

Dear S. and T,¹

During my travels from [SCHOOL NAME] upon my departure, I reflected on the events of the previous day and would like to share with you some of my conclusions for your review and/or reply.

First off, I understand the organization's sensitivity to theft and the presence of alcohol on campus—as well as the possibility that volunteers could be both in conflict with the alcohol prohibition and lying about their behavior while doing so. In fact, I have occupied roles similar to yours as a Boy Scout leader on extended trips, a classroom teacher who has supervised students on excursions, and as a field research coordinator responsible for the safety and conduct of undergraduate researchers who were living with host families in a cross-cultural context. In each of these situations, I too, have had to navigate the challenging space of attempting to uphold a decided on rules of conduct while preserving the strength of the relationships that ultimately drive much of the growth and success of any of these kinds of intensely interpersonal endeavors (teaching, research teams, scouting, etc.). I acknowledge that situations where one person is in conflict with stated rules creates a tension in finding the balance between enforcement and relationship maintenance/growth. I hope to explain in this letter why I reckon that balance was not achieved at [SCHOOL NAME] this past week in regards to the alcohol bottle incident.

So with my appreciation/empathy for your role clarified, I must say that I'm tremendously disheartened by the decisions that I witnessed you two making in regards to the situation in which we found ourselves the other day. It seems to me that C. was most centrally responsible for making the decisions regarding how to proceed with the theft and what I'll call the "beer bottle" event (and my fuzzy connection to one or, I think, perhaps even both events). Since I obviously was not involved in the internal conversations you had with C. and other staff, I can only base my critique on the events I did witness. (Any clarity around pieces of the puzzle I do not know that you would like to share would be welcomed.) Given this decision structure, it is likely that much of the content in this letter will center on situations and decisions likely driven by C.. And yet, given your stated role as an intermediary of sorts between the Western volunteers and the Indian staff (of which C. is a special case being very familiar with Western ways of operating in power hierarchies), it is your role to be a part of the decision making with respect to volunteers. Given your presence during the 7:00 pm meeting, it is clear to me that lacking any dissent on either of your parts, C.'s decisions become ones that you assent to. This is how systems work, and I doubt you would challenge this basic claim.

I'd like to give some background on the first meeting I had with C. that you weren't present for but certainly heard about from C.. I think you should hear how I perceived that meeting. It took place at approximately 3:00 pm on Monday. C. located me in the volunteer lounge room in the guest house. It seems that this meeting was prompted by the discovery by a staff member I do not know of the 30ml or so of Rum that I had in a 130 ml bottle zipped in my bag, under my bed, in my room. The bag was positioned in such a way that it would not need to be moved to take care of the sheet changing, but I can imagine how somebody might accidentally hit the bag while moving along the length of the bed. During a disputed course of events, the staff member whom I never spoke with found the bottle, removed the bottle from the pouch it was in, did something with it, and returned it to a different pouch in my bag at a later time.

As a caveat: C. and I dispute the degree to which the bottle was findable during a normal cleaning operation. C. maintains that the staff member lifted my bag and the bottle "fell out" or was obviously exposed without any manipulation of a zipper—an act that would certainly not be part of a standard cleaning operation. I am confident that even if the pouch was slightly unzipped, it would not be considered by an objective observer to have been "unzipped." I had my wallet in the same pouch, and was careful to close the pouch fully the night before. Also, I'm not sure why my bag would ever have been lifted because it was already on the ground and was not in the way of cleaning. None of my other belongings under my bed, for example, or to the side of the bed seemed to have been moved to my knowledge, suggesting that it wasn't moved or lifted for the purposes of sweeping. But I acknowledge that sweeping may have occurred, prompting the moving of my bag.

1 Names and initials changed from original

I go into detail here because the fact that my involvement in these event was initiated not by any adverse behavior or impact on my part, but rather because my involvement was prompted by the acquisition of knowledge acquired in clear violation of basic expectations of privacy. Strangely C. pointed out that many other Indian staff members had many of their materials searched through in the course of the “investigation.” He mentioned this seemingly as a justification for the possibility (that he did not admit to) that the bottle was found during an intentional search. I would hope that we can all agree that the searching through anybody's possessions, perhaps not in their presence or presumably under threat of being fired for refusing, is intensely problematic. So, to close this detour, the information about the rum was acquired in a morally indefensible manner and is an concern that I will not elaborate on further.

