these practices can help during the murky moments when one person interprets the intent of behavior one way while the other person does not know, disagrees, or did not mean to be rude or express a microaggression.

A note of caution: Hooker did not write about prayer, contrition, or forgiveness. Therefore, I cannot write to the entire constellation of spiritual practices known within the Christian sphere and stay within the sphere of topics that Hooker addressed within his writings. I can engage what he did write about, namely laws, rationality, reason, desires, and emotions.

To review what we have addressed thus far, in chapter one microaggressions were identified and examined at the mental and physical levels. They were shown to be maladapted expressions of associative learning that denigrate, demean, and chip away at

the image of God in other individuals. In chapter two I examined Reverend Hooker's construct of 'image of God' and suggested it to be a status of the soul, mind, *and* a way of being we grow into. In the third chapter I argued Hooker's construct of 'the appetite' and 'passions' highlights the mechanism by which bad attitudes and behavior can develop within a person if they do not use reason, will, knowledge, the appetite, and passions to balance out each other. In this chapter I show how the maladaptive expressions of associative learning which create microaggressions can be diminished through Hooker's approach of striving after virtues to develop the image of God in a person as a spiritual practice. I do this by looking at what he meant by 'love of neighbor' and 'intellectual humility'. Beyond articulating what he meant by these terms I seek to unpack what happens when we do these activities. This examination allows the assessment of spiritual activities such as social perspective taking, empathy, compassion. These were implied in how he went about researching the Disciplinary-Puritan's perspective.

Before I dive into love of neighbor and intellectual humility, let's look at how Hooker understood 'virtue'. This order is necessary because love and humility are two types of virtues. Following that, I introduce Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Social Perspective Taking (SPT), empathy, and compassion as practical ways to love one's neighbor with humility. I argue SPT, empathy, and compassion can be understood as a type of CBT, whereby we identify potentially maladaptive ways of thinking and behaving, change them, and in the process live out love of neighbor and intellectual humility. Such a process is progressive and when we choose to live this way, we are choosing to do the will of God and gradually grow into the image of God as a result, while simultaneously

honoring the image of God in those around us. As such, this chapter offers practical tools for the 21st century to help mitigate microaggressions and help with reconciliations.

Hooker has a distinctive approach to discussing virtue. He rarely discusses “virtues” as a stand-alone concept. The total number of times he uses the term ‘virtues’ is three.¹ When he does, it is always in service to a larger topic, such as goodness, perfections, reason, and ultimately imitating God. The clearest example is this:

The main principles taught by reason are obvious in and of themselves. After all, if nothing were self-evident we would not know anything...In every subject, there are some basic propositions that, once they have been mentioned, we cannot help seeing that they are undeniably true, even without proof. An example of such an axiom is ‘the greater good should be preferred to the lesser good.’ Our natural tendency is to avoid the painful and seek the pleasure. If we ask why we should ignore this tendency, and instead despise the pleasure of sin and rejoice in the struggle of **virtue**, we never would unless wisdom clearly told us that great goods are worth small difficulties, whereas fleeting pleasures are not worth the unspeakable harms that follow them.²

The larger context from which this quote comes is an explanation and defense of the way we discover the rules of goodness via natural law (i.e., not divine intervention or divine laws). The start of *Polity* is focused on both divine and natural laws and how humans come to know them. As his argument progresses it branches off to focus primarily, but not in totality, upon natural laws. These natural laws are to point back to divine laws as a way of proving natural laws are also from God. His discussion of virtue is at the joint between the branch focusing on natural laws and the branch discussing divine laws. The above quote is at this joint. In this moment, he suggests humans know through self-evident means that virtuous behavior is the better way to function.

¹ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 36, 49, 50.

² Hooker, *Divine Law*, 36. Emphasis added.

In other words, Hooker appears to argue virtues are self-evidently good things that point towards the divine law and thus the will of God for how humans are to function. He demonstrates this logic in the quote below wherein he writes about the virtue of love of neighbor:

....it is the root from which we derive all laws concerning our duties to our fellowman, and here too, men have naturally tended to see that it is their duty to love others just as much as themselves. For, since things that are equal must be treated equally, how can I expect good from another unless I am willing to offer him the same satisfaction of his desires, seeing as we all share the same nature?³

In a way, his description might sound slightly utilitarian in that if I want someone to treat me well then, I ought to treat them well, in the spirit of quid-pro-quo. While it might seem that way at first glance, Hooker is actually writing about proper ways to think about applying virtue ethics to daily life.

In his description of how ‘love of neighbor’ works, he links together several theories, pointing them all back to God: natural laws, duty, equality, desires, and equality of human nature. He obliquely references the theories natural and human laws in the phrase “we derive all laws”. From there he links these laws to the theory of duty. Duty is considered a type of good and indirectly refers to the soul’s capacity to will to love due to reason using knowledge when faced with a desire to act for the good. Reverend Hooker takes the theories of duty to love your neighbor and human equality and links them via the phrases “things that are equal” and “be treated equally”. Through this link, he uses a self-evident argument to justify virtuous behavior towards all humans. He gives further evidence for this logic by bringing in the theory of desires and, by implication, the theory

³ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 39.

of the appetite and the passions. He argues from incentive, speaking to the voluntary element within his theory of the soul, wherein he suggests he does not have to love his neighbor, but if he wants to be treated well it is logical and right that he should treat his neighbor well by satisfying the desires of his neighbor. By explicitly and implicitly linking all this together he lays bare the *how* and *why* of the virtue of loving your neighbor as yourself.

