

RETHINKING PHILOSOPHY AND RACE: AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES MILLS



The Stance team spoke with Charles Mills, noted philosopher and John Evans Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy at Northwestern University whose work focuses on issues of social class, gender, and race, on December 1, 2014. Dr. Mills reviewed Stance's transcription of the interview and made slight corrections for grammar, style, and reduction of repetition. He also inserted a sentence or two to add clarity. We hope readers find the result illuminating.

STANCE (ARTHUR SOTO): BEFORE PURSUING A PHD IN PHILOSOPHY YOU WERE A PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS. WHAT INITIATED YOUR INTEREST IN PHILOSOPHY? WHAT SERVED AS THE IMPETUS FOR YOUR ENROLLMENT IN A GRADUATE PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM? AND IN WHAT CAPACITY, IF ANY, DID YOUR SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND INFLUENCE YOUR APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHY?

CHARLES MILLS: *Daily Nous*, the philosophy website <<http://dailynous.com>>, had a feature recently in which they invited people to write in about how they got into philosophy. What I said there was that my doing physics at university was a product of chance, rather than choice. In my high school back in Jamaica, which is where I'm from, the humanities teachers had left the year I went up into the last two years of school. And at that time Jamaican high schools were modeled on the British schooling system, where you specialize in your last two years. That meant I had to do sciences in those last two years—what was called at the time “sixth form”—math, physics, and chemistry. Then, having done math, physics, and chemistry at that level (“A”-levels), I was constrained in what kind of degree I could enroll for at the University of West Indies, where I did my undergraduate degree. In the U.S. system I would have had more flexibility, but all I had there was a choice of doing sciences. So, that's really why I ended up doing science—not because I had any love for it. My preference was really for the humanities subjects, but it just had to do with the fact of people having left.

Having then graduated and started teaching, I thought, “This is really not what I want to do with the rest of my life.” I considered a range of options. I considered English, political science, history—various possibilities—because at that time in Jamaica a lot of interesting things were happening politically and culturally. If you think of the sixties in the U.S., it was a sort of equivalent, the seventies in Jamaica and the English Caribbean—a time of protest, a time of



social justice movements, a time of challenge to the existing order. I wanted to be involved intellectually with those kinds of movements, and physics was clearly not the subject for that. I made a choice of different possibilities, and I ended up choosing philosophy because I had this sort of naïve, young person's conception of philosophy as a subject that potentially gave you the big picture. So, that was the reason for my choice.

In terms of what influence my science background might have had on my philosophy, I would say not a huge influence or maybe not much influence at all. The main thing, I think, is that in physics they always used to tell you to draw a diagram to help you to understand the problem at hand. In some of my papers I've incorporated diagrams to try to illustrate conceptual points. So, maybe that's one influence. Another thing is that a lot of people who self-identify as radical in cultural theory are anti-science. Because of my science background, I'm not one of those people. My argument, which is a fairly standard argument, is that science has been misused, but it's not the case that we should be anti-science as such. Another element might be that because I've made that disciplinary leap I've always found it natural to draw on empirical research for my philosophy work. I routinely read outside of philosophy texts. I read material from sociology, from political science, from history, and so forth, and then I try to put a philosophical spin on it. You can see there, perhaps, an indirect consequence of switching disciplines to begin with. I find it natural to not necessarily stay within philosophy when I'm trying to make philosophical points.

STANCE (AS): IN INTRODUCTORY PHILOSOPHY COURSES, MINORITY STUDENTS CONSTITUTE A PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLMENTS PROPORTIONATE TO THEIR GENERAL REPRESENTATION IN COLLEGE, ALBEIT THE LATTER IS AN UNDERREPRESENTATION COMPARED TO THE OVERALL RACIAL MAKEUP IN SOCIETY. HOWEVER, THIS ALREADY STARK LACK OF MINORITIES IS FURTHER INTENSIFIED WHEN ONE LOOKS AT THE NUMBER OF MINORITY STUDENTS WHO CHOOSE TO STUDY PHILOSOPHY AS A MAJOR OR A MINOR. THIS IS A PHENOMENON OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE "PIPELINE EFFECT." WHY DOES OUR FIELD FAIL TO RETAIN THESE STUDENTS AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MINIMIZE THIS EFFECT?

CM: I'd say it's a combination of factors. One is that the canon is so overwhelmingly white. Many minority students will get no exposure at all to the few philosophy books and articles written by people of color and dealing with race. (Not every philosopher of color chooses to work on race.) So, that's a factor.

Then, it's linked with the fact that philosophy is the oldest discipline of all. (Many of what we recognize as separate disciplines today are actually spinoffs from philosophy—natural science was originally referred to as “natural philosophy.”) This means we are still reading

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texts, in the Western tradition, from 2500 years ago, and they are still seen as part of a living dialogue. It's not a young subject like sociology. So, the weight of the past is much greater in that there is this huge body of work going back more than 2000 years. Within the Western tradition, this large weight is—a somewhat mixed metaphor—a white past. So, you have the whiteness of the canon, and that's reinforced by the demography. Demographically

philosophy is just 2-to-3 percent minorities, maybe 97 percent white. Roughly 1 percent African-American, maybe another 1 or 2 percent Latinos/as and Asian Americans, and a handful of Native Americans. So, there's little chance of students on the undergraduate level, or the graduate level for that matter, being exposed to a class taught by a person of color. Insofar as the role model argument has some value to it, some minority students will think, “Well, I don't see anybody like me in this subject.”

There's also, I think, a particular feature coming out of the nature of philosophy's pretensions, the pretensions of philosophy that it's dealing with timeless and abstract matters. If you have that self-conception, it could seem as if race and racialized experience would make no difference. Sure, race could make a difference in sociology. Race could make a difference in political science. Obviously, in the world of literature, in the world of fiction and poetry and plays, race could make a difference insofar as there are different ethnic literary



traditions in one country. But you could assume that philosophy is raceless almost by definition. So, why should race be a worthwhile topic of philosophical investigation in the first place?

