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Is There a "Safe Space" for Academic Freedom?

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1. Can the University Be a Place "Where We Can Go as We Are and Not Be Questioned"?

In its 1915 "Declaration of Principles," the American Association of University Professors (A.A.U.P.) offered a powerful statement of the view that academic freedom is vital to the work that goes on in a university.[1] On this view, academic freedom is necessary to protect the university as an "intellectual experiment station, where new ideas may germinate and where their fruit, though still distasteful to the community as a whole, may be allowed to ripen" (A.A.U.P. 2006, p. 297). That is, if the university is to function properly, it must be a domain in which we can consider and debate the merits of diverse—and sometimes unsettling and disturbing—ideas and knowledge claims, as well as varied attempts to understand ourselves and transform the world. In the contemporary university, the goods produced through such intellectual experimentation include the extension of basic knowledge; the preservation of valuable traditions of argument and inquiry; "translational" research that might improve human life; and the education of students for constructive participation in complex modern polities. When supported by a robust tenure system, and faculty participation in institutional governance, academic freedom provides a durable framework for these activities through a set of professional rights. The most important rights in that set are: (1) the right to determine the content of research and publication, (2) the right to make important decisions about the content and terms of teaching, and (3) the right to speak or write as citizens without fear of institutional discipline or censorship (A.A.U.P. 2006, p. 3). Ideally, these rights help define the university as a largely self-regulating domain of intellectual inquiry that any complex modern democracy ought to value and protect.[2]

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[1] The Declaration of Principles was officially authored by Arthur Lovejoy and Edwin Seligman, but there was most likely input from well-known defenders of academic freedom like John Dewey. The opening paragraph of this paper draws on my earlier discussion of academic freedom in "What's So Special about Academic Freedom?" (Moody-Adams 2015).

[2] I offer a defense of this claim in Moody-Adams (2015).

Yet the institutions through which a society educates its members also form a critical part of what John Rawls called the "basic structure" of a society: the way in which its major social, political, and economic institutions "distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation" (Rawls 1971, p. 7). This means that we can legitimately ask whether what goes on within mostly self-governing colleges and universities contributes effectively to a just distribution of society's benefits and burdens. That is, can a largely self-regulating academy adequately conform to justice-based demands derived from external norms of political morality? This critical question has been answered with a resounding "no" by many students who engage in "safe space" advocacy, seeking to create various campus domains in which they might be protected from disturbing ideas or experiences. I will argue, in contrast, that providing robust protection of academic freedom can be fully consistent with meeting the broader demands of justice, and that limiting academic freedom as safe space advocates seek to do would eventually stifle the kind of debate most likely to help promote justice in the face of contemporary challenges to it.

Of course, critics of the safe space movement often disdain or disregard that movement's concern with justice. Students who advocate for safe spaces are said to be overly sensitive whiners, "hiding from scary ideas," because they lack the fortitude for serious intellectual exchange (Coyne 2015; Shulevitz 2015; Pérez-Peña et al. 2016). Or they are dismissed as unwitting dupes of problematic pedagogical trends which (allegedly) encourage students to "think pathologically" by endorsing "emotional reasoning" which presumes that "subjective feelings" ought to guide interpretation of reality, and promoting "vindictive protectiveness" that distorts perception of campus life (Lukianoff and Haidt 2015). Yet a substantial portion of the safe space movement presupposes a claim about the requirements of justice: that unrestricted academic freedom (along with freedom of expression in certain non-academic forums) too often overrides substantive equality and imposes unfair burdens on affected students.[3] The movement thus echoes a stance first articulated by legal theorists, philosophers, and political thinkers who have held that, in some contexts, the harm done by certain kinds of expression can be serious enough to create an equality-undermining hostile environment (Matsuda et al. 1993; Anderson and Pildes 2000).

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[3] I stress, however, that freedom of expression in the broad sense is not at issue in this paper. I follow Louis Menand, among others, in holding that freedom of speech is not an extension of freedom of expression (even though in the context of public universities and colleges, the most secure supports for academic freedom have often come through application of the laws and conventions protecting free speech) (Menand 1996, pp. 6–7). As I argue elsewhere (Moody-Adams 2015, pp. 104–5), freedom of expression protects the equal rights of citizens to express convictions in private exchanges and in various written and oral contexts in public. Academic freedom is a set of rights and privileges that belong to the accredited scholar (as defined in the opening paragraph of this paper). Most importantly, the right to determine the methods and content of one's teaching includes the right to exclude certain ideas and claims (e.g. astrology, Holocaust denial, creationism, the denial of climate change). Free speech rights are never associated with this right to limit what others can hear and discuss. The freedom of students in classrooms (and classroom-like spaces) in the university is best understood in terms of the idea of freedom to study and learn: that is, in terms of the German concept of *lernfreiheit,* as distinct from *lehrfreiheit*, or the freedom of the academic to teach.

But we can rationally assess the argument that underwrites the safe space movement's hostile environment claim only if we explicitly reconstruct it. As I understand it, the argument asserts, first, that colleges and universities have too willingly tolerated injurious expression that targets vulnerable students—vulnerable, because they belong to groups that have been (and continue to be) subject to discrimination and oppression, and who are consequently stigmatized as unwelcome in, or undeserving of access to, the university. The argument contends, second, that injurious expression is ubiquitous on campus: in class readings; in unreflective comments made by teachers and fellow students; in student interactions in campus facilities; in commentary by invited speakers; in elements of the built environment; and even in administrative nomenclature. Finally, the argument concludes with the claim that the harm produced by such expression is so widespread that any approach which discourages harmful expression, but does not try to suppress or eliminate it, violates a fundamental norm of political morality: the commitment to substantive equality of educational opportunity. The safe space movement is thus a contemporary expression of the idea that liberal democracies cannot be fully just until they achieve a defensible resolution of the tension between liberty and equality. The movement essentially challenges us to consider whether robust protection of academic freedom can be part of such a resolution. I will argue that it can, because the exercise of academic freedom often proves critical to understanding that we sometimes respond most constructively to harmful expression through the transformative power of ideas.

Yet safe space advocacy often poses another, and in some ways more vexing, challenge when the norms of political morality to which it appeals become intertwined with norms and cultural attitudes that have nothing to do with political morality and that are, in fact, antithetical to academic values. Demands to be protected from injurious expression are sometimes entangled with (1) *market-based norms* on which students are essentially construed as customers who can rightly demand input in shaping the "products" they consume; (2) *anti-intellectual prejudices* that demean intellectual life and encourage students to challenge the epistemological authority of academic expertise; and (3) *mental health norms* through which students appeal unreflectively to what has been called the "master narrative" of late modernity, on which human beings are essentially defined by their capacity for psychological suffering and "trauma," but not also by their capacity to *overcome* that suffering.[4] I will show that frequent failures to separate concern for justice from market values, anti-intellectualism, and the valorization of trauma not only endanger academic freedom but ultimately undermine the safe space advocates' efforts to promote justice.

