Cultivating Trust: Vulnerability and Creativity in Moral Education
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According to the title of a recent book by German sociologist Ulrich Beck, we live in a 'world at risk.' While we have always had to cope intermittently with natural catastrophes – hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis – the successes of modernity through industry and technology now require us to cope daily with the *anticipation* of human-produced, but often uncontrollable, catastrophes – nuclear and financial fall-outs, terrorist attacks, climate change, etc. Ineradicable threat and insecurity now characterize our condition. The result is distrust in our institutions, not simply because they often fail us, but more significantly because, in a world at risk, it is unclear if they are able to help us or only to exacerbate the risk. This poses a dilemma. On the one hand, we no longer feel warranted trusting a social environment that is alternately impotent and inhospitable; this leads to a form of 'institutionalized individualization' whereby individuals are constantly thrown back onto themselves as the only source of responsible judgment when faced with decisions that require expert knowledge. On the other hand, trust in our social environment is necessary; we inhabit it by default, and we must access expert knowledge even though only we ourselves make the ultimate decision regarding, e.g., whether or not to eat genetically modified foods, approve vaccines for our infants or continue to use cell phones so much, the long-term effects of all of which are unknown[1]. My essay intends to contribute to this discussion by arguing that trust is the precondition for the sort of innovation that will be required to effectively deal with the trust-corroding insecurity of our world. Loss of trust means loss of creativity, the value of which increases in direct proportion with the increase of risk.

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[1] All of these themes appear throughout Beck's *World at Risk*. See also his *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*

Martin Marty has recently addressed our loss of trust in the face of risk by calling for us to 'build cultures of trust.'[2] This essay can be read as a critical extension of his project. Marty notes that improving trust is a bottom-up endeavor: it must begin with the individual self and then increasingly expand to others, to small communities, to larger associations, up through the civil order itself[3]. The two thinkers I discuss here, the moral philosopher Annette Baier and the social theorist George Herbert Mead, are committed to a similar approach in their discussions of human development, for Humean-feminist and pragmatist reasons respectively. However, while Marty observes that our practices of self-protection and insurance suggest that trust is unnatural and distrust natural[4], Baier and Mead will insist that trust is natural, at least in the sense that it is basic to human social interaction. For them, any culturally built form of trust must somehow extend or modify our natural trust, which is paradigmatically evident in childcare. This perspective on trust leads to another departure from Marty. Whereas he insists that risk is trust's "inevitable accompanying theme," my reading of Baier and Mead will emphasize *vulnerability* as trust's partner theme. Cultivating trust requires cultivating a sense of and respect for the vulnerabilities of others. This is not to say that thinkers like Beck and Marty neglect vulnerability; to appreciate that we live in a 'world at risk' is to appreciate that we are vulnerable to dangers that we do not, and likely cannot, discern. At the same time, the perspective on trust I glean from Baier and Mead begins and builds from a more intimate setting than the institutional, and so has its own particular contribution to make. In particular, this perspective requires us to consider our own personal exercises of power, beyond focusing on those that impinge upon us, or pining for those we might have lost.

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[2] *Building Cultures of Trust*
[3] *Building Cultures of Trust*, pp. 3, 32
[4] *Building Cultures of Trust*, pp. 37, 59, 75

This essay reads Baier and Mead together in order to formulate an approach to moral education focused around trust, which will ultimately bind persons together in relations of mutual care while supporting the sort of exercises of creativity that are necessary to address the now-inherent threat and insecurity of our world. Beyond being practically and existentially good, trust is conceptually good: it allows us to think about our vulnerability and power, and so care and creativity, together, providing a fuller picture of the human self than those that emphasize our autonomy or our dependence. While I do not discuss a particular religious community or examine the theological resonances of the concept of trust[5], I hope it will be obvious that my argument is acutely relevant for most religious communities, especially insofar as they do or desire to better engage in the moral formation of their members. David Tracy has noted that one strong response to our present situation can be considered anti-modern, rejecting the values of modernity while insisting on the truth and integrity of one's own particular tradition[6]. If Beck is correct that it is precisely the successes of modernity that have put our world at risk, successes which must be partly due to modern values, then the anti-modern response becomes even more attractive, especially for religious communities who may feel an increasing sense of disrespect or irrelevancy in a world, at least in the West, where religious institutions have lost their pride of place as overarching normative social forces. In this sense, my argument is addressed to those religious communities that, in striving to secure their traditions in an alternately indifferent and hostile world, may neglect reflecting on how they form their own members. One temptation of religious communities now is to fail to attend to their own use of power within their own domain, while lamenting their loss of power in the wider world.

