

Dewey Lecture

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Innocent Abroad: Rupture, Liberation, and Solidarity

“Anyone who has begun to think, places some portion of the world in jeopardy.”

–John Dewey

Thank you, Connie, for this warm introduction. And I want to thank you all for coming and thank the APA and John Dewey Foundation for the honor of asking me to give a Dewey Lecture. Dewey Lectures are supposed to be different—following Dewey’s idea that education is a process of living, not the preparation for living, the Lecturer is asked to talk about his or her own life story, and interweave this with larger developments in the field. Talking about one’s past suggests naming names, and so it isn’t surprising that the guidelines suggest a senior philosopher, “usually retired”. Now I’m not yet retired, and I really wish I could name names—so many people have contributed to my philosophical development over the years, as teachers, colleagues, students, family, friends, givers of grants, (even!) administrators—that I would hardly know where to begin. I hope all of these good people will forgive me. Believe me, I am grateful to you all. But perhaps it will be clear by the end why I have chosen to tell a tale that includes a lot of people, but very few names.

A tale? I mean it to be the truth, and have checked every fact I can,¹ but a colleague who is an expert on memory tells me that the greater the narrative coherence of a recounted episode, the less it is reliable. And a colleague who is a historian—and also happens to be my wife—warns me that oral history, even one’s own, always takes place at two levels: the work of memory is always also the reworking of memory. Indeed, if some recent research in neuroscience holds up, the very stuff of memory will turn out to be dynamic rather than static—memories evolve in response to on-going experience and patterns of recall, so there isn’t somewhere in the recesses of the mind a file of snapshots of past moments that I could dig out, however hard I tried. Memory theorists see this as feature, not a bug. Memory turns out to be tightly linked to our capacity to imagine *alternatives* to the ways things are and to meet new challenges—to face the future, where it is still possible to *make* a difference. For these purposes, it is better to have a living memory system capable of recombining, relating, correcting, and enriching stored information, even if this makes memory less reliable about which summer it was you vacationed in Maine or whether Uncle Harry had a mustache at the time.

So please understand my remarks in that light—I won’t try to offer an overarching narrative, but instead will try to present a series of moments from my remembered life, mindful that it is a

remembered life, not the life itself. Each moment is really a telescoped period of a couple of years, and each marked me deeply as a person and a philosopher. Each is a moment of making a transition from insider to outsider, or back. The first is when I made the transition into and—as it happened, rather prematurely—out of college. The second is as I first ventured into the world of everyday work beyond the academy. And the third is as I made the transition back into the academy and then began as a teacher of philosophy. And at the end, there will be a fourth transition, which might or might not take me back to outsider. I hope not. And especially I hope that, if I can make the experience of these moments real enough to you, even briefly, they might speak to you in ways that go beyond the little stories I have fashioned from them. Perhaps, like memory itself, they will open the way for others to imagine alternatives to the way things are.

Rupture, Liberation, and Solidarity

In September 1957, a Soviet R-7 rocket sent into space a 180 lb. titanium alloy sphere filled with nitrogen under pressure and a radio transmitter. *Sputnik*. With a naked eye you could see the spent booster that had propelled it into orbit, arcing across the night sky, and accompanying it, a faint dot of light, emitting tiny beeps that the amateur radio enthusiast down the block could play back to the kids in the neighborhood. The United States was at the time deep in the Cold War, and this first-ever human intrusion shook the scientific establishment ... and the country—*We can't do that ... but they just did*, everyone realized. The mandated school air-raid drills that sent kids in my generation crawling under their desks overnight became anti-missile drills.

A few months later, in early 1958, President Eisenhower addressed a worried Congress, arguing that educational programs must be matched to national defense needs, and calling for unprecedented federal involvement in science and technology. Soon the National Defense Education Act was passed and signed into law. Universities, which had been under suspicion for harboring un-American activities during the McCarthy years, now became a vital part of our Cold War armamentarium. The post-war “military-industrial complex”, as Eisenhower called it, was to become the “military-industrial-university complex”. The effects were visible everywhere—even Noam Chomsky’s path-breaking *Syntactic Structures* was supported in part by the Army Signal Corps, the Air Force Research and Development Command, and the Office of Naval Research. But many of the most important effects were less visible, as classified research led to the expansion of major defense-oriented laboratories and projects affiliated with universities across the country. We will see some unexpected consequences of these massive investments in defense-related education and research, below, but for now I wish to focus on the small rivulet of this flood of funding that found its way later in 1958 into a program for overachieving high school students in the New York area, drawing them to Columbia once a week for science classes taught by *real* professors.

In 1965, a moody fifteen-year-old from New Jersey could be found sitting in the hard plastic chairs of Columbia’s Seeley W. Mudd Building every Saturday, struggling to make sense of a dense flurry of equations about stellar interiors or fluid dynamics on the blackboard before him.

No partial differential equation or matrix algebra had ever seen the inside of his comfortable suburban high school, but here he was, surrounded by students from Bronx Science or Stuyvesant for whom this seemed to be their native tongue.

