

Diversity in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT: It is important to appreciate how the battle between multiculturalist and individualist theories of education has shaped the pedagogical advice that some institutions of higher learning now give their instructors. In an important sense, that advice invites college and university teachers to pursue conflicting, irreconcilable goals in their teaching. By examining a particular North American example of such advice, I try to explain why the understandable attempt to accommodate both multiculturalism and individualism in the classroom inevitably makes for incoherent pedagogy.

I

No observer of the university in recent years can fail to have noticed the pitched battle now occurring between multiculturalist and individualist theories of education.¹ But too few observers have taken proper notice of how that battle has shaped the pedagogical advice that some institutions of higher learning now give their instructors: in an important sense, that advice invites college and university teachers to pursue conflicting, irreconcilable goals in their teaching. Examining a particular North American example of such advice may help us see more clearly why the understandable attempt to accommodate both multiculturalism and individualism in the classroom inevitably makes for incoherent pedagogy.

II

“Diversity in the classroom isn’t a bad thing – it’s a *good* thing.” With that encomium, the Assistant Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity at Cornell University ended her remarks at a recent orientation for new instructors in the Freshman Writing Program.² What stood out more than any particular one of the suggestions she gave was their uneasy emulsification into an overall message that, like most emulsions, began to separate right before our eyes. A careful look at the ingredients will show why her well-intentioned advice produced an unstable mixture and not, as she probably had hoped, a solution.

The last of the orientation’s scheduled speakers, the Assistant Director urged her listeners to cultivate a sensitive and constructive attitude toward the plurality of genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and disabilities they would undoubtedly encounter in their classes. She encouraged audience members to take advantage of the workshops, private consultations, and other services her office provides, and she offered free copies of a brochure prepared by her staff.

The brochure, *Equal Opportunity at Cornell* (1993),³ includes a brief rationale for the Office of Equal Opportunity's enforcement of Affirmative Action rules designed to increase diversity on campus:

Cornell needs the substantial presence on its faculty and staff of persons of color, women, persons with disabilities, and veterans. The university that lacks that presence is deprived of skills, perspectives, and insights that are essential to the diversity, balance, and comprehensiveness of a great institution of learning.

While the rationale just quoted focuses on diversity in employment, other parts of the brochure explicitly extend the University's Affirmative Action and non-discrimination policies to students as well. The Assistant Director made it clear to her audience, moreover, that Cornell values a diverse student body for the very same reasons it values diversity in the workplace.

Her remarks seemed designed to convey three distinct messages. First, and most obviously, no teacher worthy of the name should apply invidious (but, in her experience, all too common) stereotypes to students of minority backgrounds: for example, the notion that "Hispanics are lazy" or that "Asians are smart, but they can't drive."⁴ Even those instructors who might feel themselves incapable of that kind of bigotry should guard against inadvertently thinking of or treating their students in terms of generalizations about race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. One of the speaker's examples suggested that even plainly true statistical generalizations could form the basis for embarrassing, even harmful, conduct on the part of instructors. Don't, she said, ask a male student whom you don't know well "a hypothetical question about his 'girlfriend'; don't simply assume that the student is heterosexual," even if the chances are good he is. I imagine that the audience found her admonition against racial bigotry almost too obvious to need saying, but her remarks about heterosexuality probably left some instructors wondering what socially significant statistical generalizations they *could* safely presuppose in the classroom – maybe none, since all such generalizations have exceptions.⁵ Still, much, if not all, of her advice on the matter of bigotry should have sounded familiar to anyone in her audience who usually travels in enlightened and tolerant circles.

Her second point seemed less familiar. Instructors, she said, should regard diversity in the classroom not as an obstacle they must tolerate or overcome, or even as a neutral fact they must (or can) ignore, but as a constructive opportunity: a chance to embrace "difference" in their classes and thereby enrich their teaching and their students' learning. As the statement of hers I opened with was supposed to indicate, we should look on diversity not as something negative or even neutral, but as something positive and valuable. Far from presenting an obstacle to good teaching, a racially and ethnically diverse and gender-balanced classroom presents an opportunity that no instructor who wants to get the most out of her students can afford to pass up. One might, of course, let one's students take the initiative here, letting the diversity in the classroom simply "emerge" of the students' own accord. But if one's students fail to take the initiative at all, or often enough, then that approach risks squandering the chance that the diversity afforded one in the first place. Again, a mix of genders, races, ethnicities, and so

on, brings with it the kinds of “skills, perspectives, and insights that are essential to the diversity, balance, and comprehensiveness of a great institution of learning” and that (says the brochure) only such a mix can provide. Consequently, the instructor who adopts a laissez-faire attitude toward diversity may be missing a bet; some sort of more activist approach seems the part of wisdom here.