My replies to the challenges posed by safe space advocacy are thus part of an effort to take seriously the movement's justice-based argument. After setting down the main outlines of the argument in this section, Section 2 assesses its claims about the possibility

[4] Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2008) discusses the problematic rise and influence of the "master narrative" of trauma.

and extent of "expressive harm," as well as its reliance on the concepts of trauma and "trigger warnings." Section 3 considers what it means to claim that expressive harm can be caused by a campus's defining messages and imagery and considers whether the best way to respond to such harm must always involve removing or expunging its source. Section 4 reflects on the nature and consequences of efforts to purge the campus of "microaggressions" and implicit bias. Throughout the discussion, I explore the nature and implications of the safe space movement's main responses to expressive harm: (a) *trauma-based claims* invoking the concept of "trigger warnings"; (b) *stigma-based claims* focusing on campus-defining messages and imagery; and (c) *unreflective inference claims* focusing on microaggressions and implicit bias.

It must be noted that students sometimes make a fourth kind of safe space claim—*offense-based claims*—when they find material offensive to their sensibilities, their moral and religious commitments, or their sense of their own identities. Because these claims have no direct connection to concerns about expressive harm, they are mostly peripheral to the argument of this paper. Yet offense-based claims do raise two concerns that are quite relevant to this project. First, they raise the question whether students have a general "right not to be offended"—whether by what goes on in the classroom, or by the circulation of ideas in non-classroom forums. In agreement with (current) American constitutional law, I have argued that they do not have such a right, although instructors (and other campus officials) have a morally and professionally weighty duty to be as respectful as possible of earnest disagreement (Bd. of Regents of the Univ. of Wisconsin v. Southworth 2000; Moody-Adams 2015, p. 105). Second, once we understand that offense based-claims are really a kind of "safe space" claim, it becomes clear that students at both ends of the political spectrum make demands for safe spaces. Public attention has tended to focus on the political "left"—most often, when students are offended by some dimension of a Western classic like Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Johnson et al. 2015; Coyne 2015). But politically conservative students also make offense-based safe space claims, though they seldom invoke the language of "safe spaces" in doing so. Their objections focus most often on curricular requirements meant to stimulate discussion of cultural and religious diversity.[5] It matters a great deal to my argument that, at both ends of the political spectrum, offense-based claims often reflect a widespread tendency toward intolerance, and that this intolerance is usually rooted in anti-intellectual resistance to the possibility that serious disagreement can be discussed in a civil and respectful fashion. This helps to show that anti-intellectualism is one of the most important sources of the safe space movement, as a whole.

This anti-intellectualism means that contemporary students often seek safe spaces because they are skeptical of the transformative power of ideas, and fundamentally resistant to the defining purposes of a university education—especially the aims of

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[5] For an account of a widely discussed challenge to Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* see Johnson et al. (2015) and Coyne (2015). For challenges to "diversity" programming at the other end of the political spectrum see Ballentine (2015) and Morgan (2002).

education in the liberal arts. In the *Sociological Imagination,* C. Wright Mills argued that a liberal education would ideally be a "liberating education," helping students learn "to turn personal troubles and concerns into social issues and problems open to reason" (Mills 1959, p. 186).[6] But too many current students believe that such projects have little value, often because they also accept a market-based model to determine the "real" value of their education. This leads them to limit the courses they take in some of the most transformative subjects in the humanities and humanistic social sciences, since they see little economic value in those disciplines. It also makes them reticent to participate in class discussions on challenging topics and unwilling to consider divergent views in non-classroom forums.

But skepticism about the projects of a liberal education is particularly dangerous for students who advocate safe spaces in the interest of justice. For, because these students understand themselves as unfairly vulnerable to expressive harm, they demand an educational experience that shields them from the possibility of such harm. At the same time, they want the university to educate *others* about the historical practices, institutions, and policies that have made them vulnerable to expressive harm. But what if those "others" demand to be exempted from engagement with such facts—perhaps because they believe that it unfairly "targets" them as complicit with oppression, or simply because they do not care to learn about the concerns of diverse "others"? It is not clear that safe space advocates can *justifiably* object to such demands, and this suggests that even if the campus could be purged of all the expression to which safe space advocates object, the result would be a Pyrrhic victory: making the university "safe" for the division and balkanization that have so damaged life outside the university.

Maya Angelou once observed that "the ache for home lives in all of us," and that, at the very least, home is "the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned" (Angelou 1986, p. 196). But the university should not try to be a "home" in this sense. The intellectual ferment of the 1960s and 1970s helped to make the university less "safe" for exclusion because the university contained "spaces" in which its constituents could not avoid challenges to its own homogeneity. The ideals of diversity and inclusion that arose as part of these challenges are now being called into question by the "new tribalism" of the twenty-first century (Reich 2014). The university can provide contexts for substantive debate about a constructive response only if we protect academic freedom *in* the classroom, and reasonable freedom of expression in campus spaces *outside of it*. Of course, the confrontation and contestation that are essential to vigorous debate must be balanced by civility and respect. But we must strike that balance in a way that enhances the transformative projects of a liberal education and restores confidence that these projects are critical to democratic flourishing.

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[6] Henry Giroux (2013) offers a provocative treatment of these issues.

2. Navigating the Terrain of "Trauma" and "Triggers"

Safe space advocates lack this confidence because they presume that robust defenses of academic freedom fail to understand the power of expression. Yet what does it mean to take the power of expression seriously? The eponymous main character in Bulwer-Lytton's *Richelieu* famously observed that "the pen is mightier than the sword," and that we may sometimes "take away the sword" because "states can be saved without it" (Bulwer-Lytton [1839] 1896). But if words can truly "save" states, perhaps we need to seriously consider an idea that runs counter to John Stuart Mill's influential account of free expression: the idea that some expression has the power to *directly* wound a vulnerable reader or listener simply in virtue of its content or viewpoint, or to *directly* harm some social groups simply in virtue of the stigmatizing messages it conveys.

In the context of American legal thought, serious attention to the possibility of "expressive harm" first emerged in debates about arguments in the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*, concerning the damaging messages expressed by racial segregation of American public schools (Brown v. Board of Education 1954). In *Brown*, the Supreme Court rejected the argument of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which had claimed that if racial segregation could be interpreted to stamp African Americans with a "badge of inferiority," it was not by "reason of anything found in the act" but only because African Americans chose "to put that construction on it" (Plessy v. Ferguson 1896; Moody-Adams 2006). In rejecting this stance, the majority in *Brown* helped make it intellectually respectable to hold that, unlike the harm done by "ordinary" slander and libel, and unlike the harm done by expression that constitutes incitement to violence against another, some important harm done by expression achieves its end by directly affecting the target's "non-material" interests (Notes 1999).