If you put all of these together, you get a set of mechanisms that interact in positive feedback loops to reproduce whiteness: an ongoing set of factors, a cumulative effect that perpetuates the whiteness of the discipline. There are some positive attempts under way at changing things. There's a Society of Young Black Philosophers, for example, and they have a website. You can go to it and link up with people—not just people who already have PhDs and are assistant professors, but graduate students, and I think even undergraduate students as well. There's a Collegium of Black Women in Philosophy, under the leadership of Kathryn Gines, and they hold regular conferences. There's the Caribbean Philosophical Association. You can establish a virtual community across the country by virtue of the Internet. There are some positive signs; it's just that the tradition so far has been largely white.

There are also material factors. If you have minority communities, and let's say the children are the first generation of the family to go to college, their parents didn't go to college, their parents might be thinking, and not just thinking, but saying, "Well, we sacrificed to get you in there, paid a lot of money. You really need to be doing something as a major that's going to get you a job when you come out the other side." And, given the way the job market is now for philosophers, you can see philosophy as a high-risk subject.

If you put all of those together, I think you get a fairly straightforward set of explanations.

In terms of what can be done, well, obviously, you—when I say "you," I mean philosophy professors, the largely white professoriate—need to self-consciously seek out minority writings and try to incorporate them into mainstream courses. It would also be good if people tried to teach a course in race. It's not the case that you have to be a person of color to teach a course on race. If you're smart enough to get a PhD, you're certainly smart enough to be able to educate yourself in these fields and to try to teach a course in critical philosophy of race, African American philosophy, Latin American philosophy, and so forth. At the same time, of course, the danger of courses such as these is that they could have a kind of

ghettoizing effect. “If you want to do race, then take these courses; if you want to do regular philosophy, then don’t bother with them.”

So, in addition to teaching courses on race, I think people should also make a self-conscious effort to incorporate such themes into mainstream courses: for example, a course in ethics, a course in political philosophy, a course in metaphysics, a course in epistemology. You might wonder, “How could you do that?” But in fact there is a growing body of work by people, for example, Sally Haslanger at MIT, who are looking at the metaphysics of race and the metaphysics of gender. Political philosophy can be expanded to include writings on the theme of racial justice. Social epistemology lends itself easily to bringing in social factors like race. For the history of philosophy, you could ask, “What non-traditional figures are there, people of color, who could be incorporated into such a history?” For example, W. E. B. Du Bois, whose PhD was in history, but who also had an acquaintance with philosophy, which shows in some of his writings, like *The Souls of Black Folk*. Metaphysical claims about race can be found in his famous 1897 essay, “The Conservation of Races.”

So, white philosophy professors could educate themselves as to what is available, include such material in their courses, and in that way enable minorities to see philosophers address their experiences. Such material would be good for white students as well. One thing that the Ferguson affair has brought home—not as if it needed bringing home very much because it’s been there for a long time—is the divide in perceptions between whites and people of color. If as a white person you take courses like this, it’s valuable for you as well. It will expand your philosophical perspectives, giving you a different sense of the world and exposure to a different worldview, a different experience, a different perspective on things. I should probably emphasize this point more. Incorporating such materials is not merely good in terms of possibly increasing the percentage of people of color in the profession, but it would have a positive effect for white students also.

STANCE (AS): IN MANY OF YOUR WORKS YOU CALL FOR THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF GLOBAL WHITE SUPREMACY AS A POLITICAL SYSTEM AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF THIS CONCEPTUALIZATION INTO MAINSTREAM POLITICAL



AND PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT. IF THIS INITIAL STEP IS SOMEDAY EFFECTIVELY REALIZED, WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE IMPACT ON THE NON-ACADEMIC WORLD?

CM: I would like to think that it would make us all much more self-conscious of the centrality of race to the making of the modern world, the ways in which race has permeated everyday life for the past few hundred years. The modern world has been very much shaped by European expansionism, by colonialism. Race was a central rationale for that. For white persons, race is what justified your right to be in these other countries, to rule these other countries, to displace native populations. Of course, from the perspective of people of color it's the opposite: race was a stigmatizing label, you were seen as members of inferior races. Race is a phenomenon that has had trans-disciplinary effects. Insofar as it affects everyday life, it can be studied critically from all kinds of perspectives: sociology, political science, anthropology, psychology, etc. Historically in the natural sciences, race was treated in a racist way insofar as what is called scientific racism—that's racism that has pretensions to being scientifically validated—becomes very important from the 19th century onwards. Leading figures at Ivy League institutions like Harvard, Princeton, and so forth are writing articles and books that claim to give scientific backing to the superiority of the white race and the inferiority of other races. Today, of course, we can draw on natural science to discredit such views.

So, race is relevant across the social sciences, in some of the natural sciences, and in the humanities. Race has affected literature—novels, fiction, short stories, and so forth. Critical race theory, as it has been called, has achieved significant success in some sections of the U.S. academy (and some other countries, like Australia) over the past ten-to-twenty years. With such courses, students can develop a greater and more enlightened self-consciousness about race because part of the problem today is that sometimes race is framed in such a way that it's only people of color who have a race. "They have a race, but we white people are raceless. Race is really their problem, rather than our problem." You then get a sort of distancing from these issues when the reality is, of course, that everybody has a race. Whites have a race also.

I should emphasize that I don't mean race in the biological sense because many scientists think that race in the biological sense has been proven not to exist. To use a phrase that has become a cliché, race is “socially constructed”: race is ascribed to you, and then because of that ascription you're slotted into a particular kind of position in the social system. You're categorized a certain way and then this is going to have a positive or negative effect on the opportunities you have, on the life-world in which you move, and so forth.

So, if we live in a racialized world, which continues to have a major impact on people's lives, people's opportunities, people's chances, then obviously that's something we need to be self-conscious about. In terms of descriptive theory, in terms of understanding how the world has worked, both at the micro level, the meso level (the intermediate level of society) and the macro level in terms of global inter-relations, all of this needs systematic investigation. It needs, in some cases, a rethinking of orthodox frameworks. You have a history of race affecting particular disciplines, and then roughly after World War II—because World War II and the Holocaust, and the postwar anti-colonial movement, largely discredit scientific racism—you get a crucial shift. Many theorists of race argue that there was a shift from scientific racism to cultural racism, so that scientific racism is largely (though not completely) delegitimated. For example, *The Bell Curve* by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, which was a best seller twenty years ago, is an example of old-fashioned scientific racism. But the modern variety of racism tends to be more cultural in form. The point is, insofar as race and racism have affected the modern world, contemporary accounts of pre-World War II history now tend to be racially sanitized because from a contemporary perspective it is now embarrassing to acknowledge that it was so routinely taken for granted among the white population that people of color were inferior and that white domination (“white supremacy”) was the norm. We need to excavate that history to understand how a wide variety of different disciplines were distorted by these assumptions.