The speaker concluded by stressing a third pedagogical message, this time again a more familiar one. On the heels, as it were, of her injunction to celebrate difference, she strongly cautioned instructors against any temptation to see or treat individual students as tokens or representatives of their race, gender, ethnicity, veteran status, or disability – or of views or cultures associated with such categories. Don’t, for instance, ask or expect the lone black student in your class to express the “black position” or even the “consensus of blacks” on an issue. Don’t treat him or her as a token of some uniform racial perspective, or even as a token of some perspective statistically but imperfectly correlated with race. Evidently, some students have complained to the Office of Equal Opportunity about experiencing just that sort of tokenism in their classes, and instructors should not underestimate the harm such tokenism can cause. In short, the speaker reminded her listeners of a rather traditional tenet of liberal education: we ought never to forget that each student is a unique individual who deserves to be treated as an individual and not as a proxy for his or her “group.” Her third and last message opposed tokenism by reasserting a guiding principle of traditional pedagogy, liberal individualism, but reasserted that principle while simultaneously calling for a multicultural approach to classroom teaching, the kind of approach which, again, her brochure appears to defend.⁶

Incompatible Goals

The speaker’s first message, the warning against bigotry, coheres with and even follows from her third message, the reassertion of individualism. But I doubt that they both cohere with her second message, the injunction to celebrate diversity in the classroom. In an important sense, of course, the liberal individualist also celebrates the mix of genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and so forth, typical in today’s elite universities; she sees it as the result of a reformed university admissions process that, some years ago, finally ceased discriminating against women and minorities. The liberal individualist celebrates campus diversity because she sees it as reflecting something more important: proof of more open and more fair competition among all applicants for admission and financial aid.

For the multiculturalist, by contrast, diversity serves a different and arguably more important purpose than merely indicating openness and fairness in admissions. It provides an indispensable range of “skills, perspectives, and insights” that we can’t get any other way. We can’t get them any other way because, according to the now-dominant versions of multiculturalism, important kinds of knowledge – if not all kinds of knowledge – depend *essentially* on the knower’s race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and so on.⁷ I’ll return to this distinctive epistemological claim later on. For the moment, it’s enough to note that the mul-

ticulturalist rationale in *Equal Opportunity at Cornell* implicitly asserts what most liberal individualists would deny: even a “procedurally fair” admissions process will shortchange the university and its students unless the process actually achieves a genuine mix of races, genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and disabilities.

The point bears repeating. The multiculturalist regards procedurally fair competition for admission and scholarships as less important than whatever it takes to ensure real diversity on campus. Provided it achieves diversity, fairness in admissions is, of course, all to the good. Contrary to the liberal individualist, however, the multiculturalist does not consider any amount of fairness an excuse for failing to enroll a diverse student body. I doubt the multiculturalist will be satisfied by “fairness” even if we enrich the concept so that a fair admissions process must consider the applicant’s group and the historical disadvantages that group has faced. The notion of “group fairness” matters to those, including perhaps some individualists, who see Affirmative Action as proper *compensation* for disadvantaged applicants. But the compensatory argument for diversity differs crucially from the multiculturalist’s epistemological argument for it. The individualist agrees that applicants who have faced discrimination may deserve compensation, but she does not value diversity because of its allegedly essential link with certain indispensable kinds of knowledge. For the multiculturalist, by contrast, both procedural and compensatory fairness take a back seat to results.