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[5] Though Marty shows how the religions have contributed to our understanding of trust. See *Building Culture of Trust*, pp. 39-43

[6] See his *On Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics, and Church*

While not self-confessedly feminist, Baier's moral philosophy is animated by themes that she believes women especially appreciate[7]: a methodological emphasis on the interdependence between persons rather than the autonomy of an isolated agent, an understanding of emotion, experience, responsiveness and interconnection as equally if not more morally significant and constitutive of the human as reason and freedom, and ultimately a focus on human vulnerabilities that enables and motivates moral concern for the most vulnerable. These themes coalesce in her work on *trust*, which she argues sits at the root of morality and sustains its growth. For Baier, "the whole point and essence of morality lies in the sustaining of encouraged mutually advantageous trust," for "the distinctive way in which morality serves the human good… is by creating the conditions favorable to mutual trust of a variety of sorts, and increasing the probability that such trust be sustained"[8]. This is because the variety of goods that constitute the human good – here Baier non-exhaustively mentions life, health, reputation, the well-being of our loved ones, conversation, the arts and economic and political life – require others to create and sustain them, to care for them. However, this necessary proximity of others to what we value puts them in 'striking distance' of those goods. We must trust others with our goods, not only because we cannot single-handedly care for them, but also more significantly because our goods (and so we ourselves) are at the mercy of these trusted others. Thus, Baier defines trust as accepted vulnerability to another's power to harm us, precisely when entrusting our care to that other[9]. In other words, trust regards our comportment in unequal, but inevitable, power relations gathered around human goods. This moral notion of trust highlights the exercises of power as well as the

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[7] Baier is perhaps better seen as a Humean than a feminist, given the focus of most of her work. At the same time, she claims Carol Gilligan's seminal work *In a Different Voice* as an inspiring factor leading her to focus on trust, which is the focus of this essay (cf. "What Do Women Want in a Moral Theory?" in *Moral Prejudices: Essays in Ethics*, pp. 1-17)

[8] "The Possibility of Sustaining Trust," in *Norms, Values, and Society*, ed. Herlinde Pauer-Studer, p. 245

[9] *Moral Prejudices*, pp. 130, 133; *Reflections on How We Live*, p. 183

postures of risk and vulnerability that inflect the overwhelming majority of human

relationships, even (and especially) the intimate ones we deem most valuable.

While trust can be and often is an achievement, moral or otherwise – and Baier has

much to say regarding when, where and why trust is appropriate and reasonable[10] – it is

essential to recognize that trust is necessary to get morality off the ground in the first place.

According to Baier, infant trust remains the essential seed or paradigmatic form of trust, the

primitive and basic "ur-confidence in what supports [us]" that serves as our automatic and

unconscious default comportment until it is betrayed. This original trust is innocent and

easily encouraged, but thereby also fragile: while it cannot be willed or chosen as our

interests in contracts are, but rather is as given as our need for oxygen is, such trust is easily

broken[11]. The parent must sustain the child's trust by continually caring for infant goods.

Importantly, these goods should be understood as common: because the parent loves the

child, infant goods are simultaneously parental goods. In other words, despite "the

discrepancy of power between the truster and the trusted" intrinsic to infant trust, it "is to

some extent a matter of mutual trust and mutual if unequal vulnerability"[12]. This sets the

moral task as a matter of addressing the disparities of those powers and vulnerabilities that

bind us together around mutual goods[13]. For Baier, there is a continuum between our most

chosen and least chosen trusts[14], between infant trust and contracts, because there is a

"natural order of consciousness and self-consciousness of trust" beginning from our

primitive trust, moving through our awareness of and confidence in risk and culminating in

our cost-benefit evaluations of risk[15]. Trust progresses, not by excising its infant-like

primitive and unconscious characteristics, but rather by becoming self-conscious and