So, all of that comes under the descriptive. But you asked about the non-academic world. This history also has crucial implications for normative issues, issues of social justice, and what we should practically do. The shaping of the world by European colonialism and imperialism involved massive injustices: slavery, Native American expropriation,



genocide. So, corrective justice, arguably, should be a crucial issue for us. We should be asking ourselves, “Given this history, what does social justice demand of us now, not merely on a national scale, but on a global scale?” Given the fundamental shaping effect of this history—in most countries, not in every area, obviously—on divisions of wealth and poverty, on the North/South chasm globally, then if you can make the case that colonialism has been largely responsible for that, and that racism was a central factor, then you have a case for global justice, which would require a fundamental restructuring of the global economic system and the way it creates and perpetuates national advantage and disadvantage. And, I should mention—because this has been in the news lately, with the big conference they’re having on global warming—that a lot of these issues are going to become more acute as time goes on. The likelihood is unfortunately that we’re going to be moving into a world where there are going to be all kinds of increased problems.

I think it’s the Marshall Islands, these low-lying Pacific islands, that are going to be flooded, losing terrain. We’re going to have an increase in droughts, and so forth. Some people are predicting food riots and water riots. In this very negative kind of scenario, issues of social justice obviously become even more pressing. You

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want people to get their due, and, under these circumstances, it’s unfortunately even less likely that they’re going to get their due. I think that we’re moving into an age where it’s really important for us to be thinking about how all these issues interact. There is a really major disadvantaging of people in the global South as against the global North. And it’s deeply affected by race. I would like to see all of these issues more on the table than they currently are.

STANCE (AS): IN THE ARTICLE “UNDER CLASS UNDER STANDINGS,” YOU DISCUSS THE RESISTANCE OF WHITE MORAL PSYCHOLOGIES TO ACCEPT A FUNDAMENTAL KIND OF CHANGE THAT WOULD REMEDY BLACK PROBLEMS. YOU MENTION THAT POLICIES TO REMEDY BLACK PROBLEMS SHOULD BE PUBLICLY PERCEIVED TO BE ROOTED IN JUSTICE BUT THAT OTHER MOTIVATIONS WILL BE NECESSARY

AS WELL. COULD YOU EXPAND ON WHAT THESE OTHER MOTIVATIONS MIGHT BE?

CM: Yeah, sure. It's a fairly long-winded answer, so get ready.

Research in sociology and political science shows that of all the multiple groups in the United States and the multiple divisions within the population on different public policy issues, the divisions on race and race-related questions are far and away the greatest. It's not even close. They eclipse divisions on issues of gender, religion, class, sexual orientation, etc. And what these studies also show is that the primary determinant of the divide in these perceptions is white perceptions of their group interest. It's not individual white self-interest, but white self-consciousness of themselves as being members of a group, self-conscious of their group interests, and how they would be benefited or threatened by different kinds of public policy. You're basically seeing an analysis that brings out the centrality of material group interest. What this suggests is that the leverage that moral suasion on its own is going to have is going to be slight.

There was this really interesting poll three years ago that showed that a majority of white Americans now believe that whites are the race that are most likely to be the victims of racial discrimination. This is not a population that is going to see racial justice as a pressing matter, because they think—I don't mean everybody of course, but a significant number think—"There's a black guy in the White House; racial justice has already been achieved. Why do you guys keep complaining about this? We're the ones that are now being discriminated against." When you have this kind of psychological terrain, a straight moral appeal is unlikely to be able to get things moving. We're not in the period of the 1950s where there are clearly "white" and "colored" signs and segregation either by law or by tradition is the norm. (We still, of course, have a lot of segregation, but it's no longer signposted and backed up by law.) So, it's going to be harder for many whites to see racial injustice as a reality and a problem. This is manifest in the split we saw on Ferguson, the different views whites and blacks have on the extent to which continued racial disparity is the result of social oppression. There's this guy who is writing this series for the *New York Times*, Nicholas Kristof, on what whites "don't get." I think the fifth installment



appeared recently. It's centered to a large extent on this gap in cognition, this gap in perception, between whites and blacks. So, if moral appeal is unlikely to get things moving, then what will?

Well, one possible answer is to try to embed a racial justice project in a larger social democratic justice project. What you try to do is split off that section of the white population who are closer to the bottom of the social ladder: the white poor, the white unemployed, the white working class. You appeal to them and say, "Look, this system is not working that well for you either." Historically, a lot of whites have measured how they're doing in a way that has been intrinsically relational. It's not necessarily been determined by how they've been doing in absolute terms, but how they're doing in relation to blacks. If they're positioned above blacks on the social ladder, then that's what's important. You have to break down that kind of perception and ask these people—the white working class, the white poor, the white unemployed—not how you are doing vis-à-vis blacks, but how you could be doing in an alternative system, in a system that's more redistributivist for everybody.

There's a book of a few years ago by Douglas Massey, a well-known sociologist, called *Categorically Unequal*. He had this phrase, I don't know if he coined it, "egalitarian capitalism." It sounds weird when you first hear it because, you know, how could there be an egalitarian capitalism? Is that like "jumbo shrimp" or "business ethics" or something like that? But his argument is that if we look at the U.S. capitalism of the 1930s to the 1970s, it's significantly more equal than what we have now, in part because that's covering the period from the Great Depression, through World War II, the post-war boom, and so forth. I tell my students, and they don't believe me, because it's really so hard to believe, that in this country, not in Swedish social democracy, under conservative Republican President Dwight Eisenhower, you had a tax rate that was as high as 91 percent. I think the top tax rate is now 40 percent or so. You had a shift from that capitalism, which was more egalitarian, which did more to spread the wealth around, and you had this systematic rolling back of progressive taxation, and you get deregulation, especially after the Reagan/Thatcher revolutions of the 1980s onwards. What this has led to is to a new Gilded Age.