To be sure, the most common educational experience in the world is coming into a new school and getting the idea that everybody—except you—knows what they're doing. And of course it turns out that they are almost as bewildered as you are, and trying just as hard as you are not to show it. That is almost the *script* for graduate school in philosophy, in my experience. But in this particular case, however, so many of them *did* know what they were doing that I ricocheted from one self-imposed crash course to another trying to keep up. After class I haunted the many bookstores around Columbia (*that's* how long ago this was) seeking texts to fill the ample gaps in my background. I wasn't going to let myself fail, but my heart seemed to be elsewhere—I kept wandering off among the tightly-packed shelves trying to find where that elsewhere might be.

Like most philosophers, I suspect, I wasn't a particularly good fit with high school. So I was looking for something Big or Important to define me, and of course this meant Big Books by Famous Men. Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example, was rumored not only to be racy but to be nearly impossible to read. So, of course, I *had* to start there. Reading *Ulysses* took me places I never expected to go (only later did I learn that it is *Finnegan's Wake* that *really* is unreadable), and for a while I was intoxicated with the idea of being a writer—you can turn your alienated observations of the human scene around you into art! But the clumsiness and didacticism of my prose, pointed out to me by a kindly old-school English teacher, soon sobered me up. Veering away from literature, I next was drawn to a different set of work at odds with prevailing culture, the writings of the people who in those days were called "social critics", like Vance Packard, John Kenneth Galbraith, and C. Wright Mills. Their diagnosis of the shallowness of consumer society, the ceaseless quest for status, and the elite concentration of power, seemed to me altogether too true. Now I was getting somewhere. But I was impatient: Where could one find better visions of how to live?

When I reached the sections in Philosophy, something hit home. As before, I'd reach for the most impressive-looking books, thick volumes like Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. And there in black and white were the problems that tormented my teenage soul: Do we have free will? Can we ever have knowledge? Do I even know myself? What is human nature, or a good society, and can morality exist without God? ... Why these things in particular should have been tormenting my soul, I do not know, though I suspect it had a lot to do with the fact that we kids in our household were always called upon to *justify* ourselves at the dinner table (again, this was a *long* time ago—being a kid seemed to mean being in a perpetual deficit of justification). Since I had a rebellious streak, my life thus far had called for more than the usual amount of justification, and my father was a keen dialectician masquerading as a public relations executive. I was game, but he seemed right: I never *could* convince myself that I *was* justified.

So here, in these philosophers, was stuff that seemed just as hard as the physics and chemistry that were bringing me to New York. Moreover, philosophers seemed to *value* a lack of confidence—telling me, not to ignore my doubts and get back to studying, but to push my uncertainty as far as it could go. Sartre explained why this is inescapable—only by self-

deception can we hide from ourselves the fact of choice and the depth of our inability to anchor life in external or internal certainties. Like it or not, we were in the end responsible for who we are and what sort of world we inhabit. I wanted to *study* and *understand* science, but I wanted to *live* philosophy. In short, I was in 'way over my head, and my solitary night-time ramblings got longer and darker.

My self-absorbed *angst* got put in its place, however, by events happening in the world around me. Demonstrators in the South, civilly demanding nothing more than equal rights, were harassed by an angry and contemptuous white populace, set upon with police dogs, splayed against walls and sidewalks by high-pressure hoses, and beaten to the ground before our eyes on the evening news. And, at night, out of sight, civil rights workers were being killed. Watts erupted in rebellion against police violence and repression, and later Newark and Detroit. Armed troops in armored vehicles and tanks were sent into the cities to try to enforce order. Something was terribly wrong, and it wasn't just the shallowness of consumer culture or teen anomie. But in my eyes, it *did* have something to do with bad faith. Mine. I hadn't yet heard the phrase that became the watchword for many of my generation, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." But an existential inner voice asked me, "OK, are *you* going to let this be the world? Then *that's* who you are."

I won't say my first steps were models of commitment or efficacy. I'd take a bus, not to Dixie, but to a nearby city in New Jersey, where I'd march in perfect peace and security in support of the campaign for equal rights in the South. And then Monday, I'd be back at school—and back to overachieving business-as-usual. Then, on the evening of April 4th of my senior year in high school Martin Luther King was shot dead on a balcony in Memphis, and when I arrived at school on April 5th the American flag that had always innocuously flown at the top of the tall pole in front of the gym somehow seemed intolerable. I marched up to the pole and lowered the flag to half-mast. Moments later, I was in the Administration Office, to do the morning announcements to the school over the PA system (you see, I really *was* an overachiever). Two of us alternated at the mike, and while I waited my turn, the Assistant Principal stormed in. Someone (not the word he used) had lowered the flag without permission, and he knew damn well why. Another existential moment. And I felt I *had* to admit that I did it, just as I *had* to lower the flag. So I learned that you *could* say, "I did it", just by opening your mouth and letting the words out, and the whole school had the treat of hearing over the PA system the "oof!" and commotion as the Vice Principal punched me from behind, pushed me against the wall, and told me I was finished at Northern Valley. I was held in the Principal's office that day, being told what a tremendous disappointment I was to the entire school, that they'd never let me graduate, and that, now, no college would take me. I was shaken and scared, not knowing what would happen next. All that overachievement down the drain!

