

DeVane Lecture: Paradoxes of Mind and Society

(SLIDE: DEVANE)

I thank Dean Kronman and President Levin for inviting me to join in these tercentennial DeVane Lectures. The structure of this series mirrors a central characteristic of democratic societies themselves: the belief that there is not a single conception of the good as expressed by a single professor, whatever her expertise may be, but rather that there are multiple conceptions of the good, and that such conceptions may well be in conflict. The source of this belief is another belief, embedded deep in the democratic soul, to use Dean Kronman's phrase, that from such diversity will emerge an understanding of the world, and the place of living beings in it, that would otherwise remain outside our grasp, perhaps outside our very capacity to imagine.

In thinking about this lecture I naturally grew aware of my own good fortune in having lived the two and equal halves of my life so far, in two of the world's largest, messiest, and in my thoroughly objective opinion, greatest democracies. Each has no doubt shaped me, and my thinking. Of the parts of which I am aware, I know that my belief in the dignity of the individual was shaped by the unique path of India's independence from British rule, as was a firm belief in the right of a people to self-determination. In India I also learned about blatant, and therefore dangerous prejudices, while in the United States, I studied less blatant and therefore dangerous prejudices. Both countries offer stark examples of threats to the dignity of the individual because of their social group – in Hyderabad's marriage market, for example, a skin imperceptibly darker than another will require a higher dowry and if lucky, a permit to a lifetime of minor abuses; in New York or New Milford or New Haven, a skin darker than another is more likely to fetch a bullet, and if lucky, merely a permit to a lifetime of minor abuses.

My own focus has been on the unconscious mental roots of such threats to the dignity of the individual, that is to say their origin in thought and feeling not always detected by the conscious mind. We are interested in them, for by their very nature, they fool the senses and consciousness, existing as they do in the heretofore unexaminable parts of the mind. From the last two decades of work on the mental mechanics of unconscious prejudice, I conclude that the experimental evidence gives new meaning to the phrase "eternal vigilance" for the facts and figures that have been accumulated show that the threats to democracy's ideals of fair and just treatment, lie in every mind.

II

(LINCOLN IN NEW HAVEN)

Let me begin with the 16th president of the United States. Opponent of slavery, author of the emancipation proclamation, Abraham Lincoln changed American history while elevating the standards by which the practice of democracy came to be measured. In a rousing speech here in New Haven, given before he was President, he argued that the system of slavery was morally reprehensible and that his party had no choice but to take up the challenge of dismantling it.

In what is arguably among the greatest documents of human freedom he set his hand and affixed the seal of the United States to the words (LINCOLN EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION) "... all persons held as slaves ... shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom." And later in this same short document, he expressed a hope "And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

Although I stand in the pulpit of a distinguished chapel, I cannot report whether Lincoln indeed received the gracious favor of Almighty God. But what I can report is that the judgment of humankind has been most considerate. Albert Einstein's assessment of another freedom fighter, Mahatma Gandhi, comes closer to depicting this American President than perhaps any other:

“Generations to come” Einstein said of the Mahatma, “it may well be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.” In dissolving the last system of slavery on the planet while holding the Union together, Abraham Lincoln evokes that sort of assessment.

So let me pose a paradox that will likely chill your spine. Abraham Lincoln also said the following words, whose place in judging his overall assessment, is much debated:

(LINCOLN QUOTE PART 1 – DOUGLAS DEBATE)

“I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races – that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality.

(LINCOLN QUOTE PART 2)

And in as much as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race. I say upon this occasion I do not perceive that because the white man is to have the superior position the Negro should be denied everything.”

The historian John Hope Franklin reminds us further that if the emancipation of Black Americans was important to Lincoln it seemed so was their colonization, with one hundred thousand dollars reserved for the voluntary emigration of slaves from Washington DC to Haiti and Liberia. Calling Black leaders to the White House, he made the following pitch: “Your race suffer greatly, many of them, by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word we suffer on each side. If this is admitted, it affords a reason why we should be separated.”

How should we understand both sets of beliefs, both sets of actions? In Lincoln’s mind was there an acceptable psychological or moral consistency between the famous aspiration expressed in his 2nd inaugural address “With malice toward none; with charity for all” and his offering emancipated slaves a free boat ride to Liberia? Did he believe the emancipation proclamation fundamentally to be, as he said, an act of justice while also believing that people of African descent were inherently inferior?

I will argue, like many fellow psychologists, that both Lincolns are true – that such fractures in thought, in feeling, and in behavior are fundamental characteristics of every mind. (And here, I would see it a bit differently from last week’s lecturer, Professor Bromwich, who said, at least as I saw his lecture on the web, that the unmasking of heroes like Lincoln deprives us of a “well-spring of hope”, that it fosters a “moral snobbery and self-satisfaction”. My goal is to provoke an unmasking of ordinary folk like myself, by myself and for myself. I use the unmasking of Lincoln to show that we are each, in our own minds, both emancipators and deniers of justice. The 42nd President only a few days ago, gave voice to the Emancipator in him. On January 14th, in an OpEd piece