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The Faculty, the Web, and the People:

Academic Freedom in the New Public Sphere

For a century, now, we in academia have been slowly retreating from the idealistic commitment to intellectual engagement within a republican tradition. Today, the idea of intellectual responsibility through our universities to society as a whole is seen by many as anachronistic, a naïve vision from a time long past. Through a process of professionalization of intellectual activity, we have seen intellectual pursuits removed from the public sphere. This, I think, is a problem, and one that we have not really considered from within our universities. We in the universities have let the third function of academic freedom presented by Edwin Seligman and Arthur Lovejoy in the 1915 American Association of University Professors' "Declaration of Principles," "To develop experts for various branches of the public service," drift away from us.

The new graduate programs that began appearing in America during the last quarter of the 19th Century saw their task as one of training students to work *within* the systems of American society for reform, such as it was. By the time a century had passed, visions of academic purpose, of course, had somewhat changed. Graduate programs, by 1975, were increasingly positioning themselves in opposition to the status quo rather than simply as institutions producing people to bolster it or improve it. This has led to the sense of separation we are witnessing today between the academy and much of the

American population, the most hostile to academia being that small section on the political right led by the likes of David Horowitz, with his recent “Academic Bill of Rights” crusade, and Anne Neal, head of a relatively new organization called the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. They feel that our universities have become the agency for indoctrination of our young people into a world view that would radically change American culture.

The advent of the Internet has, so far, only exacerbated this division between most Americans and the faculties of their universities. However, it also presents avenues for creating bridges between the faculties and the general population, though they have yet to be adequately explored. It is these that I want to speak toward today, for they might even bring us back—not to the rather naïve attitudes of the early days of universities, but at least to a point where faculties are seen popularly not as opponents of the greater society but as the positive contributors that, *in fact*, they have always been and as yet, *in fact*, remain. They might even bring us back to a time where academic freedom is once again understood as a valid and valuable right on its own, and not simply as the campus adjunct to the First Amendment.

Let me start, though, with a little background:

Conducting first-rate research and providing excellent teaching, along with the resulting creation of new researchers and teachers, were but two of the three goals of the university as it developed in the decades before that first clear enunciation of the principle of academic freedom in 1915. As important as these was that third goal, the creation of intellectual participants in government, people

who could guide the great debates of the nation, from among both the students and the faculty.

By the end of the 19th Century, the classical curriculum of American colleges and universities had been superseded by a diverse curriculum supervised by new specialists in the humanities, the natural sciences, and the newer social sciences. Not surprisingly, this brought with it new attitudes towards the goals of research, teaching, and academia's place in society—along with a developing model for American universities that was to be, finally, little different from what we know today.

One of the first changes resulting from the new system was what was at first a *de facto* system of scholarly certification. The “independent scholar” became harder and harder to find, faculty affiliation with an institution of higher education becoming an almost necessary step towards having one's work taken seriously. The community of scholars able to understand any particular piece of advanced work grew smaller with specialization, and the faculties developed their own shortcuts for evaluation of new scholarship. Did the presenter have an academic affiliation? With whom had he studied? Had he published in the past in reputable venues? The answers to these questions saved time by creating an informal gate-keeping process. However, this, and the peer-review process that followed, soon began to set the faculties off from the general population and even from those who administered the schools. Membership in the club now came with very real privileges in terms of involvement in scholarly debate and even in ability to conduct new research. Seeing themselves as a “special” group

also led the faculties to believe that governance of their research and teaching had to rest with them only as well: for obvious reasons, they felt that no “outsider” was qualified to judge them. We are living with the results of this in our universities today—it can even be seen in the mundane ways our departments are run.

Not all the attitudes of that time have survived intact, however. In the eyes of the founders of the AAUP, those who first codified “academic freedom,” self-governance implied taking on responsibilities in the wider community which, in turn, called for an expansion of the special academic rights so that they covered outside as well as on-campus work. Today, for the most part, only a token nod is made towards community involvement in many of our universities, the focus (for promotion, at least) generally now being on teaching, service to the department and the institution, and scholarship. I’d like to see that change; the Internet, oddly enough, may force it to.