Needless to say, the school administration fairly soon thought better of expelling me. A federal mandate ordered flags at half-mast across the country—even Gov. Lester Maddox of Georgia eventually complied—and I was allowed to graduate, and did go to college. In truth, I was a white, upper-middle-class kid and so not a member of the class you can beat and cast aside with impunity. But I'd learned a lesson about what it means to publicly refuse to inhabit some part of the world laid out for you—a very pale form of the lesson taught much more harshly to activists in the civil rights movement. Their *visible* stand to remind society of its own principles, however non-violent, could unleash concentrated fury from those who felt defied, bringing

public humiliation, beatings, and threats of much worse. Dewey was right, attempting to think put some portion of the world in jeopardy, which often includes oneself.

We next encounter this young man a year later, April 1969, once again shaken and scared, and not knowing what will happen next. He had taken another existential act the day before, and now he is locked arm-in-arm with two hundred fellow students in the narrow hallways of University Hall in the Harvard Yard, chanting and singing to keep up morale. The stale air is thick with the smell of sweat and fear.

All the previous year, the full horror of the war in Vietnam was making itself increasingly *visible* to the country as a whole, and students across the country saw a responsibility to end the deep and often covert contributions of their universities to the war effort. At Harvard there had been two and half years of protests, and yet the university administration had remained unresponsive. Now, in April, students belonging to Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)—which had been formed a number of years earlier to articulate a new progressive critique of American society, and had been active in the civil rights movement and anti-war movement—met and decided to occupy the administration building and disrupt business as usual. It was to be a militant occupation, meaning that the deans would be escorted out. Once inside, others joined them, and all assembled in the main meeting room to ask “What next?” in a tense, open debate that lasted much of the afternoon. By day’s end, this motley group had unified around a set of demands, drawn up a statement, and resolved upon tactics—if the police came, they’d face them directly, but only with non-violent, passive resistance. Our young man then took up a post guarding faculty personnel records upstairs. The protestors sought to find evidence to rebut administration denials on classified research, foot-dragging on changing the status of military training on campus, and expansion plans involving evictions in poor neighborhoods, and some such incriminating evidence was indeed found and published. But they had no interest in violating personal privacy or destroying property.

At 3 a.m. there was shouting throughout the building—the police were outside, with clubs, sledge hammers, a battering ram, and baby-blue riot helmets. Everyone gathered in the entryway and halls and locked arms. It did not take the police long to force open the door. They tore their way through the packed mass of students, beating the students arms apart and sending the students down a gauntlet of clubs before dragging them off to waiting vehicles headed directly for the Cambridge jail. But not our young man. As he was being pulled down the gauntlet a blow to the back of his head knocked him unconscious. He would awaken an hour later with a bandaged head in a strange bed—apparently the police found it inconvenient to have an unconscious protestor on their hands, and had dragged him down the stairs and into some nearby bushes, leaving him there. Some students in the neighboring dorm had seen this, and retrieved him as soon as they saw their chance.

But the Administration had miscalculated in thinking the protestors—who had up to now been a group who could safely be ignored—belonged to the class of people that could be beaten and cast out with impunity. Not in the eyes of their fellow students at any rate. A wave of anger spread across campus and hundreds came to a mass meeting that afternoon in Memorial Church. They decided to initiate the first Harvard strike since students had walked out of class to protest rancid food in the 1700’s. Three days later, 10-12,000 students tramped across the Anderson Memorial Bridge over the Charles River to the Harvard Stadium, and debated a

whole body questions that had only been on the agendas of partisan groups a week before: “How must Harvard be changed? Should the strike continue? What comes next?” After three hours of open debate, a more reformist wording of the demands had been hammered out and a vote was taken to continue the strike, giving the Faculty and Administration 48 hours to respond and agreeing to reunite in the stadium to assess that response, three days later. Before leaving, by a vote of acclamation so loud it could be heard at the Administration Building a half-mile away, students passed a resolution that the Administration had no right to close the campus and send them home—the University belonged to all its members. Astonishingly, in the next 48 hours the Faculty worked feverishly to respond to the demands and an Administration that had barely budgeted for a year made significant concessions, enough to convince most students to end the strike, ... for now. But enough, too, to convince students that, when united, they *can* make a difference.

Why dredge up these old memories of fear and clubs and mass meetings? Because I need to give you a sense of *rupture*—a sense of the way that a set of relations we students had had to the world of authority and legitimacy, which had been fraying for years, could finally be torn apart in the most concrete and *visible* way in a matter of hours, and remain torn for years to come. It was a rupture of the order of things that was occurring across our society—cities were burning, National Guardsmen were marching down the street with bayonets fixed, and people were being beaten, expelled, jailed, and shot. This rupture at the same time created a space of *liberation* and *possibility* we had not known before—not freedom from repression, but freedom when one is willing to face of repression. Once again, Dewey was right—once we allowed ourselves to think—and act—in our own right, beyond existing boundaries and institutions, seemingly immovable aspects of the system *could* be put in jeopardy. But we would have to accept placing ourselves in jeopardy as well. The slogan of the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley had been, “We must throw our bodies on the gears of the machine,” and by laying their bodies on the line, Berkeley students had won the right to hold political meetings and distribute information freely on campus.