In a similar fashion to love of neighbor Hooker argued intellectual humility is a virtue ethic applied to life. In this instance, I suggest intellectual humility refers to how to approach thinking about your own knowledge base in relation to what it takes to understand even simple things. As mentioned in chapter 2, Hooker referenced it in relation to the act of learning and questioning. I reference the quote again:

Perhaps God has given us so much trouble in sounding these depths, so that when we see how much more the least object in the world has within it than the wisest may comprehend, we might better learn humility.⁴

While not using the term ‘intellectual humility,’ I believe this is the type of humility he meant because the larger context of this quote speaks to different ways to understand and interpret the phrase ‘eternal law’ and intellect is a large theme in the early part of *Polity*. In the larger context he is making a counter-point to the Disciplinary-Protestants who claimed the term ‘eternal law’ should be understood as “the rule of working which a superior authority imposes on another” in contrast to his understanding, which he defined as “to include any kind of rule or standard by which an action is determined.”⁵ Hooker

⁴ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 10.

⁵ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 10.

makes the distinction between the two opinions and, in effect, pulled the conversation back to remind his audience of the finiteness of humanity in relation to any intellectual endeavor. By reminding his readers of the larger epistemological point – that we are all finite and fallible, he helped keep a balance between reason and the appetite while writing. From that point forward in *Polity*, and moving through the rest of the text, his writing tone exhibits intellectual humility, especially when contrasted to other theologians of that era.

One of Hooker's points is to help us understand why we choose to do more challenging but morally upright things, i.e. acts of goodness in contrast to easier but less virtuous behavior. He seems to add this because earlier, when he was discussing how the will chooses between reason and the appetite, he claimed that if a lesser desire (something from the physical senses) stirred the appetite and a more divine desire (greater knowledge about God) stirred the appetite, a human would likely will to choose the lesser desire if they did not use their knowledge and reason. Thus, to counterbalance this point, Hooker argues over time people slowly realized it is better to do the harder and less desirable thing and choose to live virtuously.⁶ The title to the chapter from which this quote comes is, "Of The Natural Way to Find Out Laws By Reason to Lead The Will to What is Good". Thus, of consequence to his overall theological anthropology is understanding these laws, how we discover them, and how we learn them.

Hooker's discussion about 'virtues' in general, and 'love of neighbor' and 'intellectual humility' in particular, are embedded in his discussion about motives for virtuous behaviors. I think Hooker wants to show these virtuous behaviors within the larger context of the soul's desire to seek goodness as an expression of seeking after God, even if

⁶ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 37.

the person does not call on the name of God. He suggests a motivating reason behind why people know they are to love their neighbor as themselves and express intellectual humility is that the soul seeks after the good, which can be defined as virtuous behavior. This claim supports his argument of natural law expressing and reflecting divine laws. Evidence for this claim is given in multiple locations in *Polity* when he references the works of such thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates. In these references, Hooker draws an obliquely divine meaning within non-divine words written by these men who are known for not believing in the Triune God.⁷

Spiritual Practices

It is necessary to see how the concept of spiritual practices can be identified in Hooker's writing. To do this, I offer a general construct of his approach. Once outlined, we can benefit in our intellectual and behavior patterns to help mitigate microaggressions and work on reconciliation when they do occur.

Spiritual practices are practical means of 'spiritual formation,' and are defined in numerous ways.⁸ For example, Dr. Frances Vaughan, a contributor to the *Encyclopedia of Psychology* and formerly on the clinical faculty of the University of California Medical School at Irvine, uses a humanistic and transpersonal approach which includes a postmodern methodology in her research for defining the term "Spiritual Intelligence". Her

⁷ Hooker, *Divine Law*, 14-15, 22-23, 34-35, 38-40.

⁸ For a general introduction to a sociological perspective see: Guiseppe Giordan, s.v. "Spirituality," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion*, Adam Possamai, Anthony J. Blasi, ed. (United Kingdom: Sage Publications, 2002), CREDO.

explanation is based upon individual perspectives of the divine.⁹ She defines “Spiritual Intelligence” as calling “for multiple ways of knowing and for the integration of the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of work in the world. It can be cultivated through questioning, inquiry, and practice.”¹⁰ A key area of weakness is her acceptance of lack of agreement in how to define “spirituality”. My take on her writing is that by accepting the assumption that either all views are equal, or if no single view is accepted then none can be correct, she seeks to pass over epistemological challenges and address how spirituality and spiritual intelligence can be deemed of value to redress ruptures or damages within peoples’ lives. While this is a worthy endeavor, her methodology is problematic, similar to microaggression theory in general, in that it relies upon internal reference points to determine accuracy instead of external and objective reference points. Thus, the individual becomes the determiner of truth. Such an approach does not scale up well. A result is people continue to be at odds with each other, because each claims truth without being able to view the other’s perspective with the same weight, while they endeavor to reconcile with each other. A strength of the article is Dr. Vaughan’s argument describing different types of knowing wherein she offers thoughtful delineations of skill sets.¹¹

⁹ Frances Vaughan, Ph.D., “What is Spiritual Intelligence?,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 42, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 16, <https://doi.org.10.1177/0022167802422003>.

¹⁰ Vaughan, “What is Spiritual Intelligence?,” 16.

¹¹ She highlights the work of Dr. Howard Gardner at Harvard University on multiple intelligences saying his work “has helped people understand that intelligence is multifaceted.” She then breaks down several different types, writing “For example, linguistic skill with words can be differentiated from logical mathematical skill with numbers and from the spatial intelligence that perceives spatial relationships. Excellence in one area does not necessarily tell us anything about abilities in another. In addition, Gardner discussed kinesthetic intelligence that enables a person to use the body in highly differentiated and skilled ways, such as dance or athletics; musical intelligence necessary for all different kinds of musical aptitude; intrapersonal intelligence that implies awareness of one’s own thoughts and feelings; and interpersonal intelligence that enables us to relate to others empathetically. He does not discuss spiritual intelligences as a separate line of development.” Vaughan, “What is Spiritual Intelligence?,” 18.