Though, by today’s standards, the attitudes expressed by Seligman and Lovejoy in the 1915 Declaration may, as I have said, seem somewhat naïve, their view of the place of the university within the greater society and within the context of academic freedom remains significant. They wrote, for example, that one function:

of the modern university is to develop experts for the use of the community. If there is one thing that distinguishes the more recent developments of democracy, it is the recognition by legislators of the inherent complexities of economic, social and political life, and

the difficulty of solving problems of technical adjustment without technical knowledge. The recognition of this fact has led to a continually greater demand for the aid of experts in these subjects, to advise both legislators and administrators. The training of such experts has, accordingly, in recent years, become an important part of work of the universities; and in almost every one of our higher institutions of learning the professors of the economic, social, and political sciences have been drafted to an increasing extent into more or less unofficial participation in the public service. It is obvious that here again the scholar must be absolutely free not only to pursue his investigations but to declare the results of his researches, no matter where they may lead him or to what extent they may come into conflict with accepted opinion. To be of use to the legislator or the administrator, he must enjoy their complete confidence in the disinterestedness of his conclusions. (Seligman)

Though the need to be able to express an unpopular opinion in safety is as clear to today as it was in 1915, that idea that a scholar can really be “disinterested” is, we have learned, absurd. Not even the journalists who claim “objectivity” are taken at face value today, when even the least educated amongst us understands the impact of relative viewpoints on observation of any event. Still, the universities *have* continued to play a part in the public sphere, though perhaps not quite in the role of wise men that Lovejoy and Seligman may have imagined.

Yet the momentum, even in 1915, was away from active involvement in the public sphere. The desire to construct a self-governing research community provided an inward momentum that no amount of public spiritedness was able to stem. Professors, more and more, looked only to each other for approval, a fact whose downside has become quite clear these past five years, as resentment of the universities has grown in the wake of 9/11.

Even as much of intellectual debate was retreating into the universities, some of those within were taking the AAUP's commitment to a role in the greater society quite seriously and were trying to fill it. One of these, of course, was the AAUP's founding president, John Dewey. At the core of Dewey's educational philosophy was the idea that citizens could think—that the common person has the intelligence and wherewithal to participate in even the most complex of public debates—with the right training and with access to information. The spread of community colleges and the continuing increase in the number of college graduates, of course, can be traced, in part, to his influence.

Countering Dewey in the public sphere was one of the great intellects outside of academia of the time, Walter Lippmann. Lippmann, in *Public Opinion* and, three years later (in 1925) in *The Phantom Public*, made a case that has been reiterated more recently by the followers of the late Leo Strauss of the University of Chicago, that the public is not capable of digesting complex issues for itself. Things need to be simplified, presented in either/or form to the general public by a trained elite that can boil down the issues to easily digestible status. Dewey defended his more optimistic view of public intelligence two years later in

The Public and Its Problems. The debate was the type Dewey wanted to see taking place in public and not simply behind university walls. It is also a type of debate whose re-emergence on the public stage could be assisted through utilization of new technologies. But more on that later.

Both Lippmann and Dewey saw roles for intellectuals outside of the university but, strangely enough, in more recent times it has been the spiritual descendents of Lippmann and Strauss, now known as the Neocons, who have actually stepped outside of the academy to participate directly in American national decision-making in a very Dewey-like manner (though with Lippmannesque goals). For all of Dewey's belief in the common people, his heirs have retreated from them, for the most part, and into their faculty departments, arguing stridently with each other only for the causes they believe in and even applying their solutions on campus, but stepping outside of academia less and less often.

Over the past four decades, part of the reason for this retreat may have been that the dominant political force in the United States has been a conservative one, more compatible with Lippmann than with Dewey, whose followers have tended towards more liberal political beliefs. There really hasn't been a truly liberal administration in Washington since the early days of Lyndon Johnson's presidency. Even high-profile Dewey-influenced scholars such as the philosopher Richard Rorty have had little impact on the course of government or debate—certainly not to the degree that Strauss has had.

At times it even seems as though liberal intellectuals have retreated on purpose, ceding the public sphere to the strident, the true believer, and the demagogue—and to those intellectuals operating outside of academia who, one might say, saw their chance and took it.