Back to the initial conversation at 3:00 pm, during which time C. attempted to couch his accusation that I was responsible for the beer bottle in terms of wanting to “help,” but it was clear as we unpacked his goals that C. was seeking a confession that 1) I was the owner of the beer bottle and, stated in a rather direct way, that 2) I likely have an alcohol or stress management problem that I should confess along with the details surrounding the beer bottle. Further, it was strange that C. seemed to allude to the possibility that my presumed alcoholism was stress-induced. (It seemed he was using the fact of the many times he's seen me studying accounting as circumstantial evidence of the stress problem that may be leading to drinking.)

Since I have no connection whatsoever to the mysterious water bottle filled with mysterious liquid, and I rarely consume alcohol, and am not an alcoholic, I could not provide any confessions or affirmations to his satisfaction. Please note that he asked several times. I denied at each asking, and the conversation circled back to a restatement of how important it is to him to “simply know how the bottle got there so we can move on from there.” This was not a situation of somebody asking once, believing the first and correct and honest response, and moving on. This was, quite simply, an interrogation.

I recount this first meeting so you can understand why I am appalled how the two of you acted during the second of such interrogations. I am referring to the meeting at 7:00 pm on Monday during public speaking. When C. started that meeting, it was clear to me, and I believe it was clear to the two of you, that he was ratcheting up the stakes of the demand for a confession from me that he didn't get during the first conversation. The language he used (which neither of you disputed) was overwhelmingly clear. C. said, in effect, that C. had reviewed “all the evidence” and had become more convinced of my guilt than he/she had been earlier during the 3:00 pm conversation. He/she believed that because the guest house was under “close surveillance” and that I was the first one in the building without an alibi (for lack of a less trial-like term. We must admit, sadly, that for me, an alibi would have been very helpful), that there would have been no other means of the appearance of the beer bottle (on somebody else's bed) other than my having put it there.

It was also abundantly clear to me—and I would hope to each of you—that the other way she/he was raising the stakes of the conversation was by threatening to have his father yell/scream/use strong language in a meeting with me. C. mentioned this being a potentially “very unpleasant” conversation and was clearly hoping that I would, at that time, confess to having placed the beer bottle on Steven's bed so that C. could lay the issue to rest (and by insinuation avoid this unpleasant conversation with his father). C. also described on multiple occasions his authority to “dismiss me from the program” and was trying to decide on the course of action, but that to some extent, the final decision would rest with his/her father. C. also agreed that were I not to confess that I would be “under a closer degree of scrutiny going forward” and that it would be reasonable to expect more suspicion. All of this kind of threat of use of power/force/intimidation (father screaming, future interrogations for unspecified events, future searches incident to unspecified events, etc.) is completely inappropriate for staff, students, volunteers, or any human being to undergo under just about any circumstance.

S. also made a bizarre comment about this “not being about you” (you referring to me). I'm not sure why that language was used—of course this was a personal issue directed at me! We were talking about my guilt or blame in a specific incident.

I am so disappointed that the two of you decided to sit there and say nothing about the process under which this event was unfolding. And let me clarify: you may personally believe that the simple fact that I had in my concealed possessions a small amount of liquor was grounds for dismissal (irregardless of my connection to the beer bottle). You may also believe I'm an alcoholic concealing my addiction and that the beer bottle was an absurd and careless error on my part. Even if you believe both of those assertions to be accurate, the fact that you each sat there during the use of the entirely circumstantial evidence to mark me quite definitively guilty of placing the beer bottle and to threaten me with future invasions of privacy, etc. is professionally inappropriate and morally unjustified.

Additionally, sitting through the meeting in which C. was threatening me with being yelled at by a higher authority in an "unpleasant" way and insinuating about my having an alcohol abuse problem was equally disheartening.

The two of you made a deliberate decision during that event to side with the powerful people in the situation (the [Director's] family, specifically C.) who were inappropriately using their total power over the institution to attempt to extract a confession from somebody (me) who was only circumstantially connected to an event. At no time during my volunteering was I ever intoxicated--including on our free weekends. At no time during my volunteering did I produce or offer or receive alcohol to/from any other person—student or staff. At no point was I under discernible influence of any mind altering substances. At no point did I initiate or participate in any conversation with a staff or student about illicit substances or violating school policy.

So it is curious from a broader moral standpoint that the fact that with so much work to be done at the school so much effort was being funneled into accusing me of a "possession" violation that was not only circumstantial in its evidence but was not connected with a single verifiable negative behavior involving either just myself or myself and any other human being, student or adult. I wonder if this is really the way we want a society or group or structure of any kind to operate?