One strike ended, but other protests, sit-ins, picket lines, and beatings and arrests followed. From tens in a meeting there could spring hundreds in a militant action and thousands in a strike and tens of thousands in the streets. Rupture and liberation brought with them a sense of *solidarity*. In the wake of Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia, some 4 million students were on strike at over 500 universities and colleges across the country. A hundred thousand citizens young and old marched on Washington. Anti-war protestors had generally faced much less violence and repression than had the civil rights protestors in the South or the rebellious youth of the urban riots of the North, but the shooting at Kent State and Jackson State made it clear that there were no limits that could be taken for granted. Even the most peaceful demonstrators came to know the sour taste of fear when the police charged. Men and women, young and old, learned the feeling of tear gas, heavy clubs, and hard sidewalks. But they also learned that they could force change if they paid the price.

So it seemed for a time like *one* struggle, and the demands of the strikers reflected that. There was of course the war. But equally fundamental was the civil rights struggle. The Free Speech Movement started in 1964 when the Berkeley administration called in police to arrest and force off campus a student who had been active in the group that traveled to the Deep South in the Mississippi Summer Project for voter registration, and who had set up an information and fund-

raising table. And it wasn't just pampered students at elite US universities. In 1968, striking students in France were joined by millions of workers who occupied auto factories and filled the streets in a general strike, often carried out in defiance of government and established unions alike. In Eastern Europe, students and workers joined together in mass protests against Soviet domination. In the US, student strikes reflected alliances between SDS and African-American student groups, demanding that universities be responsive to the needs of urban communities and that they establish African-American studies programs. Civil rights leaders were speaking out against the Vietnam War, and the Black Panthers sent a delegation to the SDS seeking support. Women forced a male-dominated movement to re-examine itself and widen its agenda, and Harvard got its first women's center when students occupied a disused University building and furnished it with used mattresses pilfered from the University stockpile. Vietnam veterans themselves organized protests in defiance of authority and inmates in Attica High Security Prison rebelled against arbitrary abuses and demanded decent treatment. Thousands of groups mobilized across the country for countless demonstrations and endless meetings, trying to thrash out differences and map out effective strategies. Imagine the top floor of staid Emerson Hall, home of the Harvard Philosophy Department, active night and day with a silk-screen room for posters and t-shirts, a mimeo room for printing and distributing leaflets, and caucuses, caucuses, caucuses. Now imagine this repeated on dozens of campuses, and in dozens of cities. Oscar Wilde was right, the problem with socialism is no free evenings.

These events were formative for a large number of young philosophers, historians, scientists, economists, anthropologists, physicians, lawyers, They felt betrayed by many of their teachers. When a member of the Philosophy Department attempted to read a student petition at a meeting of the Harvard faculty, a petition protesting the imposition of a disciplinary committee to which student residence after student residence had refused to elect members, this faculty member's three-minute time allotment expired before he reached the end. Could he at least finish reading their students' words? Harsh shouts of "No!" from faculty all across the room quickly settled that. Despite the students' massive refusal to participate, the faculty went ahead with the disciplinary committee. Later, when one of the leading liberal moral philosophers of our time was asked by his students not to take his lunch, as usual, at the Harvard Faculty Club, since the Club was at the same time hosting the Minister of Education of the Greek military junta, which had ended academic and press freedoms, and tortured thousands, he replied that the question was indeed "important", but "too complicated to decide". And went in. By my third and final year I had, like virtually all of the SDS Executive Committee, accumulated or exceeded the limit of warnings from faculty disciplinary committees—and those who had been expelled were often banned from campus and taken to court if they returned. We had come to Harvard thinking we were on the inside of an educational elite and a venerable tradition; we left, it seemed at the time, as outsiders who would need to create new traditions.

The True Alienation of Labor

But we were not alone. And this begins the second moment of transition in our young man's life. There was a world of outsiders to join and a tremendous amount to do. New books and journals on economics, history, science, women's health, and man's relation to the environment would need to be written or rewritten. Young people from Japan and Korea to Pakistan and India to Europe to Latin America fought their distinctive systems in their distinctive ways. People were trying new paths, not asking permission, not knowing their destination, and looking—as Dewey would have them do—to agency and experience as a guide along the way. My own paths took me through working on an auto assembly line, to working as a technician in large office, to working as a commercial fisherman. My co-workers had every reason to resent me, a college student who'd never known real privation. Instead they befriended me, taking me into their lives. And I learned from experience the deep truth of the theory of the alienation of labor. Not that workers couldn't own all they produced—as Marx himself insists, in any humane society, there must be some surplus created for redistribution to help those in need and investment and education for the future. The deep truth, as I saw it, was that the factories and office floors and slippery decks of fishing boats were full of people just as intelligent and curious as the people I'd met at university, but whose abilities were never going to have the chance to develop that was enjoyed by those more privileged. Their lives would be a succession of days filled with work that was necessary just to get by. Thereby they generated the tremendous surplus that kept afloat the privileged classes in the style to which they were accustomed. This aspect of our economy, this relentless pressure for productivity at the bottom and the resulting fundamental inequality of fates across the social hierarchy, has gotten worse, not better, in the years since. But we'll come back to that

Why I prefer meetings

Does this mean that, in the end, the flood of protest had run like a river into the desert, leaving society much as it found it? “The revolution will not be televised”, ran the song, but it turned out that it *would* be institutionalized. The movement fragmented in the early 1970's—at the SDS National Convention, it was the question of non-violence and support for the Black Panthers that split us, much as issues of nationalism and non-violence had split the civil rights movement earlier. Those formerly united spread out in countless directions, some into clandestine activities, but most diffused through the institutions and practices of society, and into the internal struggles that took place within these institutions in the years that followed. A less dramatic struggle, fought not in streets but in meetings and caucuses and in the everyday running of life. Much that was unjust and wretched about our society remains so—and here, so near to Ferguson, we can hardly forget this, or the obligations it entails. Neither can we ignore the growing inequality that threatens fundamental democratic values. But many institutions and practices have been profoundly changed. As the folk saying mentioned by Lucius Outlaw in his Dewey Lecture has it, while society “ain't all it might be, and ain't all it should be, it damned sure ain't what it used to be”.