Building on this way of thinking, many theorists now accept that there are indeed "expressive harms." Some also contend that justice sometimes requires legal responses to, and legal remedies for, that harm (Notes 1999; Anderson and Pildes 2000). Thinkers who contend that hate speech is intrinsically "assaultive speech," for example, have argued that when hateful expression is embodied in criminal acts, the criminal should be subject to additional punishment for a hate crime. It has also been argued that in non-criminal contexts, hate speech should sometimes be recognized as the ground of an independent tort (Matsuda et al. 1993). Some feminist thinkers who contend that pornography constitutes the subordination of women have also held that pornography ought, therefore, to be legally proscribed (MacKinnon 1987, 1991, 1993).[7] Still other legal theorists and political philosophers contend that when governments fail to adequately address lingering institutional discrimination, such as that embodied in

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[7] In 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed a Circuit decision to strike down an Indianapolis ordinance that sought to put this theory into practice (American Booksellers Assn. v. Hudnut 1986). For an insightful discussion of how the principles underlying the ordinance bear on issues in the philosophy of language, see Langton (1993).

practices that undermine voting rights, those failures may convey dangerous messages that constitute expressive harms (Anderson and Pildes 2000).

Safe space advocacy also assumes the reality of expressive harm and the reasonableness of trying to regulate or suppress it. Yet, as I have noted, it makes three distinct kinds of claims about the nature and source of that harm. *Stigma-based claims* focus on campus-defining imagery and nomenclature believed to deny the equal worth of students. *Unreflective inference claims* focus on expression that invokes equality-undermining stereotypes and bias. In this section I consider *trauma-based claims* asserting that expression sometimes harms by "triggering" dangerously disabling experiences in people who are exposed to it.

Campus advocacy of what we now call "trigger warnings" originally focused on material containing depictions of sexual assault and rape. It was motivated principally by concern that such depictions might trigger disabling memories, along with disabling panic, anxiety, and fear, in some students who were survivors of rape and sexual abuse. Potential triggers could include material as varied as Ovid's recounting of the myths of Daphne and Persephone in the *Metamorphoses*, autobiographical accounts by survivors of wartime sexual violence, and clips from contemporary films depicting sexual assault. Advocates held that if such material were classified in advance as potential triggers, students could be alerted to the possibility that some of them might have disabling responses to it, and given the option to avoid exposure to it.

This stance appeals to the concept of "trauma" to explain the disabling "power" of potential triggers. Yet, as literary theorist Michelle Balaev has urged, discussions of the concept of trauma are "filled with contradictory theories and contentious debates" (Balaev 2014, p. 2). The most significant disagreements focus on two details: (1) the issue of whether there is one best understanding of trauma that makes sense of every kind of experience of it; and (2) the question of whether every kind of trauma can be effectively treated in the same way. In the clinical psychology literature, especially the literature on post-traumatic stress disorder (P.T.S.D.), trauma is mainly understood to involve a psychological "rupture" (sometimes accompanied by "intense fear, helplessness, or horror") that occurs in response to some event or events outside the "normal range" of human experience. Even after recent definitional revisions in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, it is typically assumed that some kind of rupture is the cause of the subject's vulnerability to reliving painful dimensions of the past (DeAngelis 2008; Jones and Cureton n.d.; Levin et al. 2014). Many clinicians also believe that controlled "exposure therapy" is a critical element of effective treatment for psychological trauma, and that its effectiveness is shown by outcomes for veterans who have recovered from P.T.S.D. (DeAngelis 2008; Institute of Medicine 2007; Levin et al. 2014). In contrast, advocates for survivors of rape and sexual assault often reject exposure therapy, arguing that, in the cases they confront, the only reliably safe response is the *avoidance* of triggers.

The rejection of exposure therapy typically rests on three considerations. It is assumed, first, that the trauma experienced by a survivor of rape or sexual assault

cannot be fully comprehended apart from an understanding of the sociopolitical context of rape and sexual assault. This means that the trauma cannot be adequately addressed simply by trying to "treat" the individual survivor's symptoms. Indeed, it is often claimed that adequately addressing the trauma ultimately demands *eliminating* gender inequality altogether (Herman 1992; Brown 1991, 2004). Second, therapists who accept this account typically do so because they adopt a concept of "insidious trauma" to express the connection between trauma and socio-political context. In the influential work of Laura S. Brown, for instance, the concept of insidious trauma is said to best capture the "traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment, but which do violence to the soul and spirit" (Brown 1991, p. 128). Moreover, according to Brown, "for all women," simply "living in a culture where there is a high base rate of sexual assault and where such behavior is considered normal and erotic" *just is* an "exposure to insidious trauma" (Brown 1991, p. 128; see also Root 1992; Tseris 2013). Taking the concept of insidious trauma seriously thus means denying that trauma must always be understood in terms of a psychological rupture in response to events "outside the normal range" of experience. But, this reliance on the concept of insidious trauma tends to lead to a third important assumption: the view that much, if not all, triggering expression is somehow *intrinsically* wounding (Tseris 2013). If some expression can never be divested of its power to wound, avoidance comes to seem the only safe stance to take in regard to it.

Over time, calls for institutions to *require* trigger warnings have extended far beyond the scope of material depicting or suggesting sexual violence. On one campus, an especially controversial (though ultimately unsuccessful) proposal would have required trigger warnings for any course material that expressed "racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism, and other issues of privilege and oppression" (Flaherty 2014; see also Heller 2016). Yet even as the category of potentially triggering material has expanded, trigger warning advocates have remained committed to the three basic assumptions associated with the initial project. That is, they remain committed to the notion that there is an inescapable link between some kinds of trauma and structures of oppression and discrimination, to the view that some material must be avoided as essentially "triggering," and to the concept of insidious trauma that links the first two commitments. To sum up the central elements of that concept, insidious trauma is a condition that (a) requires no distinct psychological "rupture"; (b) emerges over time, in response to long-term marginalization and sustained discrimination and oppression; and (c) can even be transmitted across generations (Miller 2009). The concept of insidious trauma thus commits its defenders to the view that the suffering it comprises cannot be fully understood or addressed as a discrete condition rooted in a single person's life experience. This is why criticizing safe space advocates for failing to understand the effectiveness of exposure theory—as prominent critics have done—raises concerns that are beside the point (Lukianoff and Haidt 2015).