In contrast, Jeffrey P. Greenman, President and Professor of Theology and Ethics at Regent College, uses an explicitly Christian definition of spiritual formation: “our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.”¹² By pointing to God’s grace and the likeness of Jesus Christ, Greenman taps into the Christian understanding of theological anthropology and view of reality by which we believe we are to compare our interior and exterior selves. In addition, his explanation of spiritual formation highlights well how we are to view ourselves in relation to the rest of the world. We are to be in relationship with the world, and we are called to have that relationship be one of grace because that, in part, is the basis by which our relationship with God is founded.

I believe Greenman’s definition of spiritual formation a helpful way to understand Hooker’s process of ‘image of God’ whereby ‘love of neighbor’ and ‘intellectual humility’ can be expressions of developing the image of God. In particular the first half of the quote speaks to this process, “our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit”. “Our continuing response” can be understood as Hooker’s argument for humans being given opportunities to continuously improve via prompts and choosing to act upon them. These prompts can be interpreted as “to the reality of God’s grace” meaning anything in the created realm is being used by God to point us towards responding to Him. Everything follows the divine will of God, even nature, according to Hooker. When we choose to follow these moments of grace via prompts given by nature or humans the very act of following continues ~~the~~

¹² Greenman, *Life in the Spirit*, 24.

“shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ”. This is a highly dynamic, ever developing, experiential aspect of being human, into which we are being invited and implies “The work of the Holy Spirit”.

By engaging these prompts, thereby taking opportunity to improve cognitively and socially Hooker argued humans develop better character traits as they imitate and reflect the goodness of God. We develop spiritual practices of love of neighbor and intellectual humility by learning to balance the appetite, passions, and reason in relation to the will, reason, and knowledge. This in turn improves behavior such that we are better able to mitigate microaggressions and reconcile when wrongs happen.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

With a greater understanding of spiritual practices and Hooker’s perspective on ‘virtues’, ‘love of neighbor’, and ‘intellectual humility’, I will show how these can all be thought of from a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy perspective. The goal is to offer practical ways to work on developing these spiritual practices.

Valerie L. Gaus, a noted practicing psychologist and Tony Attwood, an expert in the field of Asperger’s Syndrome, describe Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) thusly: “CBT refers to a collection of therapeutic techniques that have been developed by mental health professionals over the past 50 years to help people with depression, anxiety, and stress.”¹³ They describe six assumptions used to develop the theory which focus on how thoughts, images, and perceptions affect mood and behavior. They argue this cognitive functioning can sometimes be dysfunctional, but it’s not unmalleable. This activity can be

¹³ Gaus and Attwood, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*, 152.

monitored and changed. Such changes in the way people think have the potential to bring about desired behavior. Positive modifications in behavior is the result of people's ability to constantly learn, enabling them to create their own learning environments. As such goals of CBT focus on creating new "adaptive learning opportunities to overcome cognitive dysfunction."¹⁴

Another way to define it, in an excellent general description of CBT is "Short-term, problem-focused cognitive and behavioral intervention strategies that are derived from the science and theory of learning and cognition."¹⁵ The behavioral aspect of the intervention seeks to "decrease maladaptive behaviors and increase adaptive ones by modifying their antecedents and consequences and by behavioral practices that result in new learning."¹⁶ In contrast, but in a complementary way "cognitive interventions aim to modify maladaptive cognitions, self-statements, or beliefs."¹⁷ Methods for cognitive improvement include:

identification of situational misappraisals and underlying distorted beliefs; rational disputation or logical consideration of the evidence to refute such misappraisals and core beliefs; behavioral practices designated to collect further data to disconfirm such misappraisals; and the generation of alternative, more evidence-based appraisals and core beliefs.¹⁸

CBT highlights the possibility that microaggression behavior can be based in distorted cognitive activity. In other words, what you think can affect how you act. Microaggression theory highlights the potential for people to have unhelpful thoughts and

¹⁴ Gaus and Attwood, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*, 152.

¹⁵ Craske, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*, 3-4.

¹⁶ Craske, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*, 3-4.

¹⁷ Craske, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*, 3-4.

¹⁸ Craske, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*, 3-4.

assumptions about another person or group, and these unhelpful thoughts can be expressed in small moments of interaction. By using Richard Hooker's view of 'image of God', in that we are called by God to use our mind, emotions, and bodies to consistently behave by choosing the will of God, we are offered a highly practical way of developing better thought and behavioral patterns. These new patterns directly impact how we think about, talk to, and tacitly engage people with whom we agree and understand, and more importantly those with whom we don't.

What happens when we apply these practices? Love of neighbor and intellectual humility can be expressed in a multitude of ways. I offer three: Social Perspective Taking (SPT), Empathy, and Compassion. These practices are similar, but distinct. SPT is a cognitive process while empathy and compassion are affective behavioral processes. SPT is a theory of the mind, while empathy and compassion are theories of emotion.¹⁹ None imply or infer the other, but all three are needed to develop the ability to love your neighbor and express intellectual humility well. Each practice will enable us to grow into the image of God and decrease the potential for objectively clear microaggressions. This diminishment can help increase the community of faith and interpersonal relationships overall.

There are a few ways to describe SPT. One definition is "Social perspective taking is the ability to understand a social situation from another person's perspective."²⁰ This perspective requires a person to think outside their own ego and motivations and focus on someone else's way of thinking about a thing. Another way to understand Social

¹⁹ Hein and Singer, "I Feel How You Feel."

²⁰ Marton et al., "Empathy and Social Perspective," 107-118.