But some things haven't changed: Oscar Wilde is still right—because the cost of building a society where the people have more say in how their lives are run is still many, many meetings. What is a meeting, after all, but *people deliberating together with a capacity to act as a group* that is more than just a sum of individual actions, and this sort of informed joint action is a precondition for significant social change. Come together, decide together, act together, and bear the consequences together. We must own our institutions or they will surely own us. As Aristotle told us, one becomes a citizen not by belonging to a polity or having a vote, but by shouldering the tasks of joint deliberation and civic governance. And there is no civic or faculty governance, no oversight of discrimination in hiring and promotion, no regulation of pollutants, no organization of faculty or students to initiate curricular reform, no mobilization by professional associations to protect their most vulnerable members or to promote greater diversity, no increased humaneness in the treatment of animals and human subjects, no chance to offset arbitrariness and bullying within offices and departments, no oversight of progress and revision of plans in response to changing circumstances, without actual people *who care* spending long hours in the work of planning, meeting, and making things happen. The alternative is for all these decisions to be made at the discretion of those on high—or not at all.

We all complain about this work, but it is essential if we are to redeem the sacrifices of those who came before. We think, “But serving on that committee will cost me two articles!” For a junior person, this might be dead right. For the rest of us? Well, we don't seem to be suffering as a field from a shortage of articles. But I think we are suffering, still, from a lack of inclusion and fairness, and from the threat of increased precariousness for the many younger philosophers who are doing an increasing portion of the teaching of philosophy in the colleges and universities across this country.

Of course, I am using ‘committees’ and ‘meetings’ as stand-ins for countless forms of joint deliberation and action. It needn't fill the streets with banners or occupy buildings—*sustainable* activism is the work of a lifetime, not just of youthful bravado. What most impresses me about the activism of today's youth is that it persists, indeed, flourishes, in countless ways that are more integrated with the ways of working of the world. As I look around me from the vantage point of Philosophy, I see colleagues and students investing countless hours trying to enhance the inclusion of women and other under-represented groups, or to build collective bargaining for graduate student instructors and term lecturers, or to reach out beyond the university to promote equitable trade, or to support humane and ecological practices in agriculture, or to bring new resources to under-served communities. These efforts involve personal sacrifice, and often made by those within the academy whose positions are the least secure. Moreover, they are making these sacrifices without a movement at their backs, or a *Zeitgeist* to buoy them from below. So it behooves those of us who are more secure to revive *our* spirit of activism. To lend a hand, and to use whatever leverage we might have to provide badly-needed support. This past year, an administrative plan at Michigan called for the firing of hundreds of valued departmental staff, who could then apply to be rehired to work at off-site units where they'd carry out compartmentalized, regimented, and controlled task work—in essence, more alienated labor in the name of alleged efficiency. Faculty managed to pull together and use what leverage they had—petition campaigns, departmental non-cooperation, and turning out *en masse* for official meetings—to force roll-back of the plan. But there will be other plans, I am

sure. In trying to enhance efficiency, university administrations are trying to respond to budgetary pressures that are quite real. But administrations have sought to do this without involving faculty and staff, concentrating power. If we are to retain the sort of community universities have been, faculty and staff will need to work together to demand a role in decision-making—but we cannot ask for such a role without also *owning* the problems of access to college and university and rising student debt. We need to examine what we do to find ways to make education more affordable and inclusive, and to *take*, as well as resist, initiatives. This is today's challenge for activism. Such activism won't be either comfortable or glamorous, and it will mean a lot more meetings. In particular, those of us who are beneficiaries of the extraordinary privileges of senior academic life have to take up the cause of helping to make it the case that those at the beginning of academic careers have real prospects of secure and productive professional lives. If the philosophical profession can show solidarity with our most vulnerable members, even as they show solidarity with the many communities they aspire to serve, then Dewey will look down upon the philosophical world and smile.

End of tirade.

How not to advise

And on to the next moment in this man's life. It's now 1978, and we find him a young faculty member in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Michigan, an ABD who had specialized in the philosophy of science hired to fill a position in moral and political philosophy in a department that was tenuring about one in three of its junior faculty. All this was less than auspicious. William Frankena, by then emeritus, saw the situation for what it was and undertook to give me the basic training in ethics I had failed to acquire. (After Frankena's death, my colleagues Allan Gibbard, Steve Darwall, Liz Anderson, and Sarah Buss took over this educational task.)