Over the past thirty years, conservative intellectuals who found themselves uncomfortable in university settings have created numerous think tanks with the help of deep-pocketed supporters, institutions dedicated to just the sort of activities in the wider political culture Lovejoy and Seligman had envisioned for the universities. Though unlike universities in many respects, the think tanks certainly have stepped into the vacuum that the universities (or many of them—there have always been strong programs devoted to issues of the public sphere, just not enough of them) created by their inattention to public affairs. If anything, their influence continues to expand. Beshara Doumani, a professor of History at the University of California at Berkeley, writing about academic freedom in the post-9/11 American world, remarks that:

The role of private groups in exerting external pressures on the academy may have been energized by the events of 9/11, but it is rooted in a four-decade-long, massive investment by right-wing groups in a national network of institutions: think tanks, policy institutes, grassroots faith-based organizations, law firms, social advocacy groups, corporate lobbying outfits, media outlets (radio, television, newspapers, the Internet), tracking organizations, and pressure groups of various kinds. (25)

A means for effective interaction between the universities and the greater society had been usurped. Furthermore, while these groups have been studying the relationships between the various constituencies in American society in face of changing technologies—especially their own relationships to these—academia has ignored the way technologies are changing its own relationships with the outside world, perhaps losing yet another march.

Aside from their obvious lack of teaching tasks, there is another aspect of the mission of the think tanks that is different from that of the universities. That is, they are driven by a purpose quite distinct from the three enunciated in the 1915 Declaration. In fact, they are akin to a specific type of institution, one deliberately placed aside from questions of academic freedom in that Declaration. Seligman and Lovejoy wrote that this is:

the proprietary school or college designed for the propagation of specific doctrines prescribed by those who have furnished its endowment. It is evident that in such cases the trustees are bound by the deed of gift, and, whatever be their own views, are obligated to carry out the terms of the trust. If a church or religious denomination established a college to be governed by a board of trustees, with the express understanding that the college will be used as an instrument of propaganda in the interests of the religious faith professed by the church or denomination creating it, the trustees have a right to demand that everything be subordinated to that end. If, again, as has happened in this country,

a wealthy manufacturer establishes a special school in a university in order to teach, among other things, the advantages of a protective tariff, or if, as is also the case, an institution has been endowed for the purpose of propagating the doctrines of socialism, the situation is analogous. All of these are essentially proprietary institutions, in the moral sense. They do not, at least as regards on particular subject, accept the principles of freedom of inquiry, of opinion, and of teaching; and their purpose is not to advance knowledge by the unrestricted research and unfettered discussion of impartial investigators, but rather to subsidize the promotion of the opinions held by the persons, usually not of the scholar's calling, who provide the funds for their maintenance. (Seligman)

Such institutions can be extremely successful, as the think tanks have been, but they do not promote the type of discourse without pre-determined goals that the AAUP envisioned for the universities—and for the good of the country. For, yes, there is a political underpinning to the AAUP stand. It is most certainly a liberal one, reflecting the liberal nature of the ideas or debate and exploration behind American academic institutions.

One of the reasons for the creation of the think tanks is that many on the right view the universities not as necessary or inherently liberal but as caught up in a liberal hegemony. In a sense, they are right, but not in the way some of them believe. Others, particularly those who have established the think tanks, do understand why American universities are structurally liberal—just as the think

tanks, built both to counter university influence and to step in where they have failed, are inherently conservative, built to provide grounding for conclusions already reached, a position that is supposed to be anathema within the universities. Look at the difference like this: there is no room for a liberal in a conservative think tank by the very definition of the institution. Whereas, also by definition, there is plenty of room for conservative scholars in that liberal institution, the university. The reality, of course, may be different. Many on the right believe that it *is* different.

Yes, one of the complaints that people on the right voice over and over again about our contemporary universities is that their faculties tend to be overwhelmingly liberal. They see a conspiracy to keep conservatives out. What's frustrating about this is not that it's true that faculties are predominately liberal, but that it's the nature of the beast and not the result of conspiracy.