III

The antagonism between multiculturalism and individualism, as I said, will not come as news to anyone who has paid the slightest attention to higher education in recent years. But I suspect not everyone understands how these antagonistic principles underwrite incompatible approaches to classroom teaching, a suspicion I find confirmed by the incoherence in the advice that Cornell’s Office of Equal Opportunity gives to new instructors in the Freshman Writing Program. How can a teacher make full, active use of her classroom’s mix of races, genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientations *without* in some way treating individual students as representing, or at least possessing, the experiences, “skills, perspectives, and insights” that, according to the brochure, make diversity worth pursuing in the first place? No institution pursues diversity of race, gender, or ethnicity as an end in itself, as if to achieve an aesthetic variety of skin colors, body types, or facial features in the classroom. Instead, on the multiculturalist model, institutions pursue such diversity precisely because of its presumed correlation with a diversity of backgrounds, skills, perspectives, and insights. Why, then, should instructors not regard at least some students as, in part, repositories of the very backgrounds, skills, perspectives, and insights that make diversity in the classroom valuable?

To see the point more vividly, consider an admittedly fanciful example. Suppose that an instructor has good reason to believe that, of all the persons in the classroom (including the instructor herself), only Penelope knows the answer to

a particular question of interest to the class. Suppose that, because of Penelope's previously confessed obsession with musicology and music history, it becomes apparent to the instructor that only Penelope, and not even the instructor herself, knows who actually composed what has come down to us (unreliably) as *Purcell's Trumpet Voluntary*.⁸ Assuming it's important for the class to know that answer and assuming it fails to emerge from Penelope without the instructor's prompting, the instructor would be silly, if not also derelict in her duty, not to prompt Penelope for the answer.⁹ She would be silly not to treat Penelope as a unique repository, in that context, of knowledge that mattered to the class. On the multiculturalist model, the same lesson ought to apply to instructors who have good reason to believe that, of everyone in the classroom, only, say, the Asian student possesses a particular skill, perspective, or insight exposure to which would benefit the other students in the class. If one takes seriously the multiculturalist claim, explicit in *Equal Opportunity at Cornell*, that serious learning requires goods that diversity alone can deliver, then sometimes good teaching will *require* tokenism of the sort the individualist deplors.

Conflicting Philosophies

The teaching goals recommended by the Office of Equal Opportunity war with each other because, again, they embody two opposed political philosophies: individualism, whose standard versions stress the uniqueness and autonomy of individuals apart from their membership in racial, gender, or ethnic groups and take progress to consist in the increasing *irrelevance* of such membership; and multiculturalism, whose dominant versions stress the importance of group membership in light of a history of group conflict and see individualism as a pretext for oppression.¹⁰ The multiculturalist tells us to celebrate, not merely tolerate, the diversity in our classrooms, to recognize and value the differences among groups. The individualist urges us, regardless of group differences, to respect the individuality of each of our students and never to treat them as proxies. Since these two philosophies obviously pull in opposite directions, so too will any pedagogical goals that try to accommodate them both.

The staff at the Office of Equal Opportunity cannot have it both ways. Like good university administrators, though, they would probably respond to the charge of incoherence by asking teachers to effect some sort of *compromise* between practicing tokenism and ignoring diversity in the classroom altogether.¹¹ But any such middle way between the two poles, like a "compromise" between Marxism and libertarianism, will threaten to unravel on account of its internal inconsistency; teachers, moreover, will find it hard to know how to follow such inconsistent advice in the classroom. The inconsistency comes from trying to implement the latest multiculturalist thinking while also preserving the residue of liberal individualism with which most Western intellectuals grew up. It comes from a failure to appreciate the deep conflict between multiculturalism and individualism, or at any rate a failure to appreciate the consequences of that conflict for our teaching. No doubt some teachers already see themselves as implementing, or trying to implement, both philosophies at once in their classrooms.¹² Like the

“Marxist libertarian,” however, they cannot do justice to both of their fundamentally opposed goals, even if they think they can.

In order to begin giving coherent pedagogical advice, the Office of Equal Opportunity must either abandon its residual individualism or else recant its explicit endorsement of the multiculturalist rationale for seeking diversity on campus. Individualists tend strongly to deny that the skills, perspectives, and insights that contribute to serious learning depend essentially on race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability. Just as, they say, John Stuart Mill could advance the cause of women’s equality or Harriet Beecher Stowe could write compellingly about the experiences of slaves, the whole range of human skills, perspectives, and insights is in principle available to anyone with the requisite intelligence and industry.¹³

