

philosophy department. While we cannot let such judgments dictate our movements, we need to recognize that much of the work necessary to transform the discipline, that is, to push its boundaries, must occur from within.

4. Negotiate, negotiate, negotiate. Do not give up tenure when you might be able to take an unpaid leave of absence instead. I retained my position at the University of Scranton when I took a position as a director in an applied policy center in Washington, D.C., by negotiating such a leave. As I noted above, I recently worked with my union to find a way for me to retain my position in philosophy while chairing another department. Use leaves and varying visiting arrangements to spread your wings and find your voice.

5. Think about how we teach and mentor—are we merely reinforcing the boundaries of the discipline or not? Even if we are comfortable doing philosophy that is more likely recognized as philosophy, do we stop the intellectual bullying of those who do feminist work or who push the boundaries of the discipline as they are usually enforced? Martha Nussbaum notes that while the creativity and daring of younger male philosophers who refuse to follow the leads of their mentors is often rewarded, women are just as often not.<sup>13</sup> We need to recognize and reward the creative thinking of all.

We need to support one another. We especially need to support those most marginalized by current disciplinary boundaries, both in our work as philosopher-scholars and in our work in service to the discipline and to academe. I feel privileged to be able to push the boundaries of philosophy from the inside. I feel I have a responsibility to do so.

#### Endnotes

1. See Miriam Solomon and John Clarke, “CSW Jobs for Philosophers Employment Study,” *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 3-4 and the discussion articles on the survey in that same volume.
2. Catherine Villanueva Gardner. *Women Philosophers: Genre and the Boundaries of Philosophy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988).
3. See also Janet A. Kourany, “Why Are Women Only 21% of Philosophy?: Introduction to the Panel Presentations,” *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 9-10.
4. Michèle Le Doeuff. “Long Hair and Short Ideas.” In *The Philosophical Imaginary*, trans. Colin Gordon (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 101.
5. Elizabeth K. Minnich. “Women in Philosophy: 21% of What?” *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 11.
6. Le Doeuff, “Long Hair and Short Ideas,” 101.
7. Elizabeth K. Minnich, “Women in Philosophy,” 112.
8. Linda Martín Alcoff, ed. *Singing in the Fire: Stories of Women in Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).
9. Linda Martín Alcoff, “Introduction,” in *Singing in the Fire*, 7.
10. Claudia Card, “Finding my Voice: Reminiscence of an Outlaw,” in *Singing in the Fire*, 46.
11. Teresa Brennan, “My Open Agenda, or How Not to Make the Right Career Moves,” in *Singing in the Fire*, 12.
12. Claudia Card, “Finding my Voice,” 45-46.
13. Martha C. Nussbaum, “Don’t Smile So Much,” in *Singing in the Fire*, 103.

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## Mid Career...or Second Career?

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One of my favorite mentors in grad school imparted to me two main pieces of advice over the course of twenty years (he was not a man prone to impose his views). For one, remain focused. Get the dissertation done, and then stay the course until tenure. After tenure, I would be free to study anything I wanted—which in my naive view was what I was doing in graduate school. The second piece of advice, imparted two decades hence, was that I should steer clear of administrative positions. Universities these days seek out women administrators, he said, but women who get entangled in that sort of work often become distracted and overworked, ultimately losing out on things that had attracted them to academic life to begin with. I found him to be right on both of these points, as on nearly everything.

After tenure, I found myself forcing my research in the history of philosophy. Having trained as a Leibniz scholar, I could no longer find the work of clarifying the influences on and developments of his work as engaging and important as I once had. I sought connections between his work and the other moderns to contemporary philosophical issues that concerned me, but found that the links were weak at best. Attempts at finding relevance in my work kept falling flat. At the same time, several circumstances converged to make it possible for me to make a shift into an area of philosophy in which I had no training, but for which I discovered I had an avid interest.