Perspective Taking is offered by Michelle Garcia Winner and Dr. Pamela Crooke in “Social Perspective Taking & The 5 Steps of Being with Others”. Winner is the Founder and CEO of Social Thinking, and Dr. Crooke is the Co-Developer and Chief Curriculum Officer of Social Thinking. They suggest social perspective taking is figuring “out our social responses, based on our own and other’s social goals in a situation.”²¹ This figuring out does not only happen in social situations. “In reality, social perspective taking is active any time anyone is *thinking* about others, even when these people are not physically present.”²² Winner and Crooke’s understanding offers helpful clarification and delineation regarding the time, i.e, we do this all the time, even when alone. A final approach to qualifying SPT points to challenges in the overall development of the theory: “this ability consists of discerning what others are thinking and feeling.”²³ As the author clarified “Just being an accurate perspective taker is insufficient; one must also choose to employ those skills.”²⁴ This is where empathy and compassion are needed.

While Winner and Cooke’s definition is helpful, it does not have the goal to get outside the mind and emotions of oneself and try thinking from the perspective of another person. Instead, their construct has the focus on your own response in relation to your social goal *and* the social goal of another person. From Hooker’s understanding of ‘love of neighbor’ and ‘intellectual humility’ this approach is problematic because thinking from

²¹ Michelle Garcia Winner, MA, CCC-SLP and Pamela Crooke, PhD, CCC-SLP, “Social Perspective Taking & The 5 Steps of Being with Others,” (Think Social Publishing: May 2022), <https://www.socialthinking.com/Articles?name=social-perspective-taking>.

²² Winner and Crooke, “Social Perspective Taking & The 5 Steps.”

²³ Hunter Gehlbach, “Social Perspective Taking: A Facilitating Aptitude for Conflict Resolution, Historical Empathy, and Social Studies Achievement,” *Theory and Research in Social Studies* 32 (Winter 2004): 42, Accessed August 12, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2204.10473242>.

²⁴ Gehlbach, “Social Perspective Taking,” 42.

another person's perspective requires intellectual humility *and* the choice to behave in a way that you would want someone to behave towards you, which is love of neighbor. As such I believe the better understanding of SPT is found in the first description offered: "Social perspective taking is the ability to understand a social situation from another person's perspective."²⁵

The process of learning how to develop this trait needs expanding. On empatigo.org, a website created to connect "classrooms around the globe to foster a more empathetic world"²⁶, empathy is broken down into three cognitive steps: recognize differences; understand influences; relate to another person's perspective.²⁷ Through these steps, students are taught "others can have different thoughts, feelings, and knowledge"²⁸ in contrast to the student. In addition, they are taught there are reasons "behind someone's actions that we cannot see" because "someone's immediate circumstances, past experiences, beliefs, and culture can influence their perceptions and feelings."²⁹ Finally, they learn how to relate to others by "thinking about their unique circumstances, experiences, beliefs and culture to see the world through their eyes."³⁰ Students are also encouraged to try finding commonalities between their experiences and the experiences of others.

The questions they are given to help prompt this type of thinking are "What is life like for that person? What might be influencing how they perceive this situation? How can

²⁵ Marton, et al., "Empathy and Social Perspective Taking," 107-118.

²⁶ Empatigo, accessed August 16, 2022, <https://empatigo.org/>.

²⁷ Bruno, "Empatigo Skills."

²⁸ Bruno, "Empatigo Skills."

²⁹ Bruno, "Empatigo Skills."

³⁰ Bruno, "Empatigo Skills."

I relate to their experience to begin to understand how they feel?”³¹ To help reinforce the skill of perspective taking students are given role-playing exercises such as skits to act out, and puppet shows, encouraged to think about these questions when watching movies or reading stories, during conflicts, or when meeting people from different backgrounds.³²

As stated earlier, I suggest adopting SPT as a type of cognitive behavioral therapy to modify existing habits of thought and behavior for the purpose of expressing love of neighbor and intellectual humility towards others. The questions posed to the students can be used by anyone to help identify if they might be making assumptions about life for another person, especially a person with whom they don’t identify or with whom they don’t like. By taking the time to examine if we have assumptions, we can follow that up with wondering whether the assumption is accurate. In each of these steps we are actively seeking to reconsider our own views to determine if they are correct or need to be modified. By reframing things, or at least identifying why we disagree with someone without rejecting them, we can adjust our behavior accordingly and express love of neighbor. To outline how this might look in practice, I offer the following fictional story.

You went to high school and youth group with Carly, and she rejected you because you were dating the guy she liked. You tried to be friends with her, but she refused to be friendly and snubbed you at every opportunity. Because of this, you developed a negative cognitive and behavioral association when you think of her. Years later, you bump into her and learn she is married and has two daughters, one of whom has a rare form of cancer, and no one knows if the daughter is going to survive. You also have two little girls, about

³¹ Bruno, “Empatico Skills.”

³² Bruno, “Empatico Skills.”

the same age. In that moment you can step out of any resentment for Carly from your high school years and, using SPT, step into her perspective of powerlessness, fatigue, and frustration due to this horrible situation. By the simple act of listening and setting aside any hurt or anger due to events from high school and instead actively listen, you are demonstrating intellectual humility. You know an old wound does need to be addressed, but it is not necessarily important in this moment and thus you focus on Carly's perspective.

As stated previously, empathy is necessary for continually developing intellectual humility and love of neighbor. Multiple definitions exist for empathy because it "is widely used in social and developmental psychology, care-giving settings, sociology, and philosophy, and has been defined in many different ways."³³ Grit Hein and Tania Singer explain empathy from a neuroscientific perspective saying it is "an affective state, caused by sharing of the emotions or sensory states of another person."³⁴ They distinguish empathy from compassion based upon prosocial qualifiers.³⁵ The researchers suggest "empathy has to be transformed into sympathy or empathetic concern in order to elicit prosocial motivation."³⁶ In other words, having empathy does not automatically guarantee concern about others well-being, but having compassion does.