Individualists will make an even stronger claim if they also believe that the acquisition and dissemination of *propositional knowledge* is the ultimate goal of all academic (as opposed to practical or technical) disciplines. For these individualists, the real business of the academy – the discovery and understanding of true propositions – does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or physical handicap.¹⁴ What skills, perspectives, and insights, they wonder, does a black student possess uniquely and essentially in virtue of being black? The answer, they think, is “probably none,” or at any rate “probably none that don’t ultimately derive from the sort of first-person, qualitative experience of life that each of us possesses essentially and uniquely.” While, they admit, a white man can never know just what it feels like to grow up black or female, he can in principle grasp and disseminate any propositional knowledge possessed by any black woman. He cannot share a black woman’s (or, indeed, anyone else’s) precise qualitative experience, but he can in principle learn all there is to know *about* it. According to these individualists, the academy concerns itself not with what someone’s experience feels like from the inside – necessarily something to which only that person has access – but with what things are *true* (including what things are true of first-person experiences), something we all can come to know. Strictly speaking, only propositions, and never experiences, are true, and so group membership plays at most a contingent, and never an essential, role in learning the truth.

Individualists would probably also question the academic relevance of the *particular* categories that the Office of Equal Opportunity links with indispensable “skills, perspectives, and insights.” Why single out persons of color, women, persons with disabilities, and veterans, but not, say, homosexuals, the elderly, albinos, or Quakers? Why suppose that membership in the former but not the latter categories confers on a student those qualities essential to a community of serious learners? *Equal Opportunity at Cornell* lists no fewer than ten categories on the basis of which the university may not discriminate: race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national or ethnic origin, disability, and veteran status. But only the four categories singled out earlier – persons of color, women, the disabled, and veterans – receive Affirmative Action treatment in hiring and admissions.¹⁵ The university does not recruit on the basis of

sexual orientation, age, or religion in order to increase, say, the number of elderly homosexual Quakers on campus, and the individualist wonders why not. Seeing no educationally relevant difference between the four privileged categories and the six others, the individualist explains the special emphasis on the former as stemming purely from political pressure and not from any educational theory.

One does not, of course, answer the individualist's question by pointing out that the relevant statutes require Affirmative Action treatment for only four of the ten categories, or by contending that only applicants from those four categories have suffered from discrimination. Neither those statutes nor their legislative rationales explain why persons of color, women, the disabled, and veterans – but not homosexuals, the elderly, albinos, or Quakers – necessarily possess those skills, perspectives, and insights that no great university can do without. One does not answer the individualist's pedagogical question by reminding her of the laws that have resulted from the political give-and-take in Washington, Ottawa, or some other legislative arena.

Nor would the claim about discrimination, even if it were not obviously false, explain why all and only victims of discrimination possess those qualities indispensable to the university community. Recall the brochure's multiculturalist assertion: universities that lack the substantial presence of the four groups it mentions lack what they need to be great, and that goes for the classroom as well as the workplace. The individualist wonders what essential pedagogical difference a student's group membership makes in the first place and, second, why only membership in one or the other of four particular groups makes that difference. The individualist acknowledges the relevance of discrimination when it comes to programs designed to *compensate* victims, but multiculturalists do not regard compensation as the reason for seeking diversity. The reason, instead, is the essential dependence of knowledge on group membership.

From the multiculturalist's point of view, however, the individualist's questions all rest on errors. The preeminent versions of multiculturalism assert either that all propositional knowledge founders on a dubious assumption of "objective truth" or, more often, that even propositional knowledge depends essentially on the knower's race, gender, ethnicity, and so forth.¹⁶ Thus, either the individualist misunderstands the basic mission of the academy,¹⁷ or, assuming she does understand it, she fails to recognize that there is some knowledge that, say, only a black woman can possess – or, at any rate, that only a black woman can bring to the university. Embracing particularism about knowledge (the claim that knowledge depends essentially on the knower's race, gender, and so on), the multiculturalist understandably calls for a more varied representation of groups on campus: no first-rate institution of higher learning can do without it.