One of those factors was a very subtle shift in my teaching. Since none of the other faculty in my department had any interest in teaching analytic philosophy, I started to offer courses in the history of the tradition, as well as in contemporary metaphysics and epistemology. Having been trained in an analytic department, this was not much of a stretch, but choosing the readings for those courses took me into areas in which I had forgotten or had never known that I had strong interest. It dawned on me after several years of this that I had reached the post-tenure stage, and that I could read the things that piqued my interest. I realized that I no longer needed to discipline myself to find interest in the things from which I could get publications useful for showing progress on my research agenda, which it also occurred to me I had never consciously chosen anyway.

The other factor that facilitated my switch in focus was administrative: my department was moving toward a rotating chair system, and I was the only person with tenure on the faculty, besides the person who was in the position at the time. So I did a thing that I knew full well to be unwise in some ways, and accepted a three-year term as chair of the department. My advisor had been right; this job was even more disruptive to my research than had been living as a single parent, serving as PTO president and team mom. I immediately discovered the near impossibility of doing any writing while managing all the concerns of the faculty and administration, along with the teaching load that I continued to carry. So I spent my time preparing classes that I thought would be interesting for myself and my students, directing honors and master’s theses, and writing reports.

One of the honors theses that I directed focused on certain arguments regarding *qualia*, in the philosophy of mind. As I helped the student to develop his bibliography, I made copies of the lists, and added them to my own reading. If one lacks time to write, as any philosopher knows, one can at least read. So I read, and I found myself completely absorbed by the philosophy

of mind, and the cognitive science to which those philosophical issues led me. I took numerous courses online and watched endless videos on neuroscience, cognitive science, and philosophy of mind. I studied everything from the proteome of the synapse to computer models of face recognition processes, to the effects of addiction on brain physiology. In addition, I read widely on the philosophical debates concerning consciousness, the existence (or not) of propositional attitudes, and the internalism or externalism of mental content, as well as the whole constellation of debates surrounding the fundamental issue of the nature of mind itself. Drive time was spent listening to lectures and podcasts on minds and brains.

To my great fortune, during the first two years of my tenure as chair, our department had a postdoctoral fellow whose contract included an emphasis on interchange between our campus downtown and the medical campus with which we had recently been administratively joined. This young woman's contract stipulated that she do outreach, in the form of public talks, or symposia, or other events that would include members of both our academic and the larger community. At the urging of my honors thesis student, I suggested to our fellow that we arrange an interdisciplinary conference, bringing professionals from both campuses together in a public forum to discuss something of mutual interest, and of interest to the community. The theme that we chose for that conference was very popular that year: the problematic relation between religion and science. We had physicians, biomedical researchers, cellular biologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and a large contingent of the community come together for a full day of papers and panel discussions. It was very well received, and many participants and audience members urged that we hold another such event in the following year.

The next year we decided to enlarge the event to two days, to bring in keynote speakers, and to seek both greater participation and more publicity. We chose for the theme of this second conference the relation of mind to brain, and we put out a national call for papers. We received an excellent set of submissions, and were able to this time invite neuroscientists, neurosurgeons, cognitive scientists, philosophers, and medical practitioners to talk about the subject that had so engaged my interest. Once again the conference was a huge success, and once again I was grateful to have the chance to parlay what could have been a set of burdensome tasks (the organization of an inter-campus event, the oversight of our postdoctoral fellow, as well as the direction of a grant-funded undergraduate research team) into a wonderful learning experience for myself.

Through these activities and the others that I had created or fallen into, I have managed to make much of my time as chair that might have been otherwise just a huge lacuna in my development as a philosopher. Although I have written nothing during this period other than some book reviews and short presentation papers, I feel that I have learned more than I have at any time since graduate school. Also, I feel a sense of rejuvenation with regard to my philosophical work—I have a new direction, and one which stirs my passion. In the present year, my last as chair, because I am familiar with the demands of the job, I have been able to fit in a bit more writing, and organizing for future writing. As a result of the training I have put myself through, I have also forged new friendships and found areas of research that will keep me busy for the foreseeable future. In short, I am excited about doing philosophy again.