Mark Twain (collaborating with Charles Warner) described the

original Gilded Age in the late 19th century; we're now in the new Gilded Age with income and wealth differentials that are comparable to those of the Roaring 1920s. If you look at the United States, in comparison to the other Western democracies, this country has the greatest degree of inequality, the greatest distance between top and bottom, in terms of income and wealth. There's an incredible concentration of wealth, not merely in the top 1 percent, as is often pointed out, more like the top .01 percent or the top 1 percent of that 1 percent. We have an intense concentration of wealth up there, and stagnation for decades in many middle and working class household incomes, if you measure in real dollars, corrected for inflation. There's a recent book, a quite unlikely best seller, Thomas Piketty, a French economist, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. His argument is that the predictions that you got in the 1950s by mainstream economists, of future equalization and a fair share going to labor and capital, were quite wrong. They were based on non-representative data. In certain respects, not in every respect by any means, Marx had it right. The future that Piketty predicts is plutocracy: an increase in the concentration of wealth at the upper levels and increasing gaps between them and the rest of the population, the forthcoming long Gilded Age of the 21st century. So, what you have to do is to try to make a case to the white population, as I said those who are most vulnerable, those whose wages are stagnant, and say to them, "What do you think the future is going to be for your children, for your grandchildren, in a society like this?"

What you do is you try to incorporate the project of racial justice into a social justice project which has a class dimension.

Now, it's important to emphasize that I'm not saying you just dissolve the racial justice project in the social democratic project because historically that has not worked in this country. You go back to Franklin Roosevelt, to the 1930s, and this was the first major development of the welfare state. But because of the political influence of the South, the categories of people to be covered were constructed so as to exclude domestics and agricultural workers from benefits, which is precisely where black Americans were concentrated. From the very start you had a racialized welfare state, which is a welfare state just for whites. You can't put confidence in the fact that the welfare system will cover everybody because the history has been that it doesn't. In recent years in particular—and



there's been a lot of literature on this—the point has been made that welfare is a stigmatized category that is associated with blacks: the idea that these are folks who are trying to game the system. So, there are some people deserving of welfare, hard-working white Americans, and there are these other folks who are trying to rip off the system—they are driving Cadillacs. It's all mythical, of course. But the point is that this is a suburban mythology among whites that is very prevalent, which contributed to the dismantling of welfare under Democrat Bill Clinton.

So, you can't assume that a social democratic state alone can take care of racial justice given this history of black exclusion. You need to have racial justice as a sort of discrete component within this, recognizing that the historical processes which have led to racial injustice are not at all the same as those that have led to class injustice. We then put this case to the white working class and ask them: "What is the future for your children and grandchildren? Why is the United States so unusual among the Western democracies? Why is the division of rich and poor so extreme here? Why is it that on so many crucial social indicators, despite all the wealth of this country, the United States ranks so low?" And you give an answer—and of course this could be controversial, but there are many black Americans over the 20th century who have endorsed it—that race has been a central reason. White workers have identified as whites before they've

identified as workers. Rather than a united working class pushing for a more equal system, a system that gives a chance to everybody, you find a racially divided working class because for white workers their white identity has trumped their working class identity. This historically goes back to the 19th century and early 20th century. You find white workers forming unions and keeping blacks out of unions. You find white workers moving to segregated neighborhoods and making sure that blacks are excluded. There has been no effective national working class movement.

If you were to get social democratic, non-white-supremacist, race inclusive capitalism, those in themselves would be radical changes, considering that U.S. capitalism from the beginning has been of a white supremacist kind.

If you look at the level of unionization in the country it's now down to about 12 percent or so. I think the high point in the 1950s was maybe 35 percent. There has been no strong national labor movement comparable to those we've had in Western Europe. There has been no strong social democratic party. This has all contributed to the fact that you have a capitalism which is so extreme, a capitalism that is headed towards consolidated plutocracy if the predictions of the people like Thomas Piketty are correct. The social democratic project, then, combined with the racial justice project—the argument would be that if you can convince enough whites to join this project and recognize a need for racial justice as well as class justice in terms of creating more of a redistributivist capitalist system, then you're not just relying on moral suasion, you're not just hoping that a justice argument will win, you're trying to combine a justice argument with an appeal to white group interests. If you can sell that case, then possibly you can get those two motivations put together to be sufficiently convincing as an argument: then you could have racial justice.

STANCE (AS): THIS NEXT QUESTION IS IN A SENSE RELATED TO YOUR PREVIOUS ANSWER. YOU TALK A LOT ABOUT REVISING EXISTING PROBLEMATIC FRAMEWORKS TO ADAPT INTO RADICAL ENDS RATHER THAN CASTING THEM ASIDE TO BUILD SOMETHING NEW. WE MUST POINT OUT THE PROBLEMS WITHIN THE EXISTING STRUCTURES BEFORE WE CAN EFFECT CHANGE. THIS SEEMS LIKE A LOGICAL FIRST STEP, BUT IS IT THE ONLY STEP? WHAT DO WE DO AFTER WE REWORK THE SOCIAL CONTRACT? DO WE STILL KEEP CAPITALISM AROUND ONCE WE'VE SHIFTED TO A NON-WHITE-SUPREMACIST CAPITALISM, OR IS IT THEN TIME TO TEAR IT DOWN AND BUILD SOMETHING NEW?

CM: If you consider the kind of capitalism we've had in the U.S., I agree it has historically been a racial capitalism, a white supremacist capitalism, that has differentially disadvantaged people of color. So, if you were to get social democratic, non-white-supremacist, race inclusive capitalism, those in themselves would be radical changes, revolutionary changes, considering that U.S. capitalism from the beginning, going back to the war of independence, has been of a white supremacist kind. That's been the history of this country: a capitalism that has been racialized.



Of course, some people have argued that you can't separate the attainment of racial justice from an anti-capitalist project because racial injustice has been so foundational to American capitalism. Even if you can separate them conceptually from an analytic point of view (as a philosopher can), causally you can't because they're so intimately tied. There's that argument. If that argument is sound, then what I just described in the previous answer is not going to work because it's too threatening to the foundation of the system itself. I assumed an optimistic perspective, that you can separate them not merely conceptually but causally. But that might be wrong. And, of course, there are also people doubtful that a green capitalism that is going to be able to adapt to the impending disaster of global warming is possible either. In both cases, the claim would be that there's a systemic dynamic intrinsic to capitalism that's going to be refractory to the necessary radical changes needed.