IV

The multiculturalist challenge to liberal individualism sounds radical, and it is. Nevertheless, it evidently defines much of the mission of the Office of Equal

Opportunity at Cornell (and of many such offices elsewhere), and it influences the kind of institutional guidance that university instructors now receive. I've tried to show that the attempt to "temper" multiculturalism with a dose of individualism leads to an unworkable, even incoherent, teaching strategy, since the two political philosophies don't mix well at all. In spite of their antagonism, though, they may actually end up converging at the theoretical horizon. If, like the multiculturalist, we differentiate persons according to their membership in groups, and if we recognize that on a suitably fine-grained definition of "group" practically *any* two persons differ by virtue of belonging to *some* different groups, then we will end up differentiating practically everyone, since practically no one will belong to all the same groups as anyone else. Thus, ironically, multiculturalism may at its logical limit lead to individualism after all.

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NOTES

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¹ For examples of this debate, see (among numerous others) John R. Searle, "The Storm Over the University," *New York Review of Books*, December 6, 1990; the replies to Searle (and Searle's rejoinder) in "'The Storm Over the University': An Exchange," *New York Review of Books*, February 14, 1991; and the essays anthologized in *The Imperiled Academy*, ed. Howard Dickman (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1993).

² Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, U.S.A., April 23, 1994.

³ Copyright Cornell University 1993. Available from the Office of Equal Opportunity, Cornell University, 234 Day Hall, Ithaca, New York, U.S.A. 14853-2801.

⁴ Her public remarks did not actually include mention of these particular stereotypes, but she did mention them to me, in conversation, when I asked her just what kinds of stereotypes she had meant to refer to in her talk.

⁵ My colleague David Robb suggested to me that instructors should avoid using even a statistically true generalization if it might *offend* a student misclassified by it. For example, wrongly assuming that a student is heterosexual might offend him, while wrongly assuming his parents are still married might not. I appreciate the suggestion, but I doubt that it offers much guidance to instructors worried about the use of true generalizations in the classroom, since there's really no telling what misclassification a student might find offensive. Potentially any misclassification might offend *someone*.

⁶ A referee for this journal asks what might motivate educators and administrators to take different sides in this debate over pedagogy. However, it's not clear to me that the individualist/multiculturalist distinction neatly tracks the educator/administrator distinction: no doubt plenty of educators are multiculturalists and plenty of administrators are individualists; indeed, the Cornell administrator whose views are the centerpiece of this paper appears herself to have sympathies in both directions, which, I'm arguing, accounts for the inconsistency in the pedagogical advice she dispenses. I can't

speculate about what motivates administrators in general to take the views they do, principally because administrators surely have *diverse* views on this issue and others. But I can, I believe, identify a major influence on the views of the particular Cornell administrator whom I mention here: the views of Sheldon Hackney, Chairman of the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities, expressed in Hackney's "Organizing a National Conversation," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 20, 1994, p. A56. In correspondence with me, the administrator expressed approval of Hackney's likening of the current American "national conversation" to jazz improvisation, "the improvisation of individual performance within a group setting" (*ibid.*). "Perhaps the metaphor of jazz," she wrote, "can help us to understand what is happening in America and at Cornell."

⁷ The striking claims of multiculturalist epistemology have been well-documented in, for example, Steven Yates, "Multiculturalism and Epistemology," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 6 (October 1992), 435–456. What I have called the "now-dominant versions" of multiculturalism Yates calls "strong multiculturalism." He provides evidence that strong multiculturalism is the ascendant, and probably dominant, form of the movement and that it does posit an essential link between knowledge and group membership. For a similar definition of "multiculturalism," see Diane Ravitch, "Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures," *American Scholar* 59 (1990), 337–354; Ravitch uses the term "particularistic multiculturalism" to denote the kind of multiculturalism I discuss here; she uses "pluralistic multiculturalism" to denote a much less radical multiculturalism that, indeed, seems entirely compatible with individualism.

⁸ A musicologist at Cornell once told me, to my surprise, that Henry Purcell did not write *Purcell's Trumpet Voluntary* but that Jeremiah Clarke wrote the piece and called it *The Prince of Denmark's March*.

⁹ Notice that I say "prompt," not "coerce." While I think that most educators will agree that it can often be appropriate (if not obligatory) for an instructor to prompt a student for an answer or a comment, I doubt if many educators would agree that it is often permissible to *coerce* a student into responding. (Those educators who do think that coercion is sometimes permissible will, of course, agree with my weaker claim that prompting is sometimes permissible.) I recognize that the line between encouragement and coercion can become blurry; staying on the correct side of that line is yet another difficult but important task facing the classroom educator.