There's a basic misunderstanding involved here, as basic as that leading many people to see academic freedom as a part of freedom of expression. "Liberal," as in "liberal democracy," the "liberal media," and "liberal arts," is not a political stand except in that it stands in opposition to foundationalist approaches to thinking, research, and debate. Liberalism rejects *a priori* truth, insisting instead on demonstrable truth. The "liberal media," for example, don't start from a left-wing political bias but, ideally, from a desire to get at the truth—as opposed to entities such as Fox News where there is an explicit political purpose behind all of its actions. The "liberal media," when they are doing their job (like our universities, our news media don't always live up to their ideals), don't adhere to

any political line, conservative or progressive and annoy both sides equally. In this sense, liberalism really doesn't belong on a political spectrum but should stand on a philosophical one. It would make more sense to posit opposition between conservatives and progressives than between conservatives and liberals—for liberalism can embrace conservatives as easily as it does progressives. Not all conservatives, certainly, believe that truth is clear and appointed; many of them are seekers of truth, and it is the seekers that the liberal university wants to bring into its fold.

Given the extraordinary influence of Dewey and other liberal thinkers over the development of American universities, it should be no wonder that they are not only liberal in structure—even the concept of “academic freedom,” Horowitz notwithstanding, is an essentially liberal one—but that they are staffed primarily by people of liberal persuasion. This fact should be no more startling than the discovery that, in business, managers and executives fall just as heavily on the conservative side. Business likes to operate from a known field (especially in terms of government) even when innovating—keeping the variables down and under control, an inherently conservative stance. As the founding owner of a small business, I know exactly what that means and have felt the conservative desire to slow any change I am not in control of.

In each case, university and business, it's the underlying structure that causes people of certain inclinations to choose one over the other—not, as some believe, evil machinations by the gate-keepers. That this fundamental fact of academia is being used to attack it is a sign that universities have failed in their

extramural role in society and that the aim of the attacks isn't really reform at all, but destruction of our universities as we have known them for over a century.

With that, of course, would go academic freedom.

The impact would be the same on our businesses if we started insisting that socialists be included in their sales and managerial hierarchies. Sure, socialists can succeed in business, just as totalitarians, say, can in academia. But academia does not work on a philosophy that attracts totalitarians any more than business operates in a fashion that draws most socialists. If their participation were mandated, furthermore, root change would be inevitable. The regulated free market of ideas would disappear as quickly as would our regulated free market of goods.

This is not to say that either our contemporary systems of business or our modern universities are perfect—only that mandating reform based on the personal political biases of participants is dangerous. Certainly, in both cases, things can get out of hand—at least in public perception—making certain people wish they could exercise more control. With salaries at levels sometimes hundreds of times what their workers make, corporate executives are perceived as venal and uncaring—something that is not really the case in most instances. Even if they were all ogres, legislating a different type of person into the picture would be no solution.

From viewpoints outside the protections of our universities, professors are sometimes seen as having attempted what amounts to experiments in social engineering, of molding students into radical paths—also something that is not

really the case. Certainly, people in universities have been leaders in such things as affirmative action, in what some deride as “political correctness,” and in attempts at lowering societal tolerance for hate speech of all sorts. But, though gathering all sorts of publicity, these things have had correspondingly small influence on college students or on the society as a whole. About all these activities have accomplished, really, is a widening of the gap between academia and the rest of American society. Forcing universities to hire more conservatives is not in itself going to change that. Such change, if it comes, will result from other forces.

One of the ironies of the rise of the modern university and its concurrent specializations was that movement I mentioned, of intellectual activity of all sorts heading into the university and, to all intents and purposes, out of the public sphere. The idea, the intent, was the opposite. Political realities and other factors (not the least being the heavy demands of teaching an ever-expanding student population), however, have led to the divisive situation we are living with today. The only active attempt at a corrective has been the think tanks—and they, as I have said, are too purpose driven to fully replace the university even just in the public sphere. Yet change continues, and new possibilities arise. Today, in part because of the Internet, we have a chance to bring intellectual debate back out where it belongs, perhaps sparking a greater change in academia than any since the modern university system appeared.

Thanks to the Internet, the ivory tower no longer protects academia from the general population nearly as much as it once did. No longer can scholars,

frustrated by their reception in the broader world, retreat to the safety of the university. Much of what we do is now so much more open to scrutiny... our syllabi (which are appearing online with more and more frequency), our assignments, our course notes... all of these are increasingly easily found and debated in arenas well beyond the university's traditional purview. Though much of what we do is protected by proprietary systems such as Blackboard, even these systems aren't really meant to keep people out, their main focus (in this regard) really being protection of the privacy of students.