The problem of an anti-capitalist political project, though—and I'm not saying it's an insuperable problem, but certainly a *prima facie* problem—is that you need to be able to convince people that a post-capitalist society would both guarantee rights and be economically functional. And there's no attractive post-capitalist society on the face of the planet that meets those criteria. Karl Marx died in 1883; that's a long time ago. The People's Republic of China is now a big success economically, but it's not a democratic society, and there are all kinds of restrictions on who can participate politically. The question is how are you going to win people over when there's no attractive model to point to? These are problems that would have to be worked out. But, if you think in terms of more immediate goals—a more redistributivist capitalism, a nonracist capitalism—these are attractive targets for which there are working models. I would suggest, at least in the short term, that this is what we should be focusing on.

STANCE (AS): IN LIGHT OF THE PIONEERING NATURE OF YOUR EARLY WORKS, AT A TIME WHEN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY WAS AND STILL IS DOMINATED BY FIRST WORLD THEORY, DID YOU EVER STRUGGLE TO BE ABLE TO DO THE KIND OF WORK YOU WANTED TO DO? DID YOU EVER FIND YOURSELF TRYING TO BALANCE YOUR WORK ON RACE WITH MORE TRADITIONAL TOPICS?

CM: Most of my early work was in fact on First World theory. My dissertation was on Marxism, and I was exploring Marxist theory. In some cases it was Marx in a Caribbean context, but this is still Western theory—a radical part of Western theory, but Western theory just the same. There was still to a certain extent—this was way back in the late eighties—a publishing market for such work. Later on it became much harder to get such work published in mainstream journals because Marxism seemed to many people, on the surface, completely dead. It is true that some of my early work on race was published in non-philosophy journals, like interdisciplinary journals and Third World journals. On the other hand, just to show the important role that can be played by white philosophers with respect to race, I should mention John Deigh who was at the time the book review editor of *Ethics*, which is the most important ethics journal. John invited me to do a review essay for the journal of two books on the underclass. That in itself shows the difference that can be made by white philosophers trying self-consciously to expand the room for people of color. I had a long review essay in *Ethics* in 1994, and that shows the extent to which there were some white philosophers at the time concerned with the non-representativeness of the profession and willing to do what they could to help change things. So, a shout-out to John. Now, of course, it is somewhat easier to publish because critical philosophy of race, even if it's not mainstream, is more respectable.

STANCE (AS): THIS NEXT QUESTION IS MULTI-FACETED, SO IF YOU WANT TO TAKE IT PIECE BY PIECE THAT'S FINE. HOW DOES YOUR WORK ACCOUNT FOR INTERDISCRIMINATION AMONGST DIFFERING NONWHITE GROUPS: FOR EXAMPLE, TENSION AMONGST BLACK AMERICANS AND LATINOS IN CERTAIN AREAS OF THE UNITED STATES? WOULD HORIZONTALLY DIRECTED DISCRIMINATION BE A PROPER WAY OF THINKING ABOUT THIS TYPE OF HOSTILITY, OR DOES THE TENSION BETWEEN DIFFERING NONWHITE GROUPS ALWAYS ARISE FROM A DOMINATIVE WHITE SUPREMACY? WHAT TYPE OF INITIAL EPISTEMIC ISSUES DO YOU THINK NEED TO BE ADDRESSED FOR VARYING MINORITY GROUPS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT EACH OTHER'S TESTIMONIES AND MOVE TOWARDS A FRUITFUL AND COALITIONAL CONVERSATION?



CM: It's important not to confuse a terminological unifying term with a unified reality. "Nonwhite" and "people of color" are convenient umbrella terms. But they cover groups with radically divergent histories and interests, and there's no reason to think that there's a natural alliance of the different "races" under this umbrella. We're all human. Insofar as people are trying to get larger shares of a social product, white supremacy will play a certain kind of role insofar as society has been more controlled by whites historically. But it would be a mistake to locate all the blame upwards. We're all prone to racism. We're all prone to racist sentiments. It's important not to romanticize the oppressed. It's important not to think, "These poor oppressed guys are going to get into power and everything's going to be different because they're going to be forged by their oppression to be saintly people." It doesn't work like that. Often it's the case that people have been so shaped by oppression that their aim is to do to others what has been done to them. It's really important to be realistic about this kind of thing and not to have a romantic and naïve idea about social dynamics. That doesn't mean you shouldn't work for social justice, because of course you should. But you need to understand the dangers and tensions in all these processes.

These dangers bring home all the more why you need a principled commitment to racial justice that does not degenerate into interest group politics. Interest group politics just means you have race R1 as the dominant race and R2s, R3s, and R4s that have been subordinated, and it then becomes a battle between the R2s, R3s, R4s and R1s for larger shares of the pie. That's not what you want. What you want is some attempt, objectively from a moral point of view, to say, "Well, okay, whose opportunities have been affected in this context? Who deserves corrective justice in this other context?" You try to adjudicate them and bring them together. Obviously, this is really difficult and complicated, but all the more reason for philosophers to start taking a stand on these issues. It's going to mean a recognition of legitimate interests including white interests. It's not the case that you can say those are white people, so that's white supremacy, so we're going to ignore them. No. Everybody's legitimate racial interests need to be taken into account. What you want is a racial justice that is objective,

It's important not to romanticize the oppressed.

not a racial justice that is basically just catering to whichever racial group seems to have more power.

In terms of a more fruitful conversation, that will only be able to take place in a framework sensitive to diverse racial histories. There has been an increasing body of work in critical philosophy of race lately talking about the importance of moving beyond what's called the black-white paradigm. The black-white paradigm historically has been that you have from the start in the U.S. three groups: reds, whites, and blacks. You have white settlers, you have indigenous Native Americans, and blacks are mostly slaves. These are the three basic races. Then, with the eventual outcome of the Indian Wars, the conquest of the Native Americans, they're forced onto reservations, they no longer play such a role in the national racial dynamics, because they're sequestered on reservations rather than being an ongoing major factor. Then you get a shift where the major dialectic becomes the white-black dialectic, and you get what is called the black-white paradigm because it seems you can understand all other races and ethnic groups on this model. But the problem is that practices of racism against Native Americans, racism against Latinos, racism against Asian Americans, have distinct features of their own. The stereotypes differ, the particular histories differ—the history of Native Americans who are here from the start, the history of mass Asian immigration that starts much later than African slave labor, stimulating anti-Asian sentiment and anti-Asian immigration law—these are all different histories and different racial positionings. You need to develop a sophisticated understanding of racism that's going to be sensitive to these diverse histories. On this basis you then try to establish a framework for principled dialogue among people who can recognize these diverse histories.