Of course it makes sense to have rules against the consumption of alcohol on campus. I think it's probably illegal for minors to drink in India. It is not, however, to my knowledge, illegal for an adult in India to be in possession of 30 ml of legally purchased Rum (I presume that the hostel mates that bought it for me purchased it legally). So while I acknowledge that my possession was in violation of [school] rules, it certainly was not in violation of the spirit of the rule, and seems unfortunate that so much energy and the loss of a teaching person was incident to an event that actually had no demonstrable negative impact on any member of the [school] community.

I would also like to raise a curious moral line of reasoning that seemed to be at play in our deliberations. There seemed to be a shared sentiment that because I was working hard at teaching accounting and am a somewhat experienced educator that the decision of my fate was more challenging, or perhaps less clear cut. Perhaps you meant you were less inclined to "dismiss" me from the program? Was that a claim made out of self interest, then? What if I had been a struggling teacher, somebody who had never taught a day in a formal classroom setting before getting to [school name]? What if instead of learning accounting I played on facebook and downloaded youtube videos? Would that have meant that dismissing me for a technical rule violation (and no demonstrable adverse impact on any other human being in regards to that technical violation) would have been an "easier" choice? Easier from what standpoint, exactly, one must ask?

These questions should prompt you to inquire: what, exactly, are the moral values guiding disciplinary choices in this regard? Clearly, I would hope we would agree in the abstract that the difficulty of replacing a teacher (perhaps due to skill level or skill portfolio or willingness to learn an arcane set of accounting rules) should have zero impact on the way in which authority is exercised over another person, especially authority in regards to a rule that is unrelated to teaching quality or work output. Another situation that is equally scary to raise: what if I had been a major [school name] donor? Or, perhaps, what if my mother had donated 100k to the [school name]? Would this have changed the calculus used in deciding what to do with my lack of a confession or what to accuse me of doing? Would it have changed what evidence to use in doing so? (I almost typed "admit.") Would it have changed how high the dismissal threshold should be? I fear that the answer to the latter hypothetical is surely in the affirmative, and it

seemed by C.'s language and to some extent S. that the first situation was also occurring.

Each of these are not moral justifications for the choices made and actions taken. It seems we should reflect on the fact that part of being in a position of authority is recognizing that just rules and guidelines and the moral spirit behind them exist as much for those with power as they should exist for those without power (i.e. the rule makers and the rule followers). It is not a stretch to claim that the moral fabric of an institution soon crumbles when the function of a so-called rule is actually simply a guideline used by authorities to justify decisions that are made using un-clarified and un-scrutinizable rationales.

But perhaps it is the case that a privately run organization would decide to allow technical rule violations by donor/volunteers or the volunteer children of donors. Perhaps a private foundation like [school name] would, in fact, deliberately choose to apply a separate set of enforcement guidelines to “hard working” or “experienced” teachers than would apply to “lazy” or “incompetent” or inexperienced teachers. Private foundations can make such choices, we can agree, but in the interest of building a transparent and life-giving community of people working cooperatively to enrich lives, such morally specious trade-offs should be stated and therefore open to scrutiny by all parties involved, including students. If rules/policies are, in fact, just guidelines, then the circumstances surrounding the interpretation of those guidelines should be open for review and scrutiny. And, sadly, I have a lurking suspicion that nobody in the [school name] administration would publicly admit that such trade-offs were driving factors in staff disciplinary proceedings. And yet, sadly, I believe the conversations we had were evidence of exactly this kind of condemnable moral reasoning.

So to clarify again my critique—regardless of your presumption of my “innocence” or “guilt,” I believe the two of you abdicated your stated roles as being an intermediary between the Indian staff and the Western volunteers. Even had you not wanted to take the personal risk of challenging the authority of the [family of the head of school] (supposedly mostly C.) to accuse volunteers under improperly acquired and circumstantial evidence, the least you could have done would have been to approach me individually and discuss the tension in the relationship.

I have three suppositions for your explaining your behavior during these events. First, perhaps you were fully cognizant of the way authority and power was being used in this situation and actually believe it was properly wielded, in which case I am very comfortable asserting that you have no place in a role of authority over anybody, let alone students who are in a fragile position as supremely powerless to resist abuses of authority over them. I don't believe this is the case, though. I think each of you have a desire to create communities of vitality and humanity where power is exercised in good faith and is not wielded in a way to instill fear or threat of punishment.