This construct of empathy is helpful, but it does seem to be rather abstracted from daily life because of its neuroscientific perspective. As such I offer a therapeutic, care-giving understanding, set in a nursing context from "Key Concepts of Nursing" offering

³³ Hein and Singer, "I Feel How You Feel," 153.

³⁴ Hein and Singer, "I Feel How You Feel," 153.

³⁵ Hein and Singer, "I Feel How You Feel," 153.

³⁶ Hein and Singer, "I Feel How You Feel," 153.

an introduction to basic nursing skills: “The capacity to experience the emotions of another person...The principal elements of empathy constitute seeing the world as others see it; being non-judgmental; understanding another’s feelings and communicating this understanding.³⁷ In this descriptive definition the emphasis is on the shared emotional experience and what one does with that common knowledge in relation to the other individual. The authors blend SPT with empathy, but I think that more due to the nature of the two in that they are frequently intertwined - like a double-helix – connected yet separate and able to coexist without each other, but better and far more effective when united. This definition supports Hooker’s ‘love of neighbor’ and ‘intellectual humility’ specifically in relation to “understanding another’s feelings and communicate this understanding”.

Demonstrating the capacity to understand not just another perspective, but the emotional aspect of that perspective and then communicate that understanding requires a person to use their mind and their emotions in a highly developed manner. A person is required to put aside their assumptions, beliefs - and most challenging - any emotions associated - to listen without prejudice and with empathy to the interpretation and perspective held by another person. Such a method does not inherently demand agreement, far from it. Engaging this modality of active listening demands authenticity and willingness if the goal is improving relationships or develop relationships.

As this relates to CBT and spiritual practices, we are benefitted by using SPT to help us think about things from another person’s perspective and identify potentially unhelpful assumptions or attitudes we hold. Empathy is necessary if we want to seek to

³⁷ Tom Donovan, “Empathy,” *Key Concepts In Nursing*, Ann Bryan, et al., ed. (Sage UK, 2008), CREDO.

view things from another perspective and share a similar experience or emotion as another. By sharing these types of things, we engage at both neurobiological and cognitive levels. In so doing, we not only modify our brain chemistry, but we also adjust the emotional experience we associate with that person.

Going back to the story of you and Carly, where we left it, only SPT was used. There was no sharing of emotion and thus no empathy. You only listened and understood her point of view. If you choose to not have empathy and instead have an inner monologue that yells at her for being so rude all those years ago, you are not going to have any desire to stay in the conversation very long. In this moment you have choice: you can choose to reject her and leave thereby feeding any negative emotions you have towards her. This would not help you continue to develop the image of God in yourself or support that in her. Or you can set aside your emotional pain and listen. As you listen you hear her speak about emotions of fear, anger, and deep sadness. You find you are able to empathize and experience these same emotions. As you focus on her pain and identify with her, you engage in a CBT practice and demonstrate love of neighbor because you would want her to do the same for you should the tables be turned. In this moment you are growing into the image of God in yourself and honoring the image of God in Carly.

The final step in the process is compassion. Without compassion a person can engage in SPT and express empathy but still not act. One way to understand compassion is etymologically with a definition offered by Shane Sinclair, Founder and Director of Compassion Research Lab: “it means to ‘suffer with’ and has been defined as ‘a deep

awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it.”³⁸ A second, linguistic approach, provided by Krystyna Sanderson, Ph.D., an instructor at the Psychoanalytic Training Institute of the New York Counseling and Guidance Service, uses the Hebrew word *rehamim* referring to the womb.

Just as the womb is the source of biological human life, so God’s compassion is the source of life itself. God acts as a womb, and the place of birth is the vehicle of compassions. Psalm 103 names compassion as a paternal attribute of God: ‘As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassions for those who fear him.’ And Isaiah 46:3-4 portrays God as a mother bearing the house of Israel.³⁹

Elements of both approaches help amplify and clarify different aspects of compassion. The etymological definition offers a simple but beneficial deconstruction of the emotional and compulsive components within the term. It speaks to the capacity humans have to identify at deep and profound levels various experiences of another person or group. This identification is coupled with a desire or compulsion to change/fix the pain and suffering of another. The Hebraic term speaks to the element of Hooker’s theological anthropology in that we only have this, and all other capacities, because God has them and has given them to us. Hooker calls this the ‘image of God’, whereas in the above quote the author describes it as “the source of life itself”.

Let’s revisit the story of Carly once more. You understand her point of view (SPT), and feel sadness about it (empathy), but without compassion, the likelihood of you doing something for her or on her behalf to alleviate the situation is minimal. Compassion is the thing that helps you go one step further. It prompts you to act in tangible ways, such as

³⁸ Sinclair, et al., “Sympathy, Empathy, and Compassion,” 439, <https://doi.org.10.1177/0269216316663499>.

³⁹ K. Sanderson, s.v. “Compassion,” *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*. D.A. Leeming, K. Madden, S. Marlan, ed. (Springer, Boston, MA, 2010), https://doi.org.10.1007/978-0-387-71802-6_122.

praying for her, or setting up a GoFundMe page, or cooking a meal for her family. Through lived out compassion, you clearly demonstrate love of neighbor. Through the way you choose to demonstrate love of neighbor you also demonstrate intellectual humility. In other words, you determine what to do for them based upon their actual needs, wants and preferences, rather than your own.