STANCE (AS): I THINK THAT WAS A GOOD POINT YOU MADE ABOUT CONCENTRATING ON THIS OVERALL PICTURE AND MOVING AWAY FROM THE BLACK-WHITE PARADIGM.

CM: Yes, I also wanted to mention the point that Linda Martín Alcoff has made in her work. She's a well-known theorist of race. She points out that it's also going to affect the building of coalitions. If R2s are insensitive to the problems of R3s, it's going to be hard to convince R3s to want to join them in coalition. Apart from a principled basis for it, from a moral point of view, there's also a



political basis for it. This thing is never going to get off the ground if people are not sufficiently aware of and sensitive to the differing racial histories and the different racial wrongs that have been done unto groups. There's both a principled moral racial justice reason and also a pragmatic, political reason in terms of being able to form these groups into a coalition in the first place.

STANCE (AS): THANK YOU. YOU MENTIONED IN *BLACKNESS VISIBLE* THAT IT WAS A PREPARATION FOR THE TEACHING OF YOUR FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY COURSE THAT CAUSED YOU TO REFLECT ON THE ROLE OF RACE IN PHILOSOPHY IN A MORE IN-DEPTH AND SYSTEMATIC PERSPECTIVE. SINCE THAT INITIAL COURSE, HOW HAVE YOUR STUDENTS' QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS TOPIC AND INTERACTIONS AND ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE TOPIC DEVELOPED OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF DECADES?

CM: I think my answer to that is the shortest of all because there hasn't been that much change. Race is still a fringe subject in the field, and, even if there is more literature than there previously would have been, the students who come to these classes will not necessarily have read it. In many cases, when you teach an undergrad course, students will never have done this in a philosophy course before. Sometimes you feel that you're making the same initial points over and over again. For example, "Why is this legitimately philosophical in the first place?" as against sociological or some other thing like that. I would not say that there has been a dramatic change in the kind of questions I have been asked.

STANCE (AS): MUCH OF YOUR WORK FOCUSES ON MAKING INDIVIDUALS CONSCIOUS OF RACE AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION, BUT COLOR-BLINDNESS IS NOT A DESIRABLE ALTERNATIVE AS EXEMPLIFIED BY MAINSTREAM PHILOSOPHY. HOW DO YOU PUT A POSITIVE SPIN ON IDENTITIES THAT HAVE HISTORICALLY OPPRESSED INDIVIDUALS, OR, IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT ARE THE RIGHT WAYS TO ATTEND TO RACE?

CM: Different positions have emerged on this question. The question is: white identity historically has been tied up with social oppression, so what's an appropriate response? Do you say that white identity needs to be given up because it's inextricably tied up

with this history of oppression? Or do you say that white identity needs to be reclaimed, to be redeemed for a progressive anti-racist agenda? Interesting work has been done on this subject by Linda Alcoff, whom I mentioned in answer to a previous question, and also Shannon Sullivan, a philosopher originally at Penn State, now at North Carolina Charlotte, and George Yancy. Linda has a forthcoming book, *The Future of Whiteness*; Shannon has published *Revealing Whiteness* and, more recently, *Good White People: The Problem with Middle-Class White Anti-Racism*. George is a very prolific anthologist; he's edited at least fifteen books so far, and some of them have specifically brought together white philosophers as a group weighing in on the topic as white persons, as white philosophers. I think his most recent one is *White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-Racism*. So, philosophers are exploring these issues.

One argument is that, in a racialized society such as the United States, everyone is going to have an ascribed racial identity. It's not up to you to decide what your race is. There are borderline cases such as the long history of those black people who were light enough to pass, and some of those people did pass. You cross over into the white community and sever relations with your own family. So, there are a few borderline cases where people can choose their own races in that sense. But, for the most part, your race is chosen by others. Your race is determined for you by social decisions. A white person cannot individually choose to give up their race. It doesn't really mean anything from a social point of view. They will still have white racial privilege and what comes with that.

Some people have argued, and this is the position of, as I said, Linda Alcoff and Shannon Sullivan, that a better approach is to try to use that privilege in a constructive way. You recognize that whiteness has been tied up with social oppression, but you also recognize that there's been a white anti-racist tradition. There's been a tradition of anti-imperialism, a tradition of anti-slavery, a tradition of anti-Jim Crow. It's been a subordinate tradition; if it had been the major one, then we wouldn't have had these problems! But it's not been nonexistent. So, as a progressive white person concerned about these issues, one answer has been that you educate yourself about the history of race, you educate yourself about whiteness, you educate yourself about the white anti-racist tradition, and you locate yourself within that tradition, helping to build a racial justice



movement. It shouldn't be white against nonwhite; we don't want a race war or anything like that. It should be people of all colors who are concerned about racial justice, against those, unfortunately, who are not concerned about racial justice and help to keep things as they are. What you do want is a broad coalition of people, and you can see this in the protests against Ferguson as it was clear on TV and looking at the demonstrators that there are many whites involved in these protests. I like the fact that an increasing number of young white people in particular, who have not been socialized in the traditions of their parents and grandparents, recognize these problems and will, I hope, help to provide part of the social transformative role, making it clear that this should not be a white versus nonwhite thing. It should be a racial justice issue, including people of all colors and all races.

STANCE (AS): WHAT DO MORE PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO SEE THE RADICAL REORGANIZATION OF RACE AS A NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE GOAL, NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE RACIAL CONTRACT FOR THEM TO HARNESS HOPE AND SUPPORT FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE?

CM: A positive aspect of the history would be that, as you note above, race is constructed. I've been using "race" throughout not in the biological sense—which I, along with many other people, don't think exists—but race as a social construct. A nonracial world existed once. That gives us some hope that a nonracial world may exist again. There is also the thought that racialized society that privileges one race at the expense of others is a morally unjust society, and for some people that may act as a motivation or stimulation to join a social justice movement. But, as I said in reply to your earlier question, it may be that moral suasion will have a limited role, that what we need to count on is the mobilization of white group interests as well as moral motivation.