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[10] "Trust and Antitrust," "Trust and Its Vulnerabilities," "Sustaining Trust," and "Trusting People," in *Moral Prejudices*
[11] *Moral Prejudices*, p. 130: "Trust is a notoriously vulnerable good, easily wounded and not at all easily healed."
[12] *Moral Prejudices*, pp. 106-10
[13] *Reflections*, p. 174: "The moral 'mother thought,' I suggest, is the thought of our power over each other, for good or ill."
[14] *Moral Prejudices*, p. 201
[15] *Moral Prejudices*, p. 100

reflexive about those characteristics: the moral options are not whether or not to trust at all, but rather whom to trust, in what way and why[16]. My discussion of Baier has been emphasizing that our judgments of various forms of trust should, given the nature of trust itself, attend to power and vulnerability disparities. Trust is good to the extent that the exercise of power and the acceptance of vulnerability that characterize it contribute to the care of mutual goods and are appropriately well balanced.

Mead's pragmatic anthropology supports Baier's emphasis on the necessity for trust within the human moral life, but also gains renewed moral significance in light of that emphasis. Mead's account of the emergence of the human self through interaction with others and society is just the sort of naturalist approach that Baier would find congenial to her own thought[17]. According to Mead, the self is formed through its responsive participation with others in social acts or endeavors. The self develops as it progressively 'takes on' the roles of others within such endeavors. In order to account for the possibility of this, Mead uses the notion of *gesture*. Human social endeavors are rooted in 'conversations of gestures': one acts, which serves as a stimulus for another to respond, which response in turn serves as stimulus for the first to counter-respond, and so on. Significantly, Mead uses dogfights, boxing, fencing and childcare to illustrate this[18]. While the pairing of childcare with forms of combat could be read as simply masculine myopia, it also resonates with Baier's insistence that infant trust involves *mutual* vulnerability between parent and child, for as their relationship continues, the child will begin exercising "ever-increasing" power over the parent[19]. In other words, I take this pairing to be an implicit recognition that exercises of power and acceptances of vulnerability are endemic to human endeavors. Of

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[16] *Moral Prejudices*, p. 96; see "Theory and Reflective Practices" and "Doing without Moral Theory?" in *Postures of the Mind: Essays on Mind and Morals*, for understanding all of morality this way.
[17] "A Naturalist View of Persons," in *Moral Prejudices*
[18] *Mind, Self, and Society*, ed. Charles Morris, pp. 42-4
[19] *Moral Prejudices*, pp. 107-8

course, it is not physical gestures alone that account for the capacity to take on the roles of others, but specifically *vocal* gestures that ultimately become significant symbols. When one 'gestures vocally,' one "hears its own stimulus just as when this is used by other forms, so it tends to respond also to its own stimulus as it responds to the stimulus of other forms."[20] In symbolically mediated conversation, one takes on the role of another towards its own linguistic gesture, and "tends to respond to it implicitly in the same way that the second individual responds to it explicitly." Language, meaning and reason – in short, mind itself – emerge *from* social interaction *in order to* render it "much more adequate and effective" by allowing us to view ourselves from the perspectives of others and so adjust our behavior according to their expected response.[21] In light of Baier we could say that language and reason enable us to exercise power over and accept vulnerability to others in a more sophisticated and complex fashion, precisely because it enables us to take on the roles of the others that have their own powers and vulnerabilities.

Mead's full account of language, meaning, reason and mind is beyond the scope of this essay, but enough has been said to turn to his account of the social self. Mead posits two stages of development by which the self becomes socially reflexive, playing and participating in a game. When children play, they play "at being a mother, at being a teacher, at being a policeman." Playing involves taking on the roles of particular others within social endeavors in an isolated way: the child enacts a conversation of gestures' (physical and symbolic) between herself and the other whom she is playing at. When children come to participate in a game, they "must be ready to take the attitude of everyone else involved in that game." Participating in a game involves taking on an entire social endeavor, taking on all of its roles in an integrated fashion so that one is able to participate effectively in response to contingent events. Mead illustrates this with baseball: to field well,