This story about Carly and her family is helpful in relation to a person who was on the receiving end of microaggressions, seeking to progress forward in healthy positive ways. But what about when you have microaggressions in the Episcopal Church? How does that change the dynamics? To help frame Hooker's theories in more concrete terms within an Episcopal setting I offer the following story:

A Deacon at the local Episcopal church has an opportunity to listen thoughtfully to an unhoused Hispanic woman named Maria. She has been using the services of the church and has an idea to help improve its infrastructure. Instead of actively listening to her and giving weight to her comments based upon her lived experience, he only half listens and uses an excuse to gently dismiss her idea as not a truly thought-out plan. To fully listen to her would require an online translation service and at least 30 minutes of focused conversation. He also assumes she is just lonely and is coming up with a silly notion as a reason to talk with him. The Deacon does not know she had been her nation's first eco-focused architect and specialized in restoring old, inefficient buildings. Instead of actively listening to her and giving weight to her comments based upon her expertise, he only half listened and speaks to her in a slightly condescending tone. He has a sermon to write and ends up abruptly ending the conversation and walking away. In this moment the microaggression is clear: he was not giving her appropriate focus, he spoke in a rude and

belittling way, and inappropriately cut off the conversation. In this moment he had a choice. He could have actively listened to her based upon the virtue of loving his neighbor and wanting to do for her that which he would want done for him. In that moment where he had a choice, to use Hooker's terminology, he could have decided to choose reason to seek the knowledge Maria was offering him. In so doing, he would be ignoring his lesser desire of writing a sermon arising from fear of his Priest, who never spoke well of any sermon this Deacon gave.

Through this process of active listening, he could have applied intellectual humility and opened himself up to serendipity. He and the leadership were aware of the need to upgrade the building, but had no clue where to start. By the simple act of choosing to listen to her the way he would want to be heard, he would practice love of neighbor and intellectual humility. This could develop into a consistent practice wherein he actively seeks out discussions with people who are different from him, because he has learned to know this is part of how God created humans to be, and because he is constantly being shown new insights that expand his awareness of the world. Through the process of these spiritual practices, an indirect biproduct within his behavior is a diminishment of microaggressions.

In the scenario where the Deacon chooses to satiate his lesser desires to write the sermon to address the fear and loathing for his priest. As consequence, he would develop a neuropathway associated with fear of his priest, and an indirect biproduct of which is that he would demonstrate microaggressive behavior towards the houseless which in turn reinforces his view of others as unequal to himself.

Now these are all scenarios where the microaggressions are clear. But what about where there is ambiguity? Let's say Maria's background is the same, and so is the context between the Deacon and the Priest. The Deacon understands his inner world to the degree any person can and today just happens to be a particularly busy day for him. Maria wanted to talk with him about her ideas and he is genuinely curious, so he speaks with her for about 15 minutes because he has several other appointments on his calendar. At the end of the 15 minutes, when she is getting into some of the details, he gives his apologies and departs. She thinks him rude and unkind and begins to wonder if he does not value her because she is unhoused, Hispanic, or a female. As referenced in Chapter 1, according to Dr. Sue and others who espouse a broader and deeper view of microaggression theory, they believe a person can demonstrate a microaggression as a result of an unknown bias towards a particular type of person or group. As such, in this case, the Deacon could be said to have an unknown bias towards the houseless that prompted him to distance towards the houseless population. This is very challenging to prove, and it could be he simply did not think to clearly tell Maria he wanted to chat but was limited due to a rather hectic schedule, thereby setting up clear, respectful, and realistic expectations for her regarding the length of the conversation. Hooker's theories can help us navigate through tricky relational situations when the best way to interpret behavior is opaque: it could be interpreted as a microaggression or it might not be interpreted that way.

If the Deacon is confronted by Maria and accused of microaggressing against her, he is being given the opportunity to practice SPT, intellectual humility and actively listen to her and her perspective. In the process of listening to her, he can practice willfully using his reason and intellect to seek after the good in the conversation. In so doing, he is

following the divine and natural laws of how a human is supposed to be, thereby following the divine will of God. As he listens, he can express passions of empathy and compassion, and out of intellectual humility apologize to Maria for coming across in a way other than he intended or desired. Furthermore, intellectual humility creates greater compassion and willingness to grasp the perspective of the other person. A result is even if the Deacon doesn't agree with the conclusions of Maria, he can still see the situation from her perspective and become more informed of how behavior can be interpreted in different ways, regardless of intent.

In addition, if the perceived microaggression is a cognitive maladaptation within Maria's thinking process, she has the opportunity to practice CBT and learn by experiencing his physical, tonal, and verbal responses. She can use SPT to understand his viewpoint, empathy to identify with his feelings of sadness and confusion, and compassion to help him understand why she experienced the situation in the way she did. In so doing she demonstrates intellectual humility because she would need to listen to his viewpoint and express herself as non-emotionally as possible while conveying her perception of his words. Together they can come up with a new way of communicating when he seems to be expressing one thing, but she experiences it differently.

If the Deacon did commit a microaggression by using a condescending vocal tone and word choice, Maria can benefit from Hooker's understanding of 'image of God', and 'passions' a few ways. One way Maria can benefit from Hooker's perspective is how to manage emotions she feels when she recognizes the condescension in the Deacon's vocal tone and words. The key is to experience the passion (emotion) and not allow it to overtake you. This is done by choosing to reason with knowledge and think through what you know,

thereby subjecting passion (emotion) to reason. In Maria's case this is an opportunity for her. She can experience anger about the Deacon speaking disrespectfully to her, then take time to think and reason through what she wants to say to him about his actions. The process of deciding what she wants to say is in and of itself a spiritual practice. She has multiple options from which to choose about her own behavior. If she chooses to grow into who God is calling her to be and develop the image of God, she will choose intellectual humility and love of neighbor. If she does not, then she allows her anger to take control and dictate her body language, tone of voice, word choice, etc.