One potentially positive possibility some people are counting on is the impending demographic shift. But it's a complicated question. Some people predict that by around 2040 or so we'll have shifted to a majority nonwhite USA for the first time in U.S. history. But part of the complication is this: Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, a well-known sociologist of race at Duke, has argued that the U.S. is moving towards a Latin model. If you compare racial systems globally, the

U.S. system has usually been set in sharp contrast with the Latin American systems, so much so that some Latin American nations—Brazil is a famous example—claim they're racial democracies. You know, "We're the good guys. The bad U.S., they have race problems. We don't have race problems." This is complete nonsense. But it was made semi-believable because the nature of race in these

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countries is different. It has not usually been a sort of clear-cut, white-supremacist system. It's been much more of a continuum of shades, "pigmentocracy" in a famous term. In Brazil, for example, people who would all count as black in the U.S. because of the one-drop rule (any black ancestry makes you black) are categorized in a spectrum of different shades, different shades of brown. In fact, many people would not want to be identified as black. They would see that designation as inappropriate,

indeed as impolite and insulting. It's been part of the difficulty, in fact, of getting a racial justice movement off the ground there. One advantage of the one-drop rule in the U.S. is that everybody's united by it. Even if you were a light-skinned black, that didn't matter: you were still categorized as black under Jim Crow.

Eduardo's belief is that if the U.S. were to move toward this system, one of the consequences would be a re-drawing of the boundaries of whiteness. In the past there were some people who argued that European ethnics were not originally white in the U.S. There's a famous book in critical race theory by Noel Ignatiev called *How the Irish Became White*. There's a related book by Karen Brodtkin called *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*. Other people say these are misleading characterizations and it's not that the Irish were nonwhite, it's not that Jews were nonwhite, it's that there was a hierarchy of white races—we shouldn't see whiteness as a monolith. In the late 19th and early 20th century whiteness was conceived of as covering different white races. European ethnics, so-called (now), generally came from the



east and south—Jews, Slavs, Italians, Greeks—these were members of inferior white races (as seen then), as against the Anglo Saxons of the north and west.

And then there's a transition that even if you concede these groups were whites, but inferior whites, their status changes. It changes in part because of postwar suburbanization. Originally you have clearly demarcated ethnic neighborhoods: there's a Greek town and an Italian town and so forth. Whereas in the suburbs everybody's sort of mixed up—and when I say everybody, I mean whites because they are the original suburban dwellers; in the postwar period suburbs were almost exclusively white. You then get a dissolution of boundaries of white ethnicity and an expansion into a white race that is now conceived of much more uniformly than it would have been fifty years before. This brings home to us the possibility of changes in the boundaries of whiteness, or you could say to a full whiteness from a more inferior whiteness. We could move towards a situation where Euro-Latinos, Latinos of a European background, who would currently be seen because of ethnicity as not white in the traditional Anglo sense, the boundaries could be redrawn to include them. Some people have argued that some Asian groups like Japanese and Chinese, maybe South Asians, that they are already seen as (a phrase somebody used was) “probationary whites.” If you consider these possibilities, if you see whiteness not as biological but as a social construct, which can be constructed in different ways, you then have the possibility of an expansion of whiteness that will bring in some of these groups so that the shift to a nonwhite majority would not in fact take place, because Latinos are the largest “minority” ethnic group in the U.S.

Not all Latinos are of European origin, of course: there are Afro-Latinos, there are Indo-Latinos, there are people who are mixed, mestizo and mulatto. But, insofar as a significant section of the Latino population here has a Euro-Latino background, if whiteness expands to include them, you could see—maybe together with some Asians, maybe some light-skinned blacks—how it could be the case that you'd continue to have a system of racial disadvantage where the boundaries are now drawn differently. It would continue to be the case that those who are at the bottom would be darker, dark-skinned blacks, Indo-Latinos, Afro-Latinos, less privileged Asian groups such as Vietnamese and so forth. You would then have a different kind of racial system, which was still an unfair one.

So, in terms of the hope of the 2040 demographic shift being a positive thing for racial justice, you need to bear in mind that it won't necessarily happen that way. It could actually be changing the boundaries of whiteness rather than minoritizing whiteness.

The second point is that even if the boundary lines remain the same and whites do become a minority, they will still have differential power because of history. They will have a lot of cultural influence, they will have bureaucratic influence, they will have political influence, and of course they will have economic influence. There's a huge differential between the wealth of the median white household and the median black and Latino household. Even if whites do become a minority, they will still have differential power in the country for a long time. So, that's a complicated answer, and I'm basically trying to say that there are some positive signs, but there are some negative signs as well, which is why you can't just expect to sit back and think that the natural course of events is going to lead to racial justice, because it won't. It's going to need people to be active. It's going to need people to be committed. It's going to need people to self-consciously think about these issues and ask what kind of a country do we want to live in.

STANCE (AS): CERTAINLY. IT'S IMPORTANT TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT HOW THE RACIAL CONTRACT MIGHT CONTINUE TO REVISE ITSELF OVER TIME. THIS ALSO TIES INTO THE NEXT QUESTION, WHICH IS, IN YOUR BOOK *THE RACIAL CONTRACT*, AMONG OTHER WORKS, YOU DISCUSS HOW THE RACIAL CONTRACT IS A NON-IDEAL POLITY THAT'S CONSTANTLY BEING RE-WRITTEN DEPENDING ON THE ERA AND ITS LOCATION. WHICH PROBLEMS ENGENDERED BY THE CURRENT MANIFESTATION OR SPECIFIC INSTANTIATION OF THIS NON-IDEAL POLITY ARE YOU CURRENTLY MOST INTERESTED IN?

CM: Well, it's one that's most obvious, which is white refusal to see racial injustice and racial inequality as stemming from oppression. In the book I use the phrase "an epistemology of ignorance." I've done philosophical work on white ignorance. It's really interesting as a philosophical issue—one can be detached and academic about it, and there's a lot of writing in cognitive psychology to help us understand such phenomena, but of course we need to bear in mind



always that this is not merely an abstract, technical issue, but one with deep and problematic social effects. But that's a really interesting question: how is it possible to be in this society, aware of huge racial disparities and all these racially divergent social indicators, and not see that there's a racial problem? That's a real challenge.