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[20] *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 65
[21] *Mind, Self, and Society*, pp. 46-7

we must take on our own position as well as those to and from whom we throw and catch the ball, we must be able to enact all possible conversations of gestures between the positions in response to whatever batters may hit[22]. While children may play at being a mother, they are not able to participate fully in family life until taking on and at the same time integrating with their own role the roles of all others who are involved in family life. The step from playing to participating in a game illustrates the step from taking on the roles of particular others to taking on what Mead calls the 'generalized other.' The generalized other is that "organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self."[23] Taking on the roles of particular others in playing provides no unity: now one is playing at being mom, and then later at being Ms. Crabapple, but there is no continuity. Since the generalized other is neither a mere collection of roles nor a singular abstract figure, but rather a coherent whole of interrelated roles, by taking it on the self is given unity; it is enabled to perceive its own particular and unique role vis-à-vis others within a social endeavor[24]. Paradoxically then, to take on the generalized other is to internalize a community's set of norms and expectations and *thus* become individuated. In this way, when Mead asserts that taking on the generalized other is the mechanism by which the community exercises 'social control' over the self,[25] he is suggesting that the self is constituted by such control. Implicit in this account is not only the self's dependence on others – captured in Baier's claim: "Persons are born to earlier persons, and learn the arts of personhood from other persons"[26] – but also the self's vulnerability to others: to learn the arts of personhood requires accepting vulnerability to the power of those earlier persons. Hence the necessity of trust: to participate in a social endeavor and so take on a generalized

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[22] *Mind, Self, and Society*, pp. 150-1
[23] *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 154
[24] *Mind, Self, and Society*, pp. 201-2
[25] "The Genesis of the Self and Social Control," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Andrew J. Reck, pp. 289-91
[26] *Moral Prejudices*, p. 313

other requires some basic trust that the others will participate responsively and appropriately, harming neither oneself nor the success of the mutual social endeavor.

Mead's account of the self does not stop here, for he insists that the self is not only vulnerable to and so mechanically reproductive of its community, but rather has the ability to creatively respond to it. Mead distinguishes two aspects or phases of the self, the 'me' and the 'I,' in order to preserve the notion that the self is a deliverance of social interaction while making room for individual novelty. He defines the 'me' as "the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes," and as "a definite organization of the community there in our own attitudes." In other words, the me is the generalized other internalized, the aspect of the self that is an object to itself from the standpoint of the community, responding to others and to contingent events conventionally or habitually. The 'I' is the aspect of the self that freely and actively responds to the me, and thus to the self's community. The response of the I is uncertain as it occurs, in the sense that it does not express any of the self's internalized social roles or attitudes. Mead explains, "There is a moral necessity but no mechanical necessity" for the active response of the I, which, as free, is "never entirely calculable" and "always something different from what the situation itself calls for." The I is the aspect of the self that is free from its social inheritance and so responsible for novel activity oriented toward the future.[27] Important values attach to both aspects of the self, though Mead tips the balance in favor of the I. The me provides recognition of our rights and dignity as members of the community, while the I provides the "freedom from conventions, from given laws" that allows us to appeal to a future, enlarged community as our standard when current conventions and laws cease to have meaning[28]. In such freedom the self finds "the most fascinating part of our experience" and "our most important values,"

27 *Mind, Self, and Society*, pp. 175-8
28 *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 199

which "we are continually seeking" to realize.[29] Using Baier's language, we could say that the me is the vulnerable aspect of the self, at the mercy of others and their shared social endeavors, while the I is the powerful aspect of the self, able to resist, at least reflectively, its social inheritance.