Other senior faculty tried to be helpful in their own ways. After a contentious faculty meeting in which I had tried to mount a moral high horse, one senior colleague took me aside and explained how important it was "not to embarrass one's senior colleagues morally". As you might expect, I didn't take this very well, but of course, he had touched a nerve: moral embarrassment is exactly what I felt underneath as my high-minded-sounding proposal fell flat and it felt as if I had said something about my colleagues that I didn't really believe. Posturing was worse than useless—it also denied the real relations of collegiality I felt. It would take some time for me to learn how to work with faculty and administrators as colleagues in a *shared* effort—not a *consensus* effort, since there were still fights ahead—but an effort in which there was a chance of coming out at the end with real change that others could embrace and, more importantly, sustain.

I had to learn this lesson another way as well, and now I was the one who was chilling the self-expression of an individual I out-ranked. One of my early graduate advisees was a free spirit full of insight and passion for philosophy, but skeptical of orthodoxy. We would spend long hours roaming around talking about epistemology and metaphysics. He was the only graduate student I ever met who had ridden the rails, hopping freight trains to cross the country and spending

the nights in hobo camps. Such were the diverse paths that were at that time now reconverging upon the academy. I would cover his writings with comments, and when finally it came time to submit his prospectus, we went through draft after draft. Finally, he called me out. “You think you’re doing me a favor, Peter, giving me all these comments. But I think you’re just trying to spare yourself embarrassment when (name of famous senior colleague withheld) reads my prospectus.” I bridled at this, but there was too much truth in it for me to deny. He took another advisor, and wisely so, and went on to a successful career that did justice to his special sensibility and allowed it to flourish, as I had not. No doubt I have erred in the same direction since, but I still hear his warning voice echoing in the back of my mind.

Quality and qualities

I think that students can easily underestimate their effect on their teachers, and young faculty can easily underestimate their effect on older colleagues.

Let’s dwell a bit longer on our young man’s early academic career, to observe something curious. He had the good fortune to have as teachers and colleagues some true philosophical trail-blazers. And it was thereby that he discovered how harsh our discipline really is. By spending quiet hours with these creative philosophers, he learned that they could suffer a surprising fate—in the prime of their careers, they could come to withdraw more and more from full participation in the public life of the department or the profession because they were *intimidated* onto the sidelines by some philosophers with very sharp intellectual knives and rather too much delight in using them.

In philosophy, we boast, it is not enough to be learned or accomplished, *you have to make a case*. And every case worth making faces tremendous difficulties. We are, by training, good at pouncing on these difficulties. This is in many ways a good thing. Philosophical hypotheses are seldom testable in a lab, but we run experiments every time we do a seminar presentation, give a lecture, or write an article. Other philosophers pay one’s work the respect of taking it seriously enough to listen for the arguments ... and then attempt to find and apply the most telling stress test. You’re *smart* if you can meet and beat the challenge.

This can be of tremendous value. But is it really all that’s going on? Is this really entirely about the selfless pursuit of truth? And is this the only way of showing respect for work, or learning from dialogue, or testing our views? How did *smartness* get to be so central in evaluation in a discipline that is supposed to be seeking knowledge and wisdom? And what is it doing to us as students, teachers, colleagues, and researchers to allow this culture to persist? What are the full costs of this culture, in which we all to some degree participate, even if only passively?

Sarah-Jane Leslie and colleagues (2015) have done research which might tell us something about these costs. Leslie and colleagues polled academics nationwide in disciplines across the university and got evidence that philosophers are at the very high end of the spectrum of disciplines in their answer to the question whether success in their field requires “raw, innate talent” or “a special aptitude that can’t be taught”. Moreover, Leslie and colleagues discovered

that, in general, disciplines where such an idea prevails—mathematics, physics, music composition, among others—have lower representations of women and historically under-represented groups than disciplines where greater importance is attached to “effort and dedication” as opposed to “raw ability”. Our ideology of smartness may work against an ideal of inclusiveness. So it’s no longer cute—can we also make it no longer cool?

We are talking here *not* about a sober recognition that aptitudes of a kind difficult to teach play a role in academic success in philosophy—of course they do, in every discipline. Rather, we are talking about an *ideology* of the discipline that communicates to students an exaggeratedly narrow and esoteric ideal type of these aptitudes, and subliminally informs many talented students “you are not the type”. I was speaking with a mathematician the other day—the quintessential field of “smarts”. She has an international reputation and works in a top department. She looked at me in a level gaze. “I always tell my women students that I wasn’t the strongest student in *my* graduate class. And I wasn’t the second strongest student. But maybe I had better ideas. Or asked better questions. Or cared more about the work.” We still have a long way to go in understanding the mechanisms involved in the implicit creation and promulgation of disciplinary ideology of “smartness”, and the ways this ideology manifests itself in our teaching, writing, and colloquia. But there’s no reason to take this ideology as fixed in the meanwhile. Once again, a voice should ask, “OK, are we going to let this be the world we inhabit? Then *that’s* who we are.” But it *isn’t* who we are—there is a tremendous amount of good will within philosophy to expand the representation of under-represented groups, and there’s a growing body of knowledge about ways of accomplishing this.

Can we, like good Deweyians, combine theory and practice to create the open and diverse community of inquirers that was the ideal represented in the best spirit of the 1960s and 1970s—even if, in truth, we very often fell short. The thing is, we are *still* falling short. And we’re running out of excuses.