The concept of insidious trauma has become widely influential in many domains. It often plays a critical role in political activism outside of the academy (Kelley 2016).[8] It is central to the work of scholars in the humanities and humanistic social sciences who believe it to be useful for understanding the consequences of sexism, racism, and colonialism (Balaev 2014; Stevens 2009). Still further, for some therapists working with populations who have been subjected to the violence of war and torture, with women who have experienced sexual violence and domestic abuse, or with members of ethnic and racial minorities subject to structural discrimination, the concept of insidious trauma is seen as a useful tool for characterizing the observable psychological effects of gender inequality, and of racial and ethnic discrimination and oppression (Miller 2009).

Yet the literature on insidious trauma makes claims that are more than usually underdetermined by available data: especially the claim that insidious trauma produces symptoms that cannot be treated—that is, psychological suffering that cannot be fully overcome—until we successfully dismantle the discriminatory institutions and practices that caused the trauma. Given its uncertain empirical credentials, it is thus not unreasonable to object that relying on the concept can have deeply problematic implications. One concern is that, in some contexts, getting a "diagnosis" of insidious trauma might encourage a fatalistic quietism about the possibility of constructively addressing one's condition—or addressing significant aspects of one's circumstances. A second pressing concern, as historian Robin Kelley has argued, is that historically important evidence seems to disconfirm the assumption that psychological suffering caused by oppression cannot be overcome while the oppression continues (Kelley 2016). When we reflect, for instance, on African American abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth (also an early advocate for women's rights), on opponents of Jim Crow segregation like Home Plessy and his colleagues, and on the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, it seems obvious that oppressed people have often found ways to address and relieve their suffering by fighting against its *ongoing* causes. Moreover, we need not confine our attention to domestic oppression: Gandhi's leadership of resistance to British rule in India, and Nelson Mandela's role as a leading opponent of South African apartheid, provide powerful counterexamples to some of the central claims connected with the concept of insidious trauma.

Some cultural observers have suggested that the psychological situation of contemporary students is radically different from that of figures such as Douglass, or Plessy, King, or Mandela (Wayne 2016). They claim that in the contemporary world, the "ordinary" effects of trauma are compounded by the constancy with which students confront interpretively unmediated imagery and ideas in disturbing videos and on hate-filled websites. But surely the indignities to which nineteenth- and twentieth-century figures such as Douglass, King, and Mandela were subjected were

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extreme and sometimes unrelenting, and the psychological (as well as physical) suffering caused by those indignities was surely as profound as anything that might be suffered by the typical contemporary student. Safe space advocacy thus seems profoundly ahistorical in its failure to appreciate the demonstrated human capacity to transform personal suffering into the grounds for constructive political struggle.

Those lessons are not being drowned out by "emotional reasoning" but, at least in part, because students have come to believe that "the personal" is somehow intrinsically (or already) constructively "political." Yet as C. Wright Mills maintained, one task of a liberal education is to help students learn how to *transform* personal suffering into something that constructively connects them to a realm of public political action (Mills 1959). The lessons of history are also undermined by relativist claims that even our most "personal" experiences are so thoroughly socially constituted that we search in vain for anything *essentially human* that transcends the social construction of experience. But as Martha Nussbaum has argued, acknowledging that there is no socially and culturally "un-interpreted" sphere of human experience does not require us to relinquish the idea that some spheres of experience are still essentially human (Nussbaum 1988). Regrettably, the one non-relativist conception of humanity that gets through is the master narrative of trauma, and especially the concept of insidious trauma on which to live as a woman in conditions of gender inequality, or to exist as a member of a minority group still subject to discrimination and oppression, *just is* to be fundamentally psychologically wounded.

In a 1963 interview for *Life Magazine*, James Baldwin offered insight into a much richer narrative, and in language with remarkable relevance to contemporary controversies:

You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was Dostoevsky and Dickens who taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive. Only if we face these open wounds in ourselves can we understand them in other people. An artist is a sort of emotional or spiritual historian. His role is to make you realize the doom and glory of knowing who you are and what you are. He has to tell, because nobody else can tell, what it is like to be alive.   (Howard 1963, p. 89)

Baldwin gestures toward a powerful defense of a liberal education with this fundamentally hopeful view that sustained engagement with the suffering of others can enable both a deeper understanding of one's own suffering, and a sense of how one's own capacity to suffer *really* (and constructively) connects one to other human beings. Of course, understanding what it is to be human is not the same thing as understanding what it is to be "political"—particularly in contemporary multicultural democracies, where it can be difficult to find a politically unifying language in which to express our varied insights about what it means to be human. But we can find that unifying language only if we first seek a richer understanding of "the human." Developing such an understanding sometimes depends on the willingness to try to divest troubling and disturbing expression of its power to wound. This process of divesting expression of the power to

wound draws, in turn, on our capacity to temporarily inure ourselves against expressive harm so that we can ask what we might be able to learn *even* from texts, or traditions of thought, with the power to produce that harm. It seems likely that inuring himself against expressive harm was precisely what allowed Baldwin to produce essays like *The Fire Next Time* which not only challenged the cruelties and injustices of discrimination and oppression even as they continued, but unsparingly demanded that both the oppressed and the oppressors learn how to see the world, and themselves, in new ways (Baldwin [1963] 2013).

Confidence in the transformative power of expression may be impossible unless we reject the idea that expression is ever intrinsically injurious, or at least assume that the class of intrinsically injurious speech is very small. Judith Butler has taken the former view, arguing in *Excitable Speech* that there is always a "gap between the originating context, or intention, by which an utterance is animated and the effects it produces," and therefore that no instance of expression necessarily "has to perform injury as its effect" (Butler 1997, pp. 14, 15). But this is no covert restatement of the old adage that "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Instead, Butler is asking us to consider the possibilities for intentionally transforming expression that wounds us into something that no longer has the power to wound. Moreover, like Baldwin, she suggests that the kind of engagement with unsettling ideas that a university education often provides can be an important route to recognizing and pursuing these possibilities (Butler 1997, pp. 16–17). In rejecting this stance, those who accept the concept of insidious trauma, and its associated demands to be protected from disturbing ideas, may well doom themselves to the unabated suffering and despair that seems to come with defining oneself as nothing more than a victim.

I do not deny that being vulnerable to suffering and loss is part of what it is to be human. Nussbaum has richly discussed the ethical implications of this fact in *The Fragility of Goodness* (Nussbaum 2001). Yet the idea that the concept of trauma best conceptualizes any kind of *psychological* (as opposed to physical) suffering is a product of the late nineteenth century, and the merits of this conceptual turn ought to be open to critical scrutiny (Young 1997). At the very least, we should ask whether the excessive focus on psychological trauma as a response to adversity may overshadow, or implicitly deny, the human capacity for resilience in the face of adversity (Bonanno 2004; Kleinman 1997; Scheper-Hughes 2008). Of course, given the fact that the "master narrative" of trauma has become a kind of academic orthodoxy, academic freedom will surely prove critical to the project of subjecting that narrative to greater scrutiny.