Not only does the self arise from social interaction, but it is a social process itself, occurring as the continuous interaction between the me and the I, between vulnerability and power.[30] Significantly, the self is not experienced directly as such a process. For Mead, the elusiveness of the novel activity of the I vis-à-vis the expectations of the me is paralleled by the nature of our access to the I. While the me is always already internalized in our experience, and so always accessible, the I can only be grasped in retrospect: the I is an "historical figure," always only present in our memory as the me of the next moment.[31] The active, novel response of the I to the organized social attitude constitutive of the me actually changes that attitude, but this change can only be registered once that response has settled into a new me.[32] In other words, the self is continually reconstructing itself and its community, but this process can only be discerned insofar as novelty is conserved[33]. Mead refers to this as the sociality of the self, "the capacity of being several things at once": the self "is what it is only so far as it can pass from its own system into those of others, and can thus, in passing, occupy both its own system and that into which its passing."[34] The me is the aspect of the self that occupies systems, while the I is the aspect that passes from one system to another. In other words, the I is the self in passage from an old me to a new me through its responses to the old me. This process is seen most acutely in those figures Mead calls

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[29] *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 204
[30] *Mind, Self, and Society*, pp. 175-8
[31] *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 174
[32] *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 196
[33] In other words, and paradoxically, novelty can only be discerned once it becomes a conservative force. Mitchell Aboulafia likens this process to a mutation surviving in its host eco-system. Cf. *The Cosmopolitan Self: George Herbert Mead and Continental Philosophy*, pp. 120-1
[34] *The Philosophy of the Present*, pp. 75, 102-3; essential to the argument of this work are Mead's ideas of time and emergence, but again, this is beyond the scope of this exercise.

social geniuses, those who have "strikingly changed the communities to which they have responded." Response is essential here, for such persons do not establish an entirely new community, but rather create "a form of society or social order which is implied but not adequately expressed" in their current community by taking "the attitude of living with reference to a larger society."[35] The I passes into a new me by making explicit what is implicit or latent in the old me in a way that stretches its boundaries. In this way, the me is not only vulnerable to the power of others and their shared social endeavors, but also to the power of the I, understood to be intrinsically creative. And precisely through exercising power over the me, the I exercises power over others and the social endeavors that the self shares with them. Baier helps us see that there is a mutual vulnerability between self and others, and self and community, which foregrounds the significance of trust as the necessary condition of personal and social life. However, by this point the power and vulnerability that trust balances are no longer care and possible harm, but rather creativity and susceptibility to change. One is left wondering what the relationship is between creativity and care, and between susceptibility to harm and change.

In this respect, it is significant that for many Mead commentators, the I, and so the self's power, is the center of ethical reflection. Filipe Carreira da Silva points out that the I is "intimately related to critical moral thinking… reflective examination of the moral problem at hand," rather than to "conventional morality, i.e., the customary and uncritical application of moral norms."[36] Silva does not explicitly align 'conventional morality' with the me, such that the I-me interaction of the self is understood to enact a dialectic between ethical reflection and merely customary morality. In part this is a reaction against Jurgen Habermas' characterization of the me as "an identity formation that makes responsible

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[35] *Mind, Self, and Society*, pp. 216-7; for Mead, social geniuses are not fundamentally different than ordinary individuals, they just carry out their own creativity to the highest pitch possible.
[36] *G. H. Mead. A Critical Introduction*, p. 52

action possible only at the price of blind subjugation to external social controls."[37] For

Habermas, me's understood as conventional identities necessarily fail under modern

conditions of social differentiation, which "set in motion a generalization of values and,

especially in the system of rights, a universalization of norms," and this generalization and

universalization require the I to anticipatorily establish an ideal me, to project "the contact of

interaction that first makes the reconstruction of a shattered conventional identity possible

on a higher level."[38] On this view, after modernity the I is necessarily the only responsibly

ethical part of the self. Silva and others resist the reduction of the me to blind

conventionality, because the me plays a crucial role in moral development and the moral life.

Taking on the generalized other enables us to sense a larger moral order than is apparent in

our local interactions and so is the (first) mechanism of self-critical reflection[39]. Mitchell

Aboulafia, recognizing that the me is conventional, insists that its conventionality could be

universalistic in intent: international agencies like the United Nations demand non-local

responses from the self, "certain 'me's' can oblige an 'I' to act or try to act in a universalistic

fashion."[40] These views highlight what Habermas ignores: the me remains a resource for the

I. Recall that on Mead's account, social geniuses do not abandon their me's in order to

establish an ideal community *ex nihilo*, but rather use certain of its elements to begin creating

a new, because broader, community. This is a necessary corrective to Habermas. Still, even

for Habermas' critics, the me is largely the object of moral reconstruction, morally significant

only to the extent that the I can ethically work from it or ethically work it over. Ultimately,

the I remains the focus of moral reflection.