¹⁰ One commentator quotes an unnamed University of Pennsylvania administrator to the following effect: multiculturalists see the word "individual" as "a 'RED FLAG' phrase today, which is considered by many to be RACIST. Arguments that champion the individual over the group ultimately [privilege] the 'individuals' belonging to the largest or dominant group." Alan Charles Kors, "Bad Faith: The Politicization of the University *In Loco Parentis*," in *The Imperiled Academy*, 153–180; 175. (See also Yates, "Multiculturalism and Epistemology.")

¹¹ A referee for this journal wonders "what contributes to the shaping of the administrator's definition of 'multiculturalism' and why it differs from [the] educator's definition." Again, however, I'm not at all sure that administrators and educators characteristically differ over the definition of "multiculturalism" or that administrators in general favor multiculturalism while educators in general favor individualism (see note 6). The definition of "multiculturalism" I'm using here (see note 7) is, I take it, quite recognizable, maybe even canonical; it is also a definition favored, it seems, by some writers who describe themselves as "multiculturalists" (see note 16).

¹² In response to my claim about the two incompatible strands in her pedagogical advice, the Assistant Director of Equal Opportunity insisted that "Many teachers have figured... out already" how to implement that advice.

¹³ Clear endorsements of this individualist theme can be found in Yates, "Multiculturalism and Epistemology," Ravitch, "Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures," and John R. Searle, "The Mission of the University: Intellectual Discovery or Social Transformation?" *Academic Questions* 7 (1993–1994), 80–85. I should emphasize that my task in this paper is not to endorse any version of multiculturalism or of individualism; instead, my task is to highlight the tensions between these two basic positions and to suggest how an incoherent pedagogy can arise from trying to accommodate them both in the classroom.

¹⁴ On this admittedly traditional view, the university has no mission to teach the *performance* or *execution* of the arts: painting, sculpture, film-making, music composition and performance, dance,

composition of poetry, creative writing, etc. Instead, the university leaves training in these practical and technical skills to music conservatories, art institutes, film schools, writers' workshops, dance academies, and so on; it concentrates instead on discovering and disseminating propositional knowledge *about* these crafts: art history and theory, musicology, prosody, the anthropology of dance, etc. Despite its controversial assimilation of academic knowledge to propositional knowledge, this view rests on a philosophically self-consistent foundation, unlike some other views of the academy.

¹⁵ My informal survey of a handful of other American institutions of higher learning confirms that the four crucial Affirmative Action categories are persons of color, women, disabled persons, and veterans. In Canada, as my investigation of the regulations at Dalhousie University indicates, the crucial categories in hiring and admissions are slightly different: visible minorities, Aboriginal peoples, women, and disabled persons. But the individualist would ask the same pedagogical question about the four categories that are salient in Canadian hiring and admissions: "Why *these* four?"

¹⁶ Yates, "Multiculturalism and Epistemology," cites the writings of prominent multiculturalists and postmodernists in support of this claim. I'll list just a couple of the examples he quotes, referring the reader to his article for the full source-citations:

"Class, race, and gender necessarily structure the individual's understanding of reality and hence inform all knowledge claims" (Mary E. Hawkesworth).

"[A] Human population's ethnocentrism is rooted in its social knowledge base; and social knowledge cannot be emptied of or divorced from ethnocentrism Claims to the contrary point out that certain types of knowledge – empirical science, for example – are objective and value-free; but this is to reify knowledge and separate it from human existence Not all people 'know' in the same way Cognitive styles which appear to be universal in society (science for example) are really the cognitive styles of the ruling classes and the elite members of dominant groups" (John H. Stanfield).

¹⁷ I recognize that any position concerning "the mission of the academy" will be contentious. For one thing, not everyone has had a chance to help shape the mission of the academy: the poor and the powerless, many of whom are represented in the four categories singled out for Affirmative Action recruitment, have, historically, been denied a voice in shaping the academy. I do not mean to endorse here any particular view of the academy's true mission; instead, I mean to point out the conflict between a multiculturalist conception of the mission of the academy and an individualist conception, especially an individualist conception driven by the conviction that the academy should restrict itself to the discovery and dissemination of propositional knowledge (see note 14 and accompanying text).