3. Stigma, Respect, and "the Decent Drapery of Life"

The stigma-based claims that have played an important role in the safe space movement are not concerned with avoiding trauma. Instead, they challenge stigmatizing messages believed to be embodied in campus-defining imagery and nomenclature on the

grounds that they threaten to deny the equal worth—and, ultimately, the fundamental dignity—of particular campus constituencies. Stigma-based claims have involved calls to remove names of slaveholders from prominent campus buildings, statues of various champions of imperialism from public spaces, and references to slavery and oppression from school crests and shields. I will argue that these claims can be rationally compelling when they object to genuinely stigmatizing phenomena. Yet I will also challenge the belief—held by many who make stigma-based claims—that the best response to stigmatizing expression is always to remove or eliminate its source. As in discussions about the trauma-based preference for "avoidance" over "exposure," we must once again consider if we can ever constructively exploit the "gap" between harmful expression and its originating context or intention.

But why am I confident that stigma-based claims can ever be rationally compelling? This is because, even when they misfire, these claims echo a plausible account of justice on which what a political society "looks like" and "feels like" is a critical element of its capacity to assure its members that they will be treated with appropriate respect. This account has been defended with compelling clarity in the recent work of Jeremy Waldron (2012, pp. 74–7). The respect to which Waldron refers is what Stephen Darwall has called "recognition respect" (Darwall 1977). Adopting Darwall's definition of that notion, Waldron maintains that a just society will assure all of its citizens that, in all of its deliberations, it acknowledges a requirement to "take seriously and weigh appropriately the fact they are persons." Waldron insists that the assurance of recognition respect—the promise of respectful consideration—is a fundamental social good, and that an adequate account of justice will help us understand what it means to provide that good and to weigh it in the balance with other important social goods (Waldron 2012, pp. 84–9).

Yet, according to Waldron, we can produce such an account only if we take seriously what he calls a society's "political aesthetics." The political aesthetics of any society are shaped primarily by officially sponsored expression: for instance, by messages conveyed through civic art and public architecture; in official ceremonies, displays, and events; and in "the visible display of power" in such things as uniforms and public symbols (Waldron 2012, p. 75). But political aesthetics are not only a function of officially sponsored expression. The way a society looks and feels—and its capacity to provide proper assurance of respectful consideration—can be affected by imagery and messages displayed or conveyed by private individuals. This idea has been poorly received in debates about hate speech and hate crimes in the United States. But Waldron plausibly asks us to consider, for instance, how the messages conveyed by the racial separatist who burns a cross on someone's lawn, or by the anti-Semite who paints a swastika on a synagogue, affect a society's capacity to assure recognition respect.[9]

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[9] In 1992, the Supreme Court struck down a St. Paul, Minnesota hate crime ordinance, to overturn the conviction of a teenager (known as R.A.V.) who had burned a cross on the lawn of an African American family, see R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul (1992). Judith Butler discusses this case from the perspective of someone defending the gap between intention and expression in Butler (1997).

Intriguingly, Waldron's argument for the importance of political aesthetics draws upon unexpectedly varied sources: including Burke's insistence, in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, on the importance of preserving the "decent drapery of life," and the "pleasing illusions" which make "power gentle and obedience liberal" (Burke [1789] 1993, p. 77); and MacKinnon's claim that official legal tolerance of pornography "institutionalizes a subhuman, victimized, second-class status for women" (MacKinnon 1991, p. 802).

I contend that when contemporary stigma-based claims on campus actually are rationally compelling, as they can sometimes be, it is because they convincingly identify some artifact, image, or name with the potential to limit or greatly endanger an institution's capacity to provide the appropriate assurance. Stigma-based claims therefore cannot be dismissed as assertions of a right not to be offended. Rather, they assert an important connection between a campus's political aesthetics and the campus's ability to provide assurances of recognition respect to all members of the campus community. Still further, while it is easy to caricature claims which focus on the stigmatizing effects of students' choices of Halloween costumes, or even on the themes of fraternity and sorority parties, it is not unreasonable to suppose that messages expressed by large or influential student groups may be as likely to endanger an institution's ability to provide assurance of recognition respect as any message deliberately conveyed by institutional decisions. Of course, unless stigmatizing messages embodied in student expression involve credible threats of physical violence or coercion, they are best countered with verbal reproach, rather than with the more serious punishments which critics of stigmatizing expression too often demand in the less serious cases.

Some critics will object that stigma-based claims can never be rationally compelling and they will often appeal to Mill's account of free expression in *On Liberty*—especially Mill's implicit rejection of the very possibility of expressive harm.[10] But Mill never argues for the notion that when we are discomfited by expression it can only be because it offends us, or because we have reason to believe that it harms our material interests through libel or slander. Moreover, this stance leaves no room for the plausible idea that the content of certain kinds of expression has the potential to harm some people's non-material, psycho-social interests in being recognized as worthy of equal consideration by the communities they inhabit. The indignities of racial discrimination, for instance, are never simply a matter of physical violence, brutality, and economic inequality. As King argued in the "Letter from Birmingham Jail," segregation "distorts the soul and damages the personality" (King [1963]). A view that requires us to reject the concept of expressive harm cannot capture the nature of the damage that King describes.

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[10] There is no single definitive passage to support this interpretation. But many would cite this passage from chapter 4 of *On Liberty:* "There are many who consider as an injury to themselves any conduct which they have a distaste for, and resent it as an outrage to their feelings; as a religious bigot, when charged with disregarding the religious feelings of others, has been known to retort that they disregard his feelings, by persisting in their abominable worship or creed. But there is no parity between the feeling of a person for his own opinion, and the feeling of another who is offended at his holding it" (Mill [1859] 2006).

Of course, some thinkers who might be ready to accept, in principle, that expressive harm occurs may object that determining what constitutes expressive harm is simply too "subjective" to be a rational basis for trying to suppress or punish expression. Yet an important lesson of the decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* is that the mechanisms that make objective identification of social stigma possible typically depend upon taking seriously the "subjective" testimony of those with first-person experience of the full range of harm done by the stigmatizing messages. It is true that, as in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the process of objective identification may require the additional testimony of "expert" social scientists who can provide aggregated data to document the socially widespread damage done by stigmatizing messages. But, ultimately, what *Brown* showed was that, taken together, the testimony of social scientists and the voices they helped to make audible were an indispensable part of the epistemological and moral pressure necessary for American society to recognize and begin to respond to the full range of harms caused by racial segregation (Moody-Adams 1993).