Baier's work provides a wider lens of moral significance, making the me more

central to ethical reflection. In positioning herself against liberal thinkers who focus on

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[37] *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, p. 182
[38] *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, pp. 187-8
[39] *G. H. Mead*, pp. 53, 60-1
[40] *The Cosmopolitan Self*, pp. 69-70

isolated and autonomous agents bound by chosen obligations, she intends to highlight the moral significance of activities normally taken for granted in liberal moral theories. These are the activities that "ensure that new members of the moral community do get the loving care they need to become morally competent persons," such as childcare and moral education[41]. Such activities foreground dependant persons bound by mutual vulnerability: just as the child depends on the parent to survive, so the elders in a community depend on the young to keep the community's life viable and vibrant. Baier points out that moralities must provide for their own continuers if they are to sustain themselves[42]. Since these caring activities are just as, if not more, morally significant as unencumbered decision-making or moral innovation, Mead's account of the formation of the self should be read as moral all the way down. In other words, the formation of the me deserves as much moral reflection as the creative activity of the I, precisely because such formation establishes the conditions for creativity. In this respect, it is important to point out that while Mead appreciates the developmental significance of childcare, aligning it with dogfights and boxing forces him to regard it as an instinctive rather than a rational, reflective, deliberate, and potentially moral, activity[43]. This, in turn, highlights that Mead never actually considers the role of the self in the formation of others' me's and so never explicitly attends to moral education, the teaching and modeling of the community's moral norms and expectations, as a reflective moral activity. A 'Baierian' reconstruction of Mead would account for the formation of the me as a moral endeavor whose goodness depends on the appropriate balance between the community's powers exercised in moral education and the vulnerabilities of its future members, especially vis-à-vis shared goods. This would be truly a *re*construction: I have labored above to show that Mead's account of the self implies a dialectic of power and

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[41] *Moral Prejudices*, p. 7
[42] *Moral Prejudices*, p. 29
[43] See *Sara Ruddick, Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, on parenting as a reflective, moral activity

vulnerability within the self and between self and other, even if he emphasizes the self's power insofar as he emphasizes the significance of the I. In short, Mead's pragmatist anthropology bears feminist reworking.

At the same time, Baier's notion of trust gives moral content to the formation of the me. Precisely because potential members of a moral community are vulnerable to the power of their formers, the maintenance and flourishing of that community require that moral education instantiate and cultivate relationships of trust that will support later moral relationships. Moral education can thus be understood as the careful exercise of power over vulnerable potential community members, aimed at cultivating trust in the community and its endeavors, and best exemplified in the care for goods already somewhat and somehow shared between teacher and student[44]. This is the case whether the student is a potential member because she is young or because she is a foreigner: children and strangers are paradigmatic figures of vulnerability. If moral education is an exercise of power, then the aspect of the self that morally educates is the I. This is important to note because it is tempting to contrast moral innovation and moral conservation or transmission too strongly. On the one hand, to say the I is responsible for moral innovation *and* moral education is simply to note that the self's freedom from its social inheritance could just as well result in reflectively achieved endorsement of that inheritance as resistance or revolution. On the other (more significant) hand, this undermines the very distinction between innovation and conservation or transmission: the teacher is likely to innovate its social inheritance while morally educating potential members into it, just as the social genius innovates by reconstructing that inheritance through its already existing, if implied and latent, elements. In this way, the task of moral education can be understood as both creative – because the

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[44] This is not to deny that moral education often requires teaching someone that something is good that she may not yet recognize as a good, but to insist that that recognition be retrospective: she must see that it was a good even before she recognized it. There is a conversation to be had here with Alasdair MacIntyre about the relationship between goods internal to practices and what I'm calling shared goods.

social inheritance that is taught is vulnerable to change – and careful – because the others being taught are vulnerable to harm. This pairing of creativity to vulnerable social inheritance and care to vulnerable others is meant to be loose: one of the points of Mead's anthropology is that social inheritance is intrinsic to the self as its me, so that to reconstruct that inheritance is to reconstruct oneself and others, just as to care-fully morally educate is to care for the students as well as for the inheritance. Perhaps the proper way to care for moral traditions is to innovate them so they don't lose relevance, meaning or depth in the face of continually novel events, just as the proper way to care for selves is to guide and support their development rather than construct them whole clothe. In this case, too strong of a pairing of creativity to others and care to social inheritance, such that the moral tradition is preserved from change while potential adherents are con-formed to it, is to be avoided (which is why I emphasize the alternate pairing).