The second explanation could be that the two of you just didn't care what was actually happening to me or, more importantly, how C. was using her/his authority. Perhaps your minds and souls were distracted by other events. I realize this may have been the case for S., and perhaps T., too. Maybe each of you are facing overriding issues of concern outside your role as [staff member title]. In this case, I hope you can resolve those issues and I would add that I think if this was the case, you should have recused yourself completely from the events. Silence is assent, even if that silence was borne out of distraction. Perhaps this letter can be informative as you think about your role moving forward. If this is the case, I hold no hard feelings or malice.

But since you were both in the meeting and there were chances for you to talk and say something, my working supposition given the events I was aware of is that the reason you two decided to be complicit in the erosion of a healthy and productive and human-friendly volunteer/work environment is that you were acting out of self interest. C. mentioned specifically, as he/she was trying to acquire my confession during the 3:00 pm meeting, that his/her family had been instrumental in securing T. position at [name of prestigious organization] C. also described using her/his family's connections to “get” or “help get” [staff member's] [prestigious position]. So I am operating on the assumption that the two of you did not actually assent to my mistreatment and the general abuse of power by your boss, but rather were silent because the loss to each of you individually in the form of a potentially less “glowing” recommendation letter or less access to [director's family]'s power networks was much greater than the perceived damage to me and, more importantly, the general erosion of the volunteer culture that results from

these kinds of events which we all know are not limited to my “interrogation.” As you full well know, volunteers are very aware of how power is used by those holding it, and my departure surrounding this event (and no doubt many other frustrating uses of school administrator authority generally) serve to create an inhospitable climate for volunteers to create and initiate and nurture the kind of interdependent team spirit that could make a program like the [school name] volunteering soar.

Instead, a top-down feeling pervades the system. Decisions that affect people's experience are made without consultation and the justified using the most disgusting and frustrating of all explanations: “that this is just how things are done here. It's this way every year!” What a complete and utter abdication of one's influence in a system it is to knowingly cooperate in a process that leaves your volunteers feeling shut out, expendable, and voiceless! And then to hypocritically claim during other meetings that your roles are to maximize the volunteers experience and help them with problems that arise. I am extremely disappointed in your leadership in this regard.

I should also note concerning my working explanation of your behavior that I do not point out the tradeoff that I believe you are making (i.e. putting up with abuse of authority and erosion of team culture in exchange for resume stamps and prestigious experiences) in order to put myself on a moral high ground. Instead, my disappointment in your choice is mirrored by my own self-disappointment at having done something very similar teaching at [PREVIOUS SCHOOL]. Similar to [SCHOOL NAME]'s structure, the school culture at [PREVIOUS SCHOOL] was top-down, completely authoritarian (i.e. there was not even lip-service paid to the ability of students to challenge or appeal the decision of an authority), and mostly fear-based. The effect of the culture of command and control at [PREVIOUS SCHOOL] was very similar to what I felt at [SCHOOL NAME], especially coming back from our weekend in [big city] and talking with the students about their weekend of having been collectively punished for hours and, in fact, days for the behavior of an unknown person. I could see, and I think you could, too, how much relational capital had been eroded by the administration using their authority to unjustly make every student at [school name] miserable and upset all weekend--the vast majority of whom—or, more likely, 100%--had no involvement in the theft or beer bottle events. It is well understood by anybody who has worked in and thought carefully about group building and community culture that imposition of fear-based, punishment driven tactics especially in cases where the many are being punished for actions taken by a few (not to mention an unknown one or few!!) creates costs in relationship erosion that far exceed any gains in “orderliness” or “compliance.” (And lest it be said this method is a function of the school being located in India: given the training and life histories of the [directors], it would be completely inaccurate to rationalize this kind of authoritarian manipulation with an unfounded claim of cultural congruence to what may be in many parts of India, a very vertically oriented system.)

Bringing this issue back to me personally, when similar events occurred in my past teaching contexts, I mostly passively continued to teach at [PREVIOUS SCHOOL], issued my demerits to students, and towed the line that what students really need for success is discipline and high test scores (my [PREVIOUS SCHOOL] students all came from low-income backgrounds). I'm disgusted with myself when I think back to the actions that I took on behalf of the authorities at [PREVIOUS SCHOOL] and, of equivalent moral weight, the decisions I did not challenge by sitting silently. Why didn't I speak up? Partly because feared the immediate event of reproach by leaders, but mostly because I knew that I thought I wanted to go to graduate school and was hoping that I could get positive recommendations from my supervisors. Just like C. certainly made clear to me, the [PREVIOUS SCHOOL] administration made it clear to staff that their future support was dependent on staff fulfilling their duties as reproducers of an authoritarian system (in all of its various forms—bust most perniciously by not challenging what an authority decides). So C.'s mention of the perks he gave to T. and [staff member] (and presumably S., too? I would be open to correction here) was clearly shared with the subtext that “if you confess and tell the truth, you could get this reward—access to more power through me—but if you sit there and keep lying, you are denied access to my power.” That kind of threat is always, in almost every situation, at play in our top-down systems of privilege conference at work today.