I am not claiming that there is moral parity between legally mandated racial separation and a college's decision to name a building after a slaveholder. But stigma-based objections to the two phenomena do, in fact, rest on the same plausible assumption: that a community's defining messages—sometimes expressed in legal policies and practices, sometimes expressed in what or who it chooses to commemorate—can affect that community's capacity to provide all of its members with equal assurances of recognition respect. This link between what an institution chooses to commemorate and its ability to assure recognition respect has sometimes been most fully appreciated in contexts where we might expect resistance to the idea. In a remarkable example, in 1971, the U.S. Military Academy resisted a proposal from then-President Nixon to erect a Confederate monument on the grounds of the Academy, largely at the urging of its (then) small cadre of African American cadets (Seidule 1972). In taking the students' objections seriously, West Point leaders avoided the temptation to discount the validity of the students' testimony about the nature and effects of stigmatizing messages. In so doing, they avoided what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls epistemic injustice: the kind of injustice that can be done to others in their capacity as knowers. Epistemic injustice matters for many reasons, not the least being that too often it works to compound whatever political injustice may be at issue in the practices, artifacts, and images that come under scrutiny in some stigma-based claim.

Yet I believe that, no matter how reasonable a particular concern about stigmatizing messages might be, advocates of safe spaces must still allow room for debate about whether any particular instance of expression really does undermine a campus's capacity to adequately assure recognition respect. Such debate is especially important when any effort to suppress, prevent, or punish an (allegedly) stigmatizing message would involve suppressing their fellow students' freedom of expression, whether in response to student choices of Halloween costumes, stigmatizing messages in a student publication, or student invitations to polarizing outside speakers. Equally important, one of the main contexts in which faculty members should be protected in the exercise of academic freedom is when they attempt to stimulate campus debate—sometimes in

the classroom, and sometimes in "teaching spaces" outside the classroom—about the possibility that there can sometimes be good, morally compelling reasons to allow some stigmatizing expression on campus. In one of the most divisive campus controversies of the last few years, in 2015, safe space advocates at Yale University challenged what I consider to be the academic freedom of faculty (and not just their broad free speech rights) to express a Millian preference for meeting the stigmatizing messages embodied in some students' Halloween costumes with "more, and better" speech, rather than with censorship. But if we want to defend the right of a faculty member to assign King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," for instance, in the hope of helping students understand the stigmatizing power of racial discrimination, we cannot then consistently deny that faculty members have academic freedom rights to encourage students (in their classrooms, and on the campus more broadly) to care about student free speech rights.[11] This is an important reminder of my earlier claim that success in purging the campus of all the expression that disturbs us will always constitute a Pyrrhic victory.

But I began this section by emphasizing the importance of the "gap" that frequently exists between expression and its originating context. The fact that there can be such a gap suggests that even when a stigma-based claim is rationally compelling, we must at least ask whether it might be possible to transform some instance of stigmatizing expression into something potentially more constructive. Asking this question is especially important in contexts where simply seeking to erase historical evidence of the active denial of recognition respect may actually endanger a community's ability to understand what it means to provide robust assurance of recognition respect in the future. To be sure, preserving historical evidence of oppression and discrimination can be compatible with recognition respect only if the "evidence" can be preserved in a way that purges it of the stigma. But if we want to understand how this is done, we need only consider the extraordinary processes by which South African officials managed to preserve historical evidence of the wrongs of apartheid as an unexpected testimony to what they call the "triumph of the human spirit over adversity." Those who have visited South Africa's Robben Island prison in the post-apartheid period have had a glimpse of what it means to strike a plausible balance between the memory of injustice and constructive affirmation of hope for a more just future.

To be sure, not every object of a rationally compelling stigma-based claim can be constructively transformed. But articulating what might be achieved by intelligent

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[11] The worry here is more than hypothetical. I write as someone who (in the 1990s) once had to defend my decision to have students read King's "Letter"—when a student at a large public university in the Midwest insisted, in front of other students, that King was a dangerous communist and that it was irresponsible of me to assign his work. I treat this as an exercise of academic freedom on the same grounds that the A.A.U.P. (and the subsequent consensus in accepting their account) defends most extramural speech by faculty as protected by professional academic freedom rights. Finally, I must note that, as both an instructor and an academic administrator (at three large public universities), I have been in the position of hoping to exercise my academic freedom rights to defend the value of using speech (instead of censorship) to silence racially stigmatizing messages in student-run publications.

historical reframing and reinterpretation is surely among the things that several academic disciplines do best. Campuses that are beset by disagreement about how to address stigmatizing messages embodied in campus-defining imagery can best affirm the value of the academic endeavor by allowing open debate on how to do so.[12] Such debates might also show that judicious reliance on academic freedom can sometimes strengthen the sense of community in contexts where intolerance, balkanization, and the new tribalism would otherwise threaten to make community impossible.

4. The Dangers of Believing that "You're Nobody 'til Somebody Wounds You"

But while the safe space movement's *trauma-based* and *stigma-based* claims are insufficiently attentive to the "gap" between expression and its originating context or intention, its *unreflective inference* claims go to the other extreme. I argue in this section that efforts to purge the campus of microaggressions and implicit bias typically make too *much* of the gap between intention and expression, and that they do so in ways that endanger academic freedom and undermine the efforts of safe space advocates who seek to promote justice.

Unreflective inference claims presume that there is a large category of expressive harms in which the harm is not dependent on the "conscious" intention of the originator of the expression. They draw on work in clinical and social psychology that seeks to reveal both the depth of implicit bias, and the frequency of microaggressions—those "thousand little cuts" to which members of vulnerable, unwelcome, or "underrepresented" populations may be subject in certain contexts (Hunn et al. 2015; Sue et al. 2007). According to this literature, *microaggressions* typically involve expression offered as benign, or even complimentary, but that actually invokes insulting or stigmatizing stereotypes: as when an African American student is described as "surprisingly articulate," or when an Asian American student is asked "where are you from?" (Hunn et al. 2015). In contrast, expressions of *implicit bias* involve comments, actions, or policies that draw on harmful prejudices and stereotypes while purporting to involve rationally defensible inferences: as when a math instructor, who has reason to suspect that there has been cheating during an exam, assumes (without inquiry) that the only black student under scrutiny "must" have copied from the paper of the student seated next to her.

A fundamental difficulty with unreflective inference claims is that they rest on a failure to acknowledge an important difference between the harm typically done by microaggressions and the harm often done by expressions of implicit bias. Contrary to what is often implicitly assumed, the two kinds of harm are not different in degree, but fundamentally different in kind. Consider, for instance, that the implicit bias animating

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[12] This is a lesson that has become clear on more and more campuses, but sometimes only after especially rancorous and divisive debate.

a math instructor who has the power to charge a student with academic dishonesty could result almost immediately in material and physical harm (for example, disruption of a student's schedule to confront the charges, or a lingering shadow of suspicion even if the student is not found guilty of academic dishonesty). The very real possibility of such harm can dangerously compound the effects of any non-material harm that the charge may cause. Nothing remotely as serious typically follows from the damage done by microaggressions—even when they may produce what some theorists describe as "stereotype threats" for the subject. Indeed, one has to assume that the lack of a direct link between microaggressions and the possibility of severe material harms is what justifies the label "microaggressions" in the first place.