Creativity and care need to be balanced in the action of the I, whether in moral education or reconstruction, because the vulnerability of others to formation and reconstruction is the same position from which they are vulnerable to harm, just as the proximity to goods necessary to care for them is also striking distance. Moral education understood as the cultivation of trust ensures the care of potential moral community members by compelling moral educators to respect their vulnerabilities: the me's' of moral students are the limits on the creative power of the moral educators' I's. This may seem to deny what I just granted – that moral education includes the teachers' moral innovations – but it is meant to highlight that the point of moral education is the formation of the students' morally creative powers. This presumes innovation on the part of moral educators (creativity), but requires that it not be all encompassing, so that room is left for students to try out moral innovations themselves (care). Moral educators' responses to students' vulnerabilities to formation must be undertaken with the recognition that these are identical

to their vulnerabilities to harm, precisely in order to cultivate what Baier calls a 'climate of trust'[45] that will support and nurture students' careful exercises of creative power. Moral innovation, whether one is enacting or accepting it, requires trust that one's social inheritance is flexible and deep enough to undergo transformation without losing all integrity. Since this social inheritance is part of our very selves, such trust is necessarily exemplified between members of a moral community. Moral education cultivates this trust in order to keep moral innovation, and so the development of selves, going. In other words, the teacher-student relationship here is one of mutual power and vulnerability, for just as today's formed are tomorrow's formers, so today's innovators are tomorrow's innovated. Moral educators should be careful with their power and their students' vulnerabilities, because soon they will be vulnerable to their students' power[46].

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I would like to conclude by briefly illustrating how this might work itself out in my own religious tradition, Christianity. For many Christians, especially Protestants, trust connotes *faith* understood as a personal relationship to God. At the same time, another, more cognitive, sense of faith persists, that of faith as world-view or identity, composed of beliefs about God, the world, and so on. Whatever else religious formation includes (liturgy, bible study, mission, community service), it must include the imparting of some information, the teaching of some propositions, acceptance of which helps define that religious community by making it somewhat and somehow distinguishable from other communities[47]. However, as my reading of Baier and Mead has hopefully shown, such formation is not simply some

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[45] *Moral Prejudices*, p. 98

[46] The recognition that innovation is constant and continual (perhaps) paradoxically endorses reform over revolution. Reform, if continual, keeps communities in a state of flux; revolution often aspires to replace one static social form with another social form that remains static because protected as immune to criticism. Moral innovators can become too enamored with their own innovations, which is precisely why their creative power needs limits. See Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *The Self Awakened: Pragmatism Unbound*

[47] I am being deliberately vague and general here. I presume neither radical difference nor complete identity between religious and others communities as a matter of descriptive course. Franklin Graham has said he does not believe a word of Islam; surely that's ridiculous if he is a monotheist.

mechanical transfer of data from a source to here-to-fore empty containers, because it occurs between personal selves. Religious formation requires the confluence of both senses of trust, cognitive and personal: the formation of others into the faith (as worldview) is inextricable from relations of human faith (as trust) between catechist and catechumen. This suggests that the beliefs we learn from others are often inextricable from our personal relations with those others. Careful religious formation, catechesis in which powers are limited, vulnerabilities respected and shared goods maintained, motivates learners to accept taught beliefs as true because they fundamentally trust the teachers of those beliefs; in turn, those teachers trust that their students will keep those beliefs secure. This is why changes of belief can be experienced as personal betrayals, for both teachers and learners: parents probably cannot help feeling somewhat injured when their children reject their beliefs, just as children probably cannot help feeling hesitant to share changes in their belief with their parents. Such inextricability means that religious formation depends on moral formation understood as the cultivation of trust. This shouldn't surprise Christians: Jesus, while he was on earth but then irrevocably when he ascended, entrusted his mission to his disciples and their subsequent followers. His divine mission now depends on human agents and the relations they foster with others[48]. In other words, the responsibilities of discipleship – and catechesis is certainly a work of discipleship – include the creation and maintenance of a climate of trust between disciples and those they encounter or interact with. Catechists and missionaries need to attend to their own exercises of power and others' vulnerabilities, which entails caring for goods shared with those others, if they want the beliefs they are proffering to be taken seriously. I am confident that not just the ascension, but also the