We’ll never know what this ideology of smartness has cost the discipline over the years in terms of the discouragement of creative minds of all ages who just didn’t, or wouldn’t, fit that mold.

* * *

A fourth transition

I promised to try to avoid narrative unity, opting instead to try to evoke three periods in a life that turned out to be—just as I’d hoped—the life of a philosopher. Memory is unreliable, but perhaps these are cases in which ignoring memory would be worse. I picked these stories because each was, for me, a difficult lesson, and because I think I have enough of a grasp of them, and how they felt, that it might be useful for others to hear about them. Or at least

interesting. And I picked these moments because, I believe, each had an important role in shaping my philosophical views.

From my early days of protest and making the transition from insider to outsider, I acquired a sense that moral issues are not only real, but palpable. By trying to make things different, one can learn not only where power lies and how it is exercised, but also who is hurt, how they're hurt, and what might make things better. I was drawn, therefore, to a form of realism that was not minimal or quietist, but naturalistic and reforming. It called for a metaphysics in which value can be found at the intersection of mind and world, and an epistemology in which such values can be learned through experience, good and bad. And it was a realism that gives a central role to *consequences*—to the differences made in people's lives. We're a long way from justice, and an ideal theory cannot tell us how to get from there to here. We need a theory that permits large-scale critique while also contribute to guiding the struggles that make for moral progress—always hard won and never complete or secure. And rarely, if ever, wholly by the rules.

From my later days as a young faculty member, making the transition back from outsider to insider, working with graduate students and colleagues, I got a sense of the moral world as deeply intertwined with *affect* as well as deliberation and action. Indeed, I have come to believe that the world of cognition is no less steeped in affect. That's as it should be, I now realize, since affect is the mind's way of registering *appreciation*—of evidence, of the importance of a fact, of the value of an action, of the goodness of a life. Most of things I blame myself for in life I did from fear of social embarrassment and humiliation—this has been a much more effective deterrent than clubs or threats in keeping me from doing the right thing. Reasoning has certainly helped me try to address these fears, but reasoning has done an almost equally good job of rationalizing my failures to overcome them. When I have managed to overcome this fear, it is because an appreciation of the values and ideals and lives at stake got the better of my over-socialized self—I *felt*, and not merely thought, I had to act.

And from my quiet hours listening to my teachers as I myself was becoming a teacher, has finally come a resolve. It is fear of just such social embarrassment and humiliation that have kept me from calling depression by its right name. Here is yet another way of being an outsider, another way of being shut off from life. As academics, we live in its midst. We know how it hurts our students, our colleagues, our teachers, our families. Of course, most of us are “educated” about depression—we like to think that we no longer consider it a stain on one's character. We've gotten beyond that. Or have we?

I'd like to roll my three life lessons together to make a fourth. (Beware narrative unity!) The stunning reversal of age-old attitudes toward gay marriage came about, not simply because the heterosexual population became “educated” about homosexuality so that they no longer “thought” it a stain on one's character. It came about, I believe, through *experience-based moral learning* of the kind Dewey continually emphasized. Enough gay individuals courageously took things into their own hands and came out publicly. Within two decades the rest of the population had learned from this bold experiment that among their friends, neighbors, co-workers, children, parents, teachers, students, and favorite movie stars were many gay individuals. Were *these* people to be denied the rights of life and love the rest of us enjoy? How could we continue to view them as outsiders to the “proper” way of living while

remaining faithful to the love, friendship, respect, and care we felt for them? Today, nearly a majority of *Republicans* favor gay marriage.

“Don’t ask, don’t tell.” Well, it wasn’t enough. Because this very formulation suggests that there is still something to be ashamed of, that being gay should be a *private* matter. And of course, anyone is entitled to keep their sexual orientation as private as they like. But gay individuals and groups insisted that privacy should be a *choice*, not a social demand or policy or presumption. Being gay must have an equal place in the *public* world—it must be made *visible*, uncomfortable as this has been for so many people, so that heterosexuals could see their gay brothers and sisters for what they are, not for what their incomprehension and apprehensions had made of them.

And what of depression? Perhaps we all know the *mask* of depression, that frozen, affectless face we catch glimpses of on our students, colleagues, and friends. I can’t do anything about that. But perhaps I can do something about the *face* of depression—its *visible* image in the minds of our children and parents, teachers and students. Because in truth, we are still to a considerable degree still in a world of “Don’t ask, don’t tell” with regard to depression and associated mental disorders, such as anxiety, even though these will severely affect one in ten of us over the course of a lifetime, and often at more than one point in a lifetime.

So there’s nothing for it. Those whose have dwelt in the depths depression need to come out as well. Some already have, but far too few adult men (big surprise!), and especially far too few of the adult men who somehow have come to bear the stamp of respectability and recognition, and thus are visible to hundreds of students and colleagues. It’s no big deal, right? We’re all enlightened about this. Then why do the words stick in my throat when I tell you that another theme uniting the three episodes I have recounted from my life, and that has played an equally important role in shaping my philosophy, is that they were all accompanied by *my* depression. This moody high school student, this struggling protester, this anxious young faculty member—they were all me and they were all living through major depressive episodes at the time. And there have been other such episodes, some more recent. Thankfully, for me and especially for my family who have been through so much already, not right now.