To be sure, this is not a path for the faint of heart. Indeed, I have heard from many professional acquaintances that starting a whole new research agenda is the last thing that they would want to do. For one thing, the energy that it takes

to sustain basically two careers at once—teaching, advising, and administering on the one hand, and reading, studying, and attempting to write in a field in which one has no expertise, on the other—is significant, and if you add to that the normal demands that all single mothers face, the result can be daunting indeed. For another, returning to the intimidation and potential for humiliation that go with breaking into a new field, particularly for those of us who are accustomed to being recognized with some respect for our expertise, may not seem very appealing. Numerous times I have thought, “what am I doing here?” as I sat in conference rooms full of strangers, all of whom seemed to know one another, as I know the modernists. I have remembered what it is to be on the outside, looking for a way to fit in. I know what it feels like to be a middle-aged novice in the middle of an assembly of highly proficient and remarkably young professionals, finding myself asking questions that even I can see, in retrospect, were only on the edge of relevance. Not only that: contrary to my previous experience, an NEH grant proposal that I was most confident of was rejected because I had no track record in the field, and I have had to suffer dents to my ego brought about by dead-on criticisms of certain of my errors, made through sheer ignorance of a single important paper in the field.

But this kind of experience was what I lived for in graduate school, and to face new challenges and to learn how little I know about fascinating subjects continues to make me feel alive. It means that there is still so much to do, that there is a grand future to which I can look forward. Of course, the really nice thing about making such a change when I am 50 and tenured, is that I no longer have to wonder whether the path I am on will secure for me a career in philosophy. In the developing stages of my career, I would only allow myself to think of what work I knew I could do well enough to convince people that I was a competent philosopher. I focused on what I did best, which seems to me now to be only what I had done the most. As an undergraduate I had focused on the history of philosophy, simply because of the contingent fact of the limitations of the department in which I was trained, and as a graduate student I continued to develop my expertise in that direction because it was the area with which I was most comfortable, and in which I believed that I had the greatest chance of getting published. This is not to say that I didn't have wonderful and inspiring teachers, or that I regret for a minute that I took the path that I did; quite the contrary. I loved what I was doing when I was in graduate school and for some time afterward.

As I tell my students, the reason that I am a professor is that I loved being in school when I was a student, so much so that I never left. I still love it, and for the same reasons that I did when I was much younger: new things are exciting. In making a major shift in my area of research, at a stage in which one might think that I would rather work on something regarding which I have some expertise, I have revitalized that sense of excitement and discovery that characterized those early years. Although the price for making the change is high, as was the price in choosing philosophy over law school or business in the first place, the payoff is tremendous.

One afterthought: with respect to that other piece of advice I was given by my mentor in grad school, I will say that he is mostly right. Administration can be a pitfall for women at mid-career. Many of my professional acquaintances either have become mired in open-ended chair appointments, managing departments much larger, more complex, and more contentious than mine, or they have moved from department-level administration to college- or university-level positions. While some have flourished, developing new skills and interests and enjoying being out of the classroom, most seem to me to

be more tired and less satisfied with their work than when they were working as faculty members. I was just this year recruited for an assistant dean's position, and I saw why they would choose me, and why they might think that I would like the position. It was a position that would have enabled me to help a number of students who needed and deserved the help. But I know how days with interruptions interrupted by interruptions go, and I know that at the end of them, I feel that I have accomplished nothing. The attractions of the academic life are not bureaucratic frustration, long hours, or years with no vacations. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to serve as my department's chair for these past two and a half years, but mostly because working in this capacity has set the conditions for me to start a second career, in the only profession I ever loved.

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## ***Some Reflections on a Bad Relationship<sup>1</sup>***

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We often compare academia to dating—from the dance card (the Eastern APA) to the engagement (tenure track position) to the marriage (tenure). Well, if the metaphor fits.... My name is Claire Katz and I left a bad relationship: abusive, mean, disrespectful, unappreciative, and cold. Others believe that my former flame was beautiful—virile, strong, accomplished, wealthy, good reputation. I stayed in this relationship for six years and we eventually married—in the metaphorical sense (tenure), but the relationship was already in serious trouble. Yet, like most relationships that are bad, it was not until the situation became completely untenable that I started looking around—“cheating” is probably the appropriate term. Maybe that is too strong a word, but I was definitely flirting. Although temporary time away from the bad situation would certainly have been welcome, I was not interested in an affair. I was looking for a whole new marriage. Like many women in troubled relationships, I thought therapy would help. So while I was seeking a new marriage—since it seemed clear that this one had very little future—I had also arranged for professional help, in the form of founding an AAUP chapter on my campus.