So I get it. I get the tradeoff. This is why, in my mind, systems of oppression and authority are so slow to change. The people who could change it (you, me, T.—people who occupy mid-level positions of authority at our respective institutions) are essentially coerced into not speaking up because the threat to self-interest and career building is

so potent in our society. Our system of networked opportunities (of which letters of rec are a critical part) is a key way in which folks from privileged groups and backgrounds remain in these circles, and those outside the system have difficulty breaking in. So I am appreciative of my experience at [school name] in a sad way because being I was able to witness from a different angle how this system of privilege functions. If anything, perhaps this letter can prompt some reflections on your own roles within systems of power and authority that continue to promote inequality and stasis in society. Maybe my assertions regarding your involvement in the process are baseless and a very plausible alternative exists for your behavior. I'm open to discussing any alternatives that may exist.

Additionally, I would note in regards to school culture at [school name] that having worked at [PREVIOUS SCHOOL], I can confidently assert that the continual use of stern, fear-based language, the autocratic use of power by the [directing] family (and the reflection of that language in many of S.'s comments regarding which adult elicits the most "fear" from students) erodes the creative and life-giving impulses of students extremely quickly. The pervasiveness of this mode of operation certainly drained me of every ounce of creative and collaborative spirit—I can only imagine the tension the students might feel. I could see much detachment and disengagement in the faces of the students. They are human beings who reflect when components of their humanity (i.e. the chance to participate in decisions that affect them, the freedom from capricious punishment and group-based fear and punishment tactics) are denied them in the name of "progress" and "ascension" in society. They work hard, of course. They are excited, energetic humans, trying to survive in the best and most vibrant way they can—and it happens at [school name] offers them many great opportunities for expression, but the positives don't justify the other methods at work.

So I persisted at [school name] for the time I did because, on the whole, it seems [SCHOOL NAME] is indeed providing students with a remarkably fortunate opportunity to access systems of wealth and power (the only jobs ever mentioned students getting were usually associated with the word "corporate", which is disheartening, but not an issue I will take up here) to assist themselves and their families financially. To this end, it seemed warranted that I hunker down and learn Indian accounting so that the [grade] students—who were completely and utterly inspiring—might be slightly more successful on their final tests. The graduates certainly seem like very competent, success-oriented and very compassionate people. I didn't get to know any of them very well, but it seems on the whole [SCHOOL NAME] has much to be proud of. But, of course, we must not use the existence of a particular end (financially and professionally successful graduates) to legitimize misuse of authority.

It is certainly not the case that the authoritarian system at [SCHOOL NAME] caused the positive outcomes. Rather, it is certainly the case that the positive outcomes are an outgrowth of forces and relationships that existed in spite of rather than as a result of the command and control structure of the school. It is this kind of human creativity in the face of absolute authority that can give us hope since many institutions are dampening human potential (while providing positive benefits to society) under this approach—not just [SCHOOL NAME]. I think it is our job as individuals presumably interested in building stronger communities and more human institutions that we think very carefully about how systems of power are actually functioning, even if it is easier in the short run (and perhaps for us individually, easier for us in the long-run, too) to remain silent in the face of glaring misuses of authority.

So, as this letter has veered toward a more big-picture critique of the systems in which I worked for a short time and the system in which you two currently have influence, I would add a more specific suggestion: I do think it would be important for the health of the volunteer pool to have a full disclosure conversation about the circumstances surrounding my departure since we all know how inaccuracies spread through the system very porously. I know some graduates on campus are aware of the beer bottle investigation, so certainly all the volunteers and some students are aware of it, too, and are speculating. It seems like a rather poor choice for just about every party involved to allow it to appear that I may have confessed to placing the beer bottle and had been asked to leave. I acknowledge that I wasn't asked to leave, only threatened with a rather miserable work environment were I to remain. This was stated in clear language by C.—you were there when he described this.