In most respects, we inside academia do not like the idea of proprietary knowledge. We want to share what we have learned—for many of us, this is why we teach. We do not want to protect knowledge, but spread it. Thus, we have loved the idea of putting course information up on the Internet. Why not? We're proud of what we are doing and believe we can attract more people to it by making it all transparent.

The thing is, we've been rather naïve in the way we've been approaching the Internet. We've forgotten that there are people out there trolling to find ammunition to use against the universities—and that much of what we post, improperly excerpted or placed outside of its original context, can seem to be damning words from our very own mouths. Secure in the virtue of what we are doing, we ignore the fact that others might not see it the same way.

Sure, we've had to convince our departments when putting together new courses, but we rarely place the underlying rationale before our students, generally letting go of the discussion and consideration of rationale once the

course is in place. Our students, after all, will experience the class directly and can judge through the doing, asking questions over the semester. Outsiders, however, who may come across an online syllabus or assignment, may have no idea of the context or reasons for the specifics of either.

And this can get us into trouble.

Now, I would never suggest that we become protective of our syllabi, reading lists, or anything else. No, I think our solution lies in the opposite direction, in providing more information, but doing it with care and connectivity rather than just dumping information online, rather than just using the Internet as a convenient storehouse for handouts our students might have missed. Each time we post something to the Internet, we should consider that many more than just our students might be viewing it—and we should make the document accessible in the full sense of its meaning, even to those who will never enter our classrooms. In other words, rather than simply placing our documents online and providing the context in our classrooms, we need to be presenting the context, the rationale for each document, online with it. No longer are we simply involved with teaching when we decide to utilize the Internet. We are also deciding to bring our classrooms into the public sphere in ways we never have before—and this has an impact on academic freedom.

Recently, Horowitz has been producing a series of examinations of university programs through the documents he has found on their websites—and through these only. Taking them out of context, he has been able to build cases against specific courses, professors, and programs, making them seem bent on

indoctrination, not education. He could still do this even if context and rationale had been provided, but his arguments would be less persuasive if his readers could easily find the original reasoning through the links that even Horowitz finds it necessary to provide. The threat to academic freedom that Horowitz represents would be lessened.

When I was being interviewed by a dean for a job several years ago, he prefaced one of his questions by saying, "Of course, I can't come into your classroom without invitation." That surprised me—I had been outside of academia for some time as was no longer quite so familiar with its ways. I assumed my classroom door was open to anyone at any time, just as my store and café always were—and this is how I think it should be. But mine is a minority opinion: many teachers are quite protective of their prerogatives under academic freedom and, therefore, want to control access to their classrooms, fearing that administrators, in particular, might use that access to encroach on the instructor's freedoms within the classroom. In many cases, the right to refuse or control entrance is an entrenched part of union contracts. As I believe that the best defense of academic freedom is to make everything open and public, I'm not a big supporter of such rules, though I understand them and sympathize with the reasoning behind them. Many of us forget this reasoning, however, when we post to the Internet. But the same concerns apply.

Before the age of the Internet and its growing utilization within the classroom and in relation to research, the real questions of academic freedom remained, for the most part, outside of general public awareness. Extramural

expression covered by academic-freedom precepts mainly concerned explicitly political statements and activities of faculty that stemmed from research. Today, research and classroom activities themselves can be just as public as those activities once specifically *meant* for the public sphere. This changes the way that faculty members approach extramural expression and changes the very conception of academic freedom, even by its older definition. If we want to protect our freedom of research and in the classroom, in other words, we have a responsibility to protect it in the public arena as well. And that means we must always consider the impact of what we post might have on people far removed from our classrooms. With academic freedom comes responsibility. If we don't take that responsibility seriously, we will lose the freedom.

If we take this up, we will also be taking a positive first step towards emerging once again from our campuses and into the public sphere. And, through showing what we are doing in the fullness of its design, we will be starting to seriously counter the image of the college professor as an out-of-touch liberal—for it is also true that, though college professors vote overwhelmingly for Democrats, not nearly so many could really be classified as political leftists. Once people can see us in the complete context of our professional activities, they may well come to understand this.