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[48] For a parallel account that focuses on the necessity of interpretation for the continuance of Christ's mission, see Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*.

character of Jesus' mission itself, endorses the cultivation of human trust as a necessary component to sustaining Christian faith in the world[49].

At the same time, human trust does not simply ensure the transmission of a fixed set of beliefs by wrapping them in personal bonds, but more significantly sets the condition for catechists and catechumens to risk responding to each other and their (soon-to-be) shared tradition creatively. In other words, human trust provides just enough personal security to allow the catechist to reconstruct the Christian faith so that it has the relevance, meaning and depth to be taken on by catechumens *and* to enable catechumens to take on the faith in a novel way that is responsive to the contingent events and elusive others they will encounter in the world. Saying that human trust provides 'just enough' personal security is meant to suggest that trust is a sort of mean situated between the excesses of a permissiveness that empowers others without obligating them to attend to vulnerabilities and an overbearing carefulness that keeps others from harm by preventing them from exercising power; between a permissiveness that treats traditions as mere resources for individual bricolage and an overbearingness that insists that traditions remain unaltered as they confront the biographies of their adherents and interact with other traditions over time. If innovation is indeed inevitable with the march of time, trust becomes a significant factor in sustaining caring relations in the face of accusations of betrayal and heresy that will inevitably accompany innovation. In this way, trust sustains personal relations that enable, but are themselves threatened by, innovation of shared traditions. Trust enables us to risk innovation *because* it enables us to risk betrayal[50]. Ideally, trust assures us that others will continue to care for us when we express what could be a betrayal of our shared tradition,

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[49] There is a conversation to be had here with the Kierkegaard of *Philosophical Fragments*, for whom the person of the apostle is irrelevant to their witness to Christ. Granting that the person of the apostle should not compete with that of Christ, I am pressing the point that witness is best performed when supported by personal relations of trust, precisely relations involving knowledge of the persons of those we trust.

[50] There is a larger argument that is possible here, namely that, from a certain angle, innovation *must* appear as failure or betrayal.

though it could also turn out to be a particularly innovative adherence. I take this to be part of the moral content of Jesus' claim that the Sabbath is made for us, and so rendered to us so that we may care for it.

The world and its future are in our hands, despite their recalcitrance to our attempts to manage and control them. If human communities, religious or otherwise, are to risk innovations in thought and action in order to confront the dangers of a world at risk, and so to persist through the vicissitudes of time, they must learn to cultivate and sustain trust between their members. I have argued that this requires careful moral formation, formation that attends to the power and vulnerability that humans exercise and suffer, not just to the maintenance of some social inheritance. After all, to pass on a tradition is ultimately to leave it in another's care, which means leaving it vulnerable to innovation. The worry animating this essay is that concentrating on the integrity of traditions can easily become disconnected from caring for the development of others, that the aim of moral education can too quickly become the conforming of others to some past code of norms rather than the development of capacities to deal responsibly with an unknown future. The conviction that stands behind this worry is two-fold. First, innovation is inevitable, and traditions that have persisted over time are those that have changed. Attempting to prevent innovation will, ultimately if not immediately, fail; better to establish a climate of trust between community members that will motivate innovations responsive a tradition's past. Second, significant traditions are deep and flexible, and so should be trusted to remain intact, if not identical, after bearing innovations. Just as moral education requires confronting rather than avoiding the vulnerability of students, risking harm as we form them, so living out a moral tradition requires confronting its vulnerability, risking betrayal as we innovate it.