Did others know? I don’t know. Some must have guessed—perhaps those who themselves had known depression in their lives could see the mask of depression upon my face. But the thing is: I couldn’t say it. I couldn’t say, “Look, I’m dying inside. I need help.” Because that’s what depression is—it isn’t sadness or moodiness, it is above all a logic that undermines from within, that brings to bear all the mind’s mighty resources in convincing you that you’re worthless, incapable, unloveable, and everyone would be better off without you. Not a steely-eyed, careful critique from which one might learn, but an incessant bludgeoning that exaggerates past errors while ignoring new information, eroding even the ability to form memories. A young man once had the courage to tell me, “My brain is telling me to kill myself, but my body is saying ‘no.’” Happily, his body won. But it doesn’t always. Every year, thousands of young men don’t win the battle. We are captive audiences to our own minds, and it can become intolerable.

So why should *I* contribute to making it harder for others to acknowledge their depression and seek help? I know what has held me back all these years. Would people think less of me?

Would I seem to be tainted, reduced in their eyes, someone with an inner failing whom no one would want to hire or with whom no one would want to marry or have children? Would even friends start tip-toeing around my psyche? Would colleagues trust me with responsibility? I'm now established in my career, so some of these questions have lost some of their bite for me. But not all of them. And think of those who are not as well-placed as I have come to be. Think how these questions can as resonate in the mind of a depressed undergraduate or graduate student, trying and failing to do his work, trying to earn the confidence and esteem of his teachers, worried what his friends and parents will think, afraid to show his face in the Department, struggling to find his first job. Will he feel free to come forward and ask for help? Or think of a young faculty member, trying to earn the confidence and esteem of *her* colleagues, perhaps one of the 12-13% of women who will experience a depressive episode in association with pregnancy? Will she feel free to come forward? We're beginning to accept parental or care-giver leave as a normal part of a career—will faculty feel equally able to request medical leave for depression?

So today marks another rupture for me, another time I *have* to act and it *has* to be public and I have to *live with* the consequences, whatever they are. And like the previous ruptures, this creates a space of freedom and possibility, including the possibility of solidarity with those who have, or whose lives are entwined with others who have, depression. People ask, "But when I see signs of depression in someone, what should I do? I don't want to pry. How can I broach the question?" I am no expert, but I do know that seeking help, and doing so sooner rather than later, is vital. I have learned, discretely, that I can give someone an opening for a conversation about seeking help by talking instead about *my own* experiences, and what help has done for me. So here, today, I now give to all of you my experience, as story, a tale, an example, you might tell others, or yourself, in order to open a non-threatening conversation with yourself or others about what seeking help can do. I stand before you because *others* have taken initiatives to open for me the path to seeking treatment.

Why now? As in civil rights struggles and the war in Vietnam, *innocent people are being killed*—their lives cut short, their promise lost, and their families and friends devastated. It's just too late in the day for "Don't ask, don't tell". Our children, our students, the young faculty forced to live for years with insecure or term-limited jobs—they are under unprecedented levels of stress, and this is showing itself in rising public health statistics for depression and anxiety. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for post-secondary students, and rising. And its chief cause is *untreated* depression. Twenty percent of college students say their depression level is higher than it should be, but only 6% say that they would seek help, and still fewer actually do.

What does it say to our students or colleagues, how does it contribute their ability to seek care, or to escape a sense of utter loneliness and inability to make it out the other side, if even grey grown-ups like me with established careers and loving families can't be open about the depression that has so deeply shaped our lives, and who can make it clear by our very selves, *there's real help, you can make it, it's worth it, you're worth it.*

Perhaps if enough of us, of all ages and walks of life, parents, children, brothers, co-workers, spouses, relatives, deans and directors, tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, can be open about our passages through mental illness, a shadowy stigma will fade away in the broad light of day. We

must call it *mental illness* because that's what it is, *illness that takes up residence in the mind*, but no more of the essence of a person than any other illness. And when we hear of mental illness, *treatment* should be the first thing that comes to mind, not shame and withdrawal. When I was young (how many times have I said *that* in the past 50 minutes?) that was how people saw *cancer*. "Don't ask, don't tell", keep it private, you mustn't upset others, or taint yourself or your family. I think we as a society have almost gotten over this bit of absurdity, and the incomprehension and fear that held it in place for generations. Because we now all know what cancer looks like: it looks like all of us ... only with some cells that won't behave themselves, so let's do what we can to fix or manage that. Perhaps if enough of us who've lived with depression pitch in and do our small bit, the true face of depression will at last be visible: it looks like all of us ... only with some cells that won't behave, so let's do what we can to fix or manage *that*.

So now you find this man before you. Once more, shaken and scared. And not knowing what will happen next. ... I think I'd prefer a police charge.

¹ I hope that readers who find any historical inaccuracies in these recollections will bring them to my attention, prailton@umich.edu. I would like to thank Warren Goldfarb for several helpful corrections: activism against the war at Harvard had been going on for two and a half years prior to the occupation, not one, as previously stated, and the event that triggered the nationwide student strikes of 1970 was the Nixon Administration's *invasion* of Cambodia, not their massive *bombing* of Cambodia, which at the time was still secret.