It may be easier to understand the grave dangers of unchecked implicit bias when we consider contexts outside of the university, such as the application of disciplinary procedures in elementary and secondary schools, and the use of deadly force by police. But the difference between the effects of implicit bias in the university and the effects of implicit bias outside of it is a difference in degree and not in kind. It is true that this context-sensitive difference in the effects of implicit bias has special relevance to the question of what it is acceptable to do in order to limit those effects. When implicit bias may affect the use of deadly force—as, for instance, in police departments—there is a very strong case for reshaping the training one must undergo before being licensed to use such force (Eberhardt 2004). Yet although the effects of implicit bias in the academy are rarely deadly, as I have suggested, they can be serious for the subject of that bias. One difficulty that hinders the effort to limit these effects is that academic institutions have not proven effective at addressing these issues in a manner that doesn't seem like "thought control." Moreover, failures in this domain are sometimes followed by a backlash that proves more injurious to a campus's climate than the harms they were meant to address. In my view, the best hope for substantive diminution in implicit bias in the academy is for conscientious faculty members (especially senior, tenured faculty members) to take on more of the responsibility for encouraging their colleagues to confront and to try to eliminate their biases. We can consider this a (Socratic) responsibility of conscientious academic citizenship.

But unreflective inference claims are plagued by a second important difficulty. The problem is that those who make these claims describe most of the phenomena they address as mainly a matter of "unconscious" or "automatic" stereotypes and bias, yet they typically see nothing objectionable in the effort to punish those who display these unconscious or automatic attitudes. Some influential contributors to the scholarly literature on microaggressions have become critical of this attitude, suggesting that it is neither defensible nor productive to seek to punish microaggressions and bias that are truly unintentional (Zamudio-Suarez 2016). But in my view, there is a deeper problem, in that the literature on these topics fails to consider that some of the attitudes in question might actually be the blameworthy product of "affected ignorance"—a phenomenon, identified by Aquinas, of choosing not to know what we can and should know (Moody-Adams 1994). Though I cannot argue the point here, there may be a

good case for the view that far too much of what gets described as "unconscious" insult or stigma, or "automatic" reliance on implicit bias, reflects the complex workings of affected ignorance. Sometimes affected ignorance is manifested as a refusal to scrutinize one's unreflective responses so as to identify indefensible (even if socially widespread) prejudices that might be embodied in those responses, and sometimes it reflects a refusal to scrutinize one's unreflective responses at all.

The possibility of widespread affected ignorance is especially important in the academic context because the members of an academic community have implicitly agreed to be bound by a fairly high standard of reciprocal reflectiveness. Faculty members justly expect their students to bracket their unreflective inferences in the interest of genuine learning, but students have a reciprocal right to expect faculty members to scrutinize and bracket their unreflective inferences—particularly when they reflect bias and dangerous stereotypes that fail to treat students with recognition respect. Indeed, I urge that faculty members have both a professional and moral obligation to set aside what Bishop Joseph Butler would have called "a cool hour" in which to carefully reflect on what it means to treat their students with respect and concern. There is certainly room for reasonable disagreement about the nature and scope of the obligation, but it is disingenuous to suggest (as some faculty have been wont to do) that being held to this standard of reciprocal reflectiveness is somehow tantamount to censorship.

Debates about the nature and scope of the faculty's obligation of self-scrutiny provide an important opportunity to reflect on the principles of good pedagogy—which are as important to good teaching as is adherence to disciplinary standards. Once we undertake such reflection, we will realize that some very common understandings of "good pedagogy" are likely to interfere with conformity to some of the faculty's important obligations. This is particularly true of what I call the "pedagogy of fear," for instance, in which (like the character of Professor Kingsfield, in the movie The Paper Chase) we imagine that we need to intimidate students, and break down their will, in order to teach them. But other pedagogical methods can also be in tension with the obligation of faculty self-scrutiny. A common method of teaching in philosophy, for instance, is what I call the "pedagogy of unrelenting combat"—a style of teaching in which, to adapt an idea from Robert Nozick, the instructor is driven primarily by the search for "knock down arguments" to dazzle and disorient her students (Nozick 1981). But the project of mainly trying to dazzle students with knock-down arguments, rather than primarily seeking to engage them in understanding why the arguments matter, too often becomes another kind of intellectual intimidation that proves antithetical to providing students with assurance of recognition respect.[13]

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[13] Far too many students who begin introductory philosophy courses with serious interest and genuine philosophical acumen end up "turned off" by the discipline when it is taught by instructors who understand their task in this way. The problem may be heightened when students see themselves as members of groups that have historically been unwelcome, or at least underrepresented, in the discipline. Unrelenting intellectual combat can then feel like a concerted effort to exclude them in perpetuity.

Both of these approaches to pedagogy have been claimed to be in some way "Socratic," in some parts of the academy as well as in popular culture. But they are both antithetical to the essentially respectful, cooperative, and dialectical nature of a truly Socratic educational experience. A genuinely Socratic stance starts by assuming we can expect students to be open to the possibility of transformative ideas and experiences. But it also presumes that, even as the intellectual authorities in the classroom, faculty should hold themselves to an equally high standard—in this case, a standard that assumes our willingness to subject our own unreflective inferences to scrutiny as well. This is a way of affirming that we, too, are ready and willing to be transformed by encounters in the classroom, at least enough to ask whether we have thought about how to help our students profit from potentially unsettling ideas and experiences that they sometimes encounter in the classroom.

This is not a call to require "trigger warnings" in college and university classrooms. Even apart from concerns about problematic conceptions of trauma that are at stake when we label some material as "triggering," the routine use of trigger warnings can become an unreflective substitute for a richly textured Socratic respect for students' different intellectual and cultural "beginnings." The Socratic standard defended here is just a call to remember that students should be assured that they are respected in their (relevant) diversity, even as we expect *them* to respect faculty and welcome the potentially transformative power of intellectual engagement. Faculty members who see the threat of censorship in this Socratic standard fail to understand the value and possibility of a pedagogy that engages students by first seeing them as worthy of respect. But in my view, students fail to fulfill *their* obligation of reciprocal respect when they become consumed with finding "unconscious" prejudice and stereotyping.[14] When students' righteous interest in fairness gives way to unforgiving self-righteousness, as it sometimes does, this undercuts the possibility of genuinely Socratic engagement in the classroom—or perhaps anywhere on campus, for that matter.