In thinking about how to take the universities public (if you will), in considering how to react to the impact of the Internet, it is worth remembering that the academic freedom that should both protect us and propel us even in *this* task is not really the same as a First Amendment right. The fact of connection

with a university does not necessarily make any particular incident a case relating to academic freedom. In other words, we cannot hide behind “academic freedom” as we venture out into the world. In many ways, academic freedom is nothing more than a compact between faculties and the institutions that house them. It is not guaranteed in law, certainly not by the First Amendment—even though there have been attempts to forge such a link in court arguments and opinions all the way up to the Supreme Court.

Though that connection between academic freedom and the First Amendment *has* been established over the past decades, it is an unfortunate one, a blurring of issues that really should be kept distinct. Even people who should know better, such as Doumani, sometimes conflate the two, as he does when he argues that one of the biggest threats to academic freedom as we venture into the public sphere today is the “War on Terror”:

Why? Partly, this is because of the virulently anti-intellectual nature of both the 9/11 attacks and the war launched in response. Mostly, however, it is because 9/11 crystallized three long-term processes. First, the emergence of the United States after the end of the Cold War as the uncontested global economic and military power. Second, the political triumph of a highly ideological coalition of evangelical religious fundamentalists, militant nationalists, and neoconservatives that now dominates, among others, the presidency, the Congress [this having been written before last November’s elections], and the top civilian ranks of the Pentagon

and is imposing itself on the intelligence services. Third, the privatization and commercialization of knowledge in an information age, which has greatly reduced the degree of intellectual autonomy with universities and magnified the influence of private donors and corporations. (15-16)

The threat that Doumani outlines, however, though it does impinge on universities, isn't to academic freedom *per se*, but to freedom of expression as a whole. Yet Doumani does point out something that we do need to consider in looking at academic freedom in the Internet age, and that is "the privatization and commercialization of knowledge." Here I agree with Doumani completely: this *is* a direct threat to academic freedom. In fact, the one thing that may stop us from returning to the public sphere in force is the proprietary aspect of much of contemporary knowledge.

Right now, as you all know, we are fighting a battle against plagiarism within our own classrooms and are also trying to deal with abuse of copyright in our own preparation and even in our research. Few of us worry about this much when we are photocopying an article and distributing it to our classes, but it becomes critical, at times, to our research. So, while we struggle with our students' tendency to copy wholesale from the web without attribution, we are also trying to come to terms with "fair use" clauses for ourselves, many of us even begin to wonder if there will *ever* be a rational system for utilization of the work of others or if *everything* will require elaborate permissions and, one day, even the utilization of extensive proprietary software to get at it. We've begun to

question whether our freedom to work unfettered has already been compromised by the proprietary needs of others. As Doumani, again, writes, “Simply put, as the commercialization of knowledge expands, the space accorded to academic freedom contracts” (34).

Because academic freedom is not really a legal doctrine, it has no weight in arguments about usage of proprietary knowledge, and this is unfortunate. The commercialization of knowledge is impinging on academic freedom not just in the way we can talk and write about what we have researched, but even in what we *can* research. Until academic freedom becomes somehow codified in law, however, we won’t be able to do much more than keep this problem before the public and our colleagues by showing through our own research results that, in most cases, it’s an example of being penny wise and pound foolish.

However, it does have an impact on our role in the public sphere—and it really is the other side of the plagiarism coin. Both problems existed before the Internet, but not nearly to the degree that they do now. I don’t have a solution for this problem of restriction of knowledge and of attribution other than continuing to support Lawrence Lessig and the Creative Commons copyright alternative—and to continue to seek improved means for attribution in student work.

What are some of the things we can do to bring our activities more fully before the public in order to both protect academic freedom and to fulfill its mission? There are quite a number, and more will arise as people experiment. One that intrigues me particularly is the idea of moving peer review from its position as a prior restraint on publication to an evaluative role after the fact.

Taking advantage of the ease and relative inexpense of publishing on the web—and of allowing people to comment, a system could be developed for a new sort of journal where the referees provide commentary and recommendation publicly and the articles are rated on a scale weighted by the *bona fides* of each rater and by later citations in significant venues. The work would have to stand on its own from the beginning.