To be sure, some of these academic marriages in fact continue happily and celebrate rather impressive anniversaries; others end rather quickly in divorce. Still others fall somewhere in between—they should end in divorce but they continue, and the toxic atmosphere is debilitating to everyone caught in their wake. There is a reason that the dating metaphor fits the academy—because it fits. My point here is that it is just as important to know when to leave a university partnership—at any point—if that relationship is detrimental to one's well being, as it is to leave an intimate relationship when that relationship is also harmful. Unfortunately, deciding if and when to leave a bad relationship—and this is a gross generalization—is something that most people, but in particular women, have trouble determining. Many women internalize the view that if they just worked a little harder, maybe the situation would improve. They are often told that making a relationship work is their responsibility and they carry that view with them into the workplace. Moreover, I would argue that like the system that governs intimate partnerships, the system is not designed to favor women who have suffered at the hands of their colleagues or the university.

Certainly it is the case that many relationships have problems that need to be addressed at some point or other. However,

there is a distinction to be made between a relationship with problems and disagreements and a relationship that is toxic, abusive, and dangerous. One might be worth saving; the other is not. While it might seem as though this distinction should be obvious, especially when one person is physically violent to the other, often the psychological abuse that preceded the physical violence renders the person less able to leave the relationship. In the case of the university relationship, violence is most likely not going to be present, thus making the distinction more difficult. There won't be bumps or bruises. Nonetheless, the systemic emotional or psychological abuse can be just as present and just as debilitating. In the same way that good counseling can help you “see” the intimate relationship for what it is, so too, seeking an outside perspective may help confirm your intuitions about the university—outside advice and perspective might help you see what is good and what is bad. It might help simply by telling you that you do not deserve to be treated this way and that those who are acting out are wrong for doing so.

Although I hope that my comments here will provide some helpful ideas, leaving a university position, like leaving a bad relationship, is not a question that I or anyone else can answer for you. It is something that ultimately each faculty member must decide for herself. However, good counsel and advice can help someone sort out the good from the bad, provide ideas and questions to consider, and help determine if the situation in which someone finds herself is simply the result of an imperfect institution or is truly toxic and harmful.

Let me begin my discussion with those features that make leaving a bad situation not only difficult but also make staying tempting. On a professional level, the institution may carry a reputation that opens doors for you. The available resources seemed pretty good—not as good as some places but certainly better than others. You may enjoy the particular appointment that you have. For example, I was jointly appointed in a Jewish Studies program and that affiliation was important to me. Thus, one might justify the abuse by thinking that the other features of the relationship compensate for it.

There might also be personal reasons for staying—you might like the town, your friends, or the location. In my case, my husband and I both had tenured positions and we did not take that for granted. We knew how difficult it was and still is for a couple to have employment of any kind in the same town. For many of us, being in a bad employment situation but being able to live together and make a life together is often better than being in a good employment situation but sacrificing the daily time spent together as a couple or a family. Additionally, we had two small children and we had made a life for ourselves outside of the university environment. We had to consider what it would mean to uproot our children and leave our friends. We stayed as long as we did because of other benefits that were important to us. I was given a semester paid maternity leave with my first baby and I was reasonably certain that I wanted a second baby. The loss of this kind of benefit was, quite frankly, not worth risking.

Nonetheless, I had to weigh these benefits against how I was being treated and what the climate was like for me and other vulnerable women—untenured professors (or even tenured associate professors) and graduate students. For most of us with a conscience, a hostile environment for others affects all of us and one needs to make a concerted effort to turn away from that kind of situation. I could not turn away and my outspoken support of those colleagues and graduate students increasingly put me at risk and continued to make my life unpleasant. Although I finally made a decision to leave, for reasons which I will turn to in a moment, let me state briefly that my time at my previous institution was not simply unpleasant.<sup>2</sup>