As I suggested in Section 1, a regrettable obstacle to reasonable discussion of these matters is the frequency with which students' interests in political morality are entangled with norms and attitudes that have nothing to do with justice. When students are convinced that they are just purchasing the credentials needed to get a good job, their demands to shape the experiences they have along the way will be resistant to rational reflection and discussion. When they approach a college education from a stance that demeans intellectual life and discounts the value and authority of academic expertise, they will believe that they are entitled to police their instructors for "unacceptable"

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[14] In my view, students have a right to complain about professors who abuse academic freedom in a classroom, or in any other learning environment (Moody-Adams 2015). This means that colleges and universities should have procedures in place to take such concerns seriously. But there is a difference between complaining about egregious abuses and setting oneself up as a classroom censor or "watchdog." Whatever the political beliefs that produce the "watchdog" phenomenon (and they can be right-leaning as well as left-leaning), all such conduct expresses a dangerous anti-intellectualism that will ultimately undermine the framework that makes the best of the university possible.

language and sentiments. If they uncritically rely on theories that encourage them to see themselves as walking wounded, they will understandably insist that faculty—and the university as a whole—view them this way and "treat" them accordingly.

The university ought to be a place for robust debate about the nature, extent, and dangers of these entanglements. But, regrettably, too many changes internal to the university make it difficult for such debates to occur. The encroachment of market values into the university is, by now, well-documented. Even former university presidents have acknowledged the dangers of commercializing university activities, and corporatizing its institutional structures (Bok 2004). But what is seldom discussed is how easily these developments encourage us to think that students really should "get what they want" in colleges and universities so that we won't lose "market share" in admissions or see degree-completion rates drop in ways that affect college rankings.

Equally problematic is the increasing tendency of institutional leaders—often appealing to (supposedly) corporate values such as "cost-efficiency" and "staffing flexibility"—to capitulate to cultural trends that ultimately devalue the intellectual expertise and authority of their own faculty. The increasing reliance on contingent (or "adjunct") faculty to teach undergraduates is an especially concerning expression of that devaluation, because it represents an institutional retreat from the idea that—at least, in many subjects—the best teaching will often occur when instructors have (and believe that they have) the freedom to challenge students in the interest of intellectually transformative experiences. But academic freedom is not secure without broad access to a robust tenure system, and to the opportunity to participate in institutional governance at multiple levels in any institution, and contingent faculty are cut off from such access (Swidler 2016; Clausen and Swidler 2013; Ginsberg 2011; A.A.U.P. 2014). Critics who worry about the damage done to the academy by the overzealous pursuit of safe spaces should consider that more damage may result when institutions retreat from structures and practices necessary to protect academic freedom.

Finally, when institutions encode the master narrative of trauma in policies meant to address concerns about "campus climate"—as many institutions do—they encourage students to suppose that "you're nobody 'til somebody *wounds* you." We should not be surprised that students who think this way sometimes come to view the policing of campus expression as a valuable activity, in itself, and that bias response teams will be encouraged to act on this view in uncritical and potentially destructive ways (Heller 2016). These developments are particularly dangerous for students who are genuinely interested in justice, because the excessive pursuit of safe spaces on campus will leave them with little outward-facing energy to address important deficits of justice in the world at large. This suggests students who genuinely care about justice ought to become less preoccupied with purging their campuses of microaggressions, and more concerned with addressing the "*macro*aggressions" that limit opportunity for those who never go to college, as well as for many students who attend college in circumstances of great socio-economic instability (Moody-Adams 2012). In his late work, Richard Rorty offered a powerful critique of the idea that the "politics of the academy"

might be a plausible substitute for real politics in the real world (Rorty 1999, 1999a). Students who care about justice should be courageous enough to consider that Rorty may be right, and to ask whether some injustices outside of the academy are politically more urgent than any injustices associated with unreflective inferences within the academy. Still further, as I have tried to show, they should also be ready to acknowledge that academic freedom provides the best protection for robust debate about why those injustices matter and how best to address them.

5. Conclusion: Home, Alienation, and Morally Conscientious Citizenship

Of course we should vigorously discourage the overt expression of harmful prejudice on campus, and we should be willing to punish expressions of prejudice meant to incite violence against the populations targeted by it. But we should be equally vigilant about encouraging every member of university and college communities to meet their obligations of reciprocal reflectiveness, and we must insist that faculty have an especially stringent obligation to scrutinize those unreflective responses that may be distorted by implicit bias and stigmatizing stereotypes. Additionally, we should support well thought-out efforts to make all students feel welcome in, and valued by, the institutions they attend. But being welcome in college or university is not the same thing as being "at home." When the university is purged of every form of expression that may cause discomfort, the only thing it will be "safe" for is the worst excesses of the "new tribalism." There is certainly a place on campus for so-called "affinity groups" where students can reasonably hope, in Angelou's phrase, to "go as they are and not be questioned." Colleges and universities should welcome and support a wide array of student organizations organized around such phenomena as academic interests, religious commitments, ethnic identities, interests in civic engagement, and recreation preferences. But once a campus has met the standards necessary to ensure physical security and safety, to provide adequate assurance of recognition respect, and to make appropriate student affinity groups feel welcome, it cannot and should not aspire to be safe from uncomfortable ideas and experiences.

Colleges and universities best prepare students for morally conscientious citizenship by helping them learn to cope with, and sometimes even to welcome, the experience of not feeling "at home." The problem with "home," as anthropologist Mary Douglas has argued, is that "even in its most altruistic and successful versions" home exerts a "tyrannical control over mind and body," and that in the interest of harmony it often "censors speech" and critical reflection (Douglas 1991, p. 303). This suggests that the willingness to "stand apart"—to live with some sense of alienation from certain communities of which one is a member—is important for productive exercise of the capacity to reflect critically on the norms of one's community. Feeling apart actually seems indispensable to the project of asking whether in conforming to familiar norms,

one might have become inattentive to—or complicit in—serious injustice. George Kateb has suggested that we best understand what is morally admirable about Socrates in terms of this willingness to "stand apart" (Kateb 1991). I suspect that *all* the great moral visionaries and reformers in human history—including such figures as Socrates, Gandhi, and King—have been unafraid to stand apart in this way. That is, they have been unafraid to be alienated from the quotidian life of their communities and from structures of thought and feeling that might uncritically preserve injustice.

In the contemporary world, the university is one of the few institutions to respect the willingness to stand apart in this way, and to accept that in standing apart one will sometimes express ideas or create experiences that others find disturbing or unsettling. Indeed, as Ronald Dworkin once argued, educational institutions can play a special role in rejecting a morally dangerous "culture of conformity" that can be essentially hostile to a life of ethical conviction (Dworkin 1996, pp. 189–90). But the university can provide space for serious, intellectually independent reflection only if we ensure that it provides safe space for academic freedom.

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