If the Deacon did not intend to commit a microaggression towards her, but she interpreted his actions in that way, she again has the same options about choosing what type of behavior and way of being she wishes to practice and develop in the act of confronting him. If he explains his perspective saying it was not intentional as he was in a hurry, and thus his behavior was an accident and he apologizes for any unintended rudeness, she has the option of either accepting his statement or not believing him and maintaining her perspective. Perhaps she has seen the Deacon demonstrate this type of microaggressive behavior before and through learned experience she is slow to believe his apology. Or perhaps Maria has developed a perspective that men in positions of power and authority over her will always lie and thus no matter how unintentional the Deacon's behavior was, Maria is going to 'read' his conduct in a particular manner. If this is the case, then Maria allows her passions (emotions) to overrule reason and will. It is also clear that over time her reason has become distorted as well and she does not use SPT, and does not engage her empathy, or compassion. Instead, she encourages an imbalance within herself and relying more and more upon her passions (emotions) to inform her choices, resulting

in greater degrees of maladaptive thinking and actions in turn. Even though the stories of Carly, and the Deacon and Maria are completely fictional, they help convey the complex, nuanced, and challenging interrelational circumstances underlying this thesis.

Conclusion

As a reminder, in this chapter I argued Hooker's understanding of 'love of neighbor' and 'intellectual humility' can be viewed as a type of spiritual practice to gradually modify our behavior to help diminish microaggressions. I suggested practical methods such as SPT, empathy, and compassion can be used as a type of CBT, enabling us to live out love of neighbor and intellectual humility and potentially mitigate or possibly prevent deliberate or conscious microaggressions. This enables a person to make mistakes, learn from them, and change, which is something CBT and spiritual practices in general help people to do. When we work at keeping a balance between our reason, will, appetite (desire), and passions (emotions) we enable ourselves, through the work of the Holy Spirit to grow into the image of God. This requires you to desire and seek after the good via reason and choose virtuous habits and behaviors. This process of the mind and emotions is a particular type of spiritual practice. By choosing virtues, such as love and humility, as a way of orienting our inner world and thus how we view ourselves in relation to people, places, and things around us, we are actively choosing to keep things in proportion and not over – or – underestimate ourselves and our value in the world. By not inflating our value, we avoid diminishing or devalue those around us.

Hooker's 'image of God' can help with reconciliation when unintentional microaggressions occur, such as when someone thinks a microaggression occurred and

someone else either does not, did not mean to, or did not know that their behavior or words could/would be interpreted that way.

EPILOGUE

The questions driving this thesis has been: ‘How can microaggressions either be prevented or lessened in the context of the Episcopal church? And when they do happen how can we move forward?’.

To answer these questions, I explained in the first chapter the three elements constituting ‘microaggressions’, and how these can be understood via Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology as learned behaviors that can potentially create biases and behavioral patterns. I offered a brief historical explanation regarding how ‘microaggression theory’ was developed, showing it to be part of a larger framework of different types of critical theory. Following this I showed the inherent challenge of trying to resolve questions about behavioral problems via modern epistemological methods. A challenge these methods present is by referring to themselves as the basis by which to assess a thing. There is no external reference point to critically challenge a statement. Lacking a foil enables easier accuracy claims, creating a self-reflective standard while simultaneously being used to highlight epistemological errors in other systems. The result is a myriad of words, but minimal progression forward. I concluded the chapter by highlighting some key criticisms of microaggression theory, including empirical, liberal Positivist, and sociological.

In the second chapter, I placed Richard Hooker in his historical context, and showed how his understanding of the ‘image of God’ within his theological anthropology is to be understood. I illuminated the dynamic development of human reason, will, appetite, and passions, with a focus on following the divine and natural laws, are primary ways in which Hooker understood what ‘image of God’ to mean. The ‘image of God’ was lived out

through various practices, two of which are the Christian virtues of intellectual humility, and love of neighbor.

In the third chapter, I explained Hooker's process for keeping reason, the will, the appetite, and the passions in balance. I proposed the ancient and Medieval understandings of appetite and passions could be viewed similarly to desire and emotion today. From there, I suggested a way of understanding microaggressions was to view them as reason, the will, the appetite, and passions not held in balance. One could be too rigid in one's reasoning, thus not leaving room for intellectual humility, and in that way commit microaggressions. I also noted that interpretations of ambiguous microaggressive behavior could themselves be expressions of either passions gone amuck or intellectual hubris. I showed that according to Hooker's understanding of 'image of God' and the Episcopal baptismal covenant, microaggressions run contrary to the theology embedded within these questions: 'Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself', and 'Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?.'¹ I discussed how inappropriate shame, judgement, and blame can be when charging someone with microaggressions. We should never forget the other person is an image bearer of God.

In the fourth chapter, I explored Hooker's understanding of 'love of neighbor' and 'intellectual humility' in the context of spiritual practices. I argued these can be applied in daily life by means of social perspective taking, and the practices of empathy, and compassion. I framed these practices as a type of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, such that changing how we think about a thing can affect our behavior.

¹ *Book of Common Prayer*, 305.

As stated in the Introduction, I started writing this version of the thesis during the summer months of 2020. It was during lockdown AND towards the beginning of global protests initiated in reaction to the murder of George Floyd. I had been mentally wrestling with my personal contextual ministry problem for two years. My advisor kept saying ‘Once you figure out your context and a ministry problem, your thesis will take off.’ My issue at the time was I did not have a ministry context. I attended St. Gabriel the Archangel’s Episcopal Church in Portland, Oregon and was involved in various ministries, but I was working full-time in the corporate world and trying to complete a Doctor of Ministry. My work life and my religious life were at odds in relation to helping me identify a ministry opportunity. The protests, whether about the murder of George Floyd, #MeToo, or against face masks and the lockdown, prompted within me a desire to seek after something better. I tend towards the progressive side of the political spectrum and heavily identified with the #MeToo movement. As I thought and prayed, ‘microaggressions’ came to mind. I investigated it and suddenly recalled moments in church when I thought I had experienced something akin to it. I researched, discovered little had been written about microaggressions in churches, and I realized this was my ministry opportunity.