Those circumstance surrounding my decision should of course be part of the disclose to the volunteers. Even though doing so might put you at odds with the interests of the administration--doing so seems to be an important

part of leading a group of people who live and work under your guidance and, ultimately, control. And, as you mention the finding of my Rum, I also think it would be appropriate to mention that the circumstances of that acquisition were in dispute nor were there any actual connections between me and the beer made, other than what C. speculated and whatever [staff member 2] and [staff member 3] may have said during the inquires to which I was not purview. As stated, once again, for the record: I have no connection to the beer bottle, nor any knowledge whatever about its appearance in the guest house (or anywhere else it may have been seen).

It is true that the events surrounding the beer bottle meant that the environment for me became simply too toxic. In effect, the passive stance the two of you took was the deciding factor in my mind in departing. I knew that in each of you I did not have an ally against the capriciousness of many of the [director's] family decisions and, like I alluded to in the meeting, at some point, something must change when authority is misused. I do regret that my early departure meant a few fewer weeks of formal instruction by me to the [grade] graders regarding accounting and economics. Luckily, I have no special skills in that regard and any assiduous individual of any background could spend a few days and learn how to draw Supply/demand graphs and account for forfeited shares.

I hope if my claims are at least somewhat accurate, that pointing them out may lead to a healthier use of authority by you and the staff at [SCHOOL NAME] so staff, volunteers, and students can flourish in the human/freedom sense of Flourish--not the corporate/financial/power acquisition form of flourish. I would also like to know if any specific changes may be in the works to avoid this kind of situation in the future, such as how disciplinary investigations proceed, how rules and decisions around rules are scrutinized by [SCHOOL NAME] community members, and what clear discussions are had around when searches are allowed to happen, by whom, with whose consent, and what happens with the information found. When one runs a near total institution like [SCHOOL NAME] (see Foucault), these kinds of considerations cannot be left to the authorities to decide on a whim for, as we've seen, they cannot be relied on to have the best interests of the entire community at heart—the group to which they are ultimately morally answerable.

I am not outraged at what “happened” to me. I was only going to be at [SCHOOL NAME] for another 5 weeks. I didn't even have to endure a “stern talking to” by [SENIOR STAFF MEMBER] (which I'm sure I would have found unpleasant). But, as somebody who has invested a tremendous amount of time and life (relative to my age) in the project of educating young people, I care deeply about building school institutions that are free from the kind of behaviors that I witnessed and happened to be subject to personally. So my personal experience is offered as only a case of a larger set of trends that I think should be changed for the betterment of everybody at the school.

I'll leave you with some words from one of the most influential people in my life, Mr. Bertrand Russell, the distinguished 20th century pacifist, feminist, and political/educational theorist. From his book written during WWI, Why Men Fight:

“Industrialism and organization are constantly forcing civilized nations to live more and more by purpose rather than impulse. In the long run, such a mode of existence, if it does not dry up the springs of life, produces new impulses, not of the kind which the will has been in the habit of controlling or of which thought is conscious. These new impulses are apt to be worse in their effect than those that have been checked. Excessive discipline, especially when it is imposed from without, often issues in impulses of cruelty and destruction, this is one reason why militarism has a bad effect on national character. Either lack of vitality, or impulses which are oppressive against life, will almost always result if the spontaneous impulses are not able to find an outlet.

...

“Our institutions rest upon injustice and authority: it is only by closing our hearts against sympathy and our minds against truth that we can endure the oppressions and unfairnesses by which we profit. The conventional conception of what constitutes success leads most men to live a life in which their most vital impulses are sacrificed, and the joy of life is lost in listless weariness. Our economic system compels almost all men to carry out the purposes of others rather than their own, making them feel impotent in action and only able to secure a certain

modicum of passive pleasure. All these things destroy the vigor of the community, the expansive affections of individuals, and the power of viewing the world generously. All these things are unnecessary and can be ended by wisdom and courage. If they were ended, the impulsive life of men would become wholly different, and the human race might travel towards a new happiness and a new vigor. To urge this hope is the purpose of these lectures.”

Note: Since this critique is weighted almost equally toward the two of you as well as C., I have sent an exact copy of this letter to C. for his/her consideration. And you may believe that the contents of this letter are best suited for C.. Yet, I wrote this letter to the two of you. My faith in institutional change lies most heavily on those with intermediate levels of power—the people that powerful people rely on to actually make their systems work day in and day out. A concerted and unified effort by those who actually hold the operational power of an organization can, I believe, substantially influence the culture and functioning of our most important social institutions.

Yours in the struggle,

Eric Christopher Darsow