Or, rather, the author would have to be willing to undergo the revision process in public. Unlike an article in a print journal, Internet publications can be constantly revised. Scholars could take from the comments what they see as valuable suggestions for change and improvement, constantly tinkering and revising their work and even furthering the discussion.

Such a system would invite the public to observe exactly how academic writing and evaluation take place—even to the extent of allowing a certain amount of involvement by interested outsiders. With this, people could come to a greater understanding of just why those of us within academia find the concept of academic freedom so important, for they would be seeing it in operation.

Another way that academics can bring their work before the public in a positive way is through the blogs. Though there are many who advise young academics not to get too involved in blogging (thinking that hiring committees will search through Google and find damning posts), their attitude is simply an extension of that leading to closed classroom doors. Personally, I find blogging a wonderful avenue for widening academic discussion. For me, it has led to new

connections with other academics, new avenues of research and exploration, and, quite frankly, to a better understanding of my profession.

Perhaps the premier academic blogger today is Michael Bérubé of Pennsylvania State University, whose website has been visited some five *million* times since it was established in early 2004, just three years ago. Introducing a selection of his blog posts in a recent book, he writes about what the blogs can be, asserting that, through his, he wants to “Demonstrate the potential discursive and tonal range of academic blog writing while posing the question of whether blog writing can be understood in the terms bequeathed to us by the print culture of the book” (289). In other words, his blog is an academic exercise, one that deserves the respect afforded any other academic exercise and, therefore, should be afforded the same academic-freedom protections assumed by any lab scientist. Though few blogs are as successful or as interesting as Bérubé’s, most academic blogs are objects of pride to their creators, not shame. And most present posts much more intriguing than the stereotypical ruminations over choice of breakfast foods.

Like most academic bloggers, Bérubé was quick to discover possibilities inherent in the blogs:

one of the joys and challenges of blog writing—and one of the things that distinguishes it from every other kind of writing—is the plasticity of the hyperlink.... The other distinctive feature of blog writing, of course, is the comments section. Not every blog allows comments, and some blogs’ comment sections consist of strings of

single-sentence insults and the equivalents of online screams and shouts. But the best, most thought-provoking blogs are renowned not only for the quality of their writing but for the quality of writing they stimulate in response. (289)

What the blogs offer, among other things, is the possibility of dialogue extending far beyond particular campuses, far beyond even academia. They become a new way of encouraging academic debate but also a way of making clear to the general population just what we, inside university walls, actually do.

The idea that some within academia advise against blogging because of possible negative career implications bothers me, for it indicates that those holding such beliefs do not really understand the true nature of the blogs or the extent of academic freedom as it was originally envisioned. Bloggers are experimenting with a new way of communicating and of developing knowledge. Their work, though public and not part of the traditional peer-review research formula, is research nonetheless, and deserves respect instead of the derision that sometimes accompanies admission that, "Yes, I'm a blogger." Much of academic blogging falls directly under that third point of academic freedom as expressed by Seligman and Lovejoy, that scholars need protection within the public sphere.

In fact, this is perhaps the clearest example of the difference between academic-freedom protections and First Amendment rights. No one questions a bloggers right to post, merely the wisdom of doing it. That is exactly the same as advising against an avenue of laboratory research because it might offend

someone whose beliefs lie in a different direction. And exactly why academic freedom is so important.

As we move further into the public sphere with our academic work—as the Internet *forces* us to become more public—we will have to keep academic-freedom concerns constantly before us or, as I have said before, we will lose it.

One of the beauties of our university structure is that, though it has a political rationale underlying it, room is provided for a variety of expressions and beliefs. People like Horowitz don't believe this, but I think that's simply because they don't see the whole of what we are doing. Horowitz thinks that a bunch of syllabi pulled off the net along with an anecdote or two is sufficient information for judging a campus program. What we have to do, to protect our academic freedom and to fulfill its promise, is to bring both our research and our teaching into the full light of day, where not even Horowitz can misrepresent it. The Internet is providing us a chance for doing this easily. We would be fools not to take it.

Thank you.

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