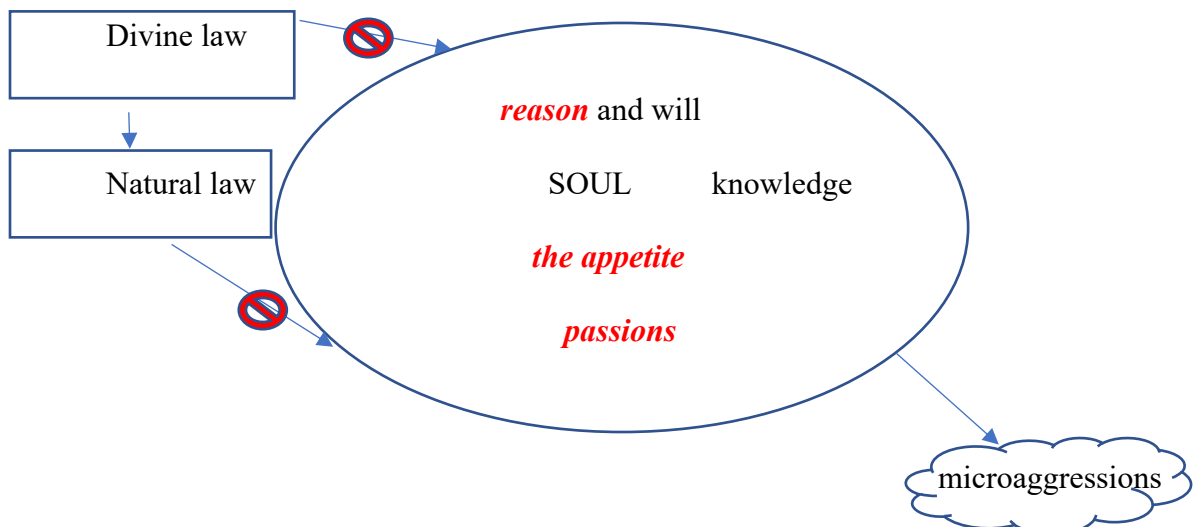
During the process of writing and research. I came upon a massive mental boulder: how to prove microaggressions occur? I spent at least a year wrestling with this section of the paper. The essence of the question is epistemological, which resides within larger philosophical conversations. I know I have many strengths. Cerebral philosophical analytics is not one. My answer came in a most unexpected way, through multiple conversations with a friend who is conservative. During these extended chats - in which political topics were brought up, the logical defenses were assessed, deconstructed and

weaknesses identified – I slowly came to understand the following: an epistemological approach to proving something is helpful, but can be overridden by ego and become problematic. Unless the issue is something deeply fundamental, human relationships are far more important than proving that my view is correct. I knew these things intellectually, but they impacted me in new ways that challenged how I was going to move forward with both this thesis and interaction with people in general. That second realization, which can be restated by saying ‘demonstrating love of neighbor is more important than this topic being debated’, was integral to this paper. In that time, I was using Hooker’s love of neighbor and intellectual humility to navigate enjoyable but challenging conversations. I did not know it at the time, but it became the guiding light in helping me articulate the rest of the paper. It is embedded in the phrase “All Are Welcome” and is foundational to our Baptismal Covenant.

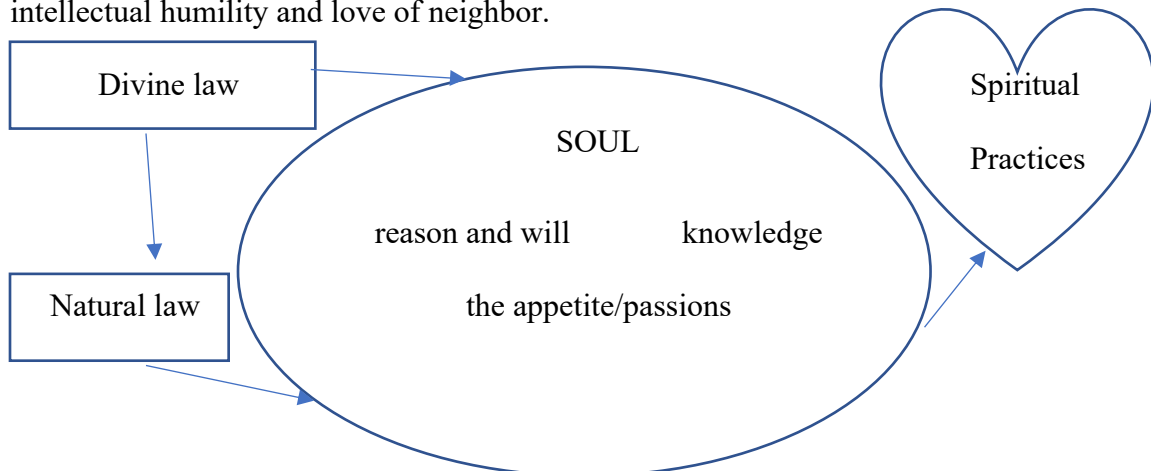
APPENDIX A:

Below are two diagrams. The first gives a model of the soul and what happens in the instance of a microaggression. The second gives a model of the soul and what happens to move us towards spiritual formation.

A: If the divine and natural laws are not followed by the elements in the soul then reason, the appetite and passions become inappropriately independent from each other, the will, and knowledge, resulting in microaggressive behaviors.



B: If the divine and natural laws are followed by the elements in the soul, then the elements stay in balance in relation to each other, resulting in spiritual practices of intellectual humility and love of neighbor.



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