There's a famous quote from Du Bois's 1940 autobiography *Dusk of Dawn* where he likens the situation of blacks trying to reach out to an indifferent and impassive white population to being behind a thick wall of plate glass that blocks out sound, and he expresses vividly there the frustration of that inability to make cognitive and affective contact with the white population. We're obviously in a very different world from the one in which he lived, considering the progress that has been made since then. Nonetheless, that has been an ongoing problem. People who benefit from privilege develop a cognitive adjustment by virtue of which they do not see the privilege as privilege. In comparison to this time period in particular, you could say more effort would have been required

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in Du Bois's time not to see privilege, considering that Jim Crow was then the law of the land. Now, you have a black president in the White House, somebody who was elected not once but twice. This is an intellectual, political, and moral challenge: how do you reach this white population who are convinced that racial justice has, if not completely, been achieved—and as long as there are events like Ferguson I guess such convictions may be somewhat disrupted—and that we've really come quite far.

The problem is that a lot of people, maybe it's even an innate human cognitive tendency, use a metric by which you look back: "Look how far we've progressed from slavery, look how far we've progressed from Jim Crow, a black guy in the White House." If that's your measuring stick, then obviously progress has been made. The real measuring stick should be, "How far are we from racial equality? What would racial equality require?" But it's very easy to look backwards and say, "Well, hey, it's clear we're making progress,

and if we keep on as we do we will continue to make progress.” When, in fact, there are some social indicators that are actually going backward. The wealth differential, at least since the government has started to collect figures on it, is worse than it’s ever been. The percentage of people of color in prison is worse than it has ever been. You had partial desegregation in the seventies and eighties; but it has been resegregation since then. This is 2014—the sixtieth anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision—and many parts of the country are now more segregated educationally than they were in the time of *Brown*. Nonetheless, for too large a percentage of the white population, this is not seen as a problem. That, I think, is a major obstacle facing everybody who is interested in racial justice. From a philosophical point of view, the point of view of social epistemology and cognitive psychology, that’s a really interesting question.

STANCE (AS): YES, SO IN A SENSE YOU COULD SAY IT’S A MATTER OF EXPOSING THE INTANGIBLE AND THE UNSEEN?

CM: Except there’s a lot of stuff that is seen. How can those in segregated communities not see that they live in an almost all-white environment? Or think of the Katrina disaster and the things that were “seen” then. But there’s this capacity of whiteness to recuperate, rewrite, gloss over, so that even if the equilibrium is temporarily disturbed, it returns to the equilibrium point.

STANCE (AS): WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUR WORK AND ACTIVISM, AND HOW SHOULD PEOPLE PUT YOUR IDEAS INTO PRACTICE?

CM: Well, there is standard stuff. People have formed study groups to develop their understanding of race or to understand the history of racial domination in the country. Arm yourselves with the facts; arm yourself with knowledge of the actual history. There’s a huge amount of ignorance on race in the United States, as I just said. A lot of the things that many whites believe are just completely false, completely divergent from the way things actually were and are. So, overcoming white ignorance should be a goal, both in yourself, if you’re white, and in people of color who have been socialized into the white viewpoint as well, insofar as there are hegemonic white-sanitized texts in high school and university. In terms of activism, people can find out what the local issues are and get involved in



them, or if they have the temperament, and of course only a few people have this kind of temperament, get involved in national issues. You can take positions, sign petitions, give money to the appropriate causes, write your congressperson, protest. There are all kinds of issues of segregated education, racial profiling, the disproportionately nonwhite prison population, patterns of police shootings—there are all kinds of things on which if more whites took an activist stand it would be harder to see them as non-issues. If it's only or largely people of color who are taking a stand on these issues, it's easier for the majority white population to dismiss them. You really need a significant section of the white population to see these as racial justice issues about which everybody should be concerned.

STANCE (AS): HAVE YOU EVER CO-AUTHORED AN ARTICLE WITH AN UNDERGRADUATE, AND WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SHOULD PLAY IN THE FIELD OF PHILOSOPHY?

CM: No, I'm afraid not. But I think it can play a valuable role to facilitate the transition to graduate work. One is challenging oneself by doing a self-sustained piece of intellectual work. And it's also very valuable in itself. It's not merely the case that it has instrumental value for your own development; it can actually generate new knowledge. I had an undergraduate student two years ago who did a very interesting undergraduate dissertation about racism on the Internet. The original vision, the promise of the Internet, was that it's a place where your body, your identity, becomes irrelevant. We know from hate sites that this has not at all turned out to be the case. The thesis was a very interesting piece of work documenting this reality and looking at the shift in perception from the original utopian vision of the Internet to the way things have actually turned out.

STANCE (AS): OUR LAST QUESTION: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR UNDERGRADUATES CURRENTLY PURSUING PHILOSOPHY, AND WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU HAVE LIKED TO HAVE RECEIVED UPON BEGINNING YOUR CAREER?

CM: Well, for anybody considering graduate work, I'm afraid the situation is now pretty bad. There's a famous statistic, which I can't remember exactly: it's either 75 percent of all college and university

courses are being taught by temps or 75 percent of all college and university teachers are temps. Which, either way, is obviously not encouraging. The grand days of an expanding university system and lots of tenure-track jobs available—they're not around anymore. On the other hand, an undergrad degree in philosophy is valuable, even if you don't go on to grad school in philosophy, because there are a lot of statistics that show that people with philosophy majors do very well in adapting to other professions. It cultivates a particular skill set: you learn to think analytically, you learn to challenge the arguments of others and construct your own arguments, you learn to identify the particular conceptual framework a person is working with and how to challenge that. Apart from the classic cultivation of wisdom, teaching you to think very deeply about your life and what you want to do with your life, philosophy also has an instrumental side to it that's very conducive to getting a job in other areas.

Arm yourselves with the facts; arm yourself with knowledge of the actual history.

In terms of advice I was given myself, they distributed a statement to all of us in my first year in graduate school at the University of Toronto warning us that the golden age of job expansion was past and that we should not think that the PhD would, if we did indeed finish the program, necessarily result in a job. So there is a sense in which this has been a problem for a long time. But I think it's even worse now than it was then. What you might think is, "Well, that's the other guy. They won't make it, but I will." In my particular case, I did make it, but luck played a large role in my eventually finding a job. So, I would suggest to all of you that you do need to think very seriously before going on to graduate school and make sure you get advice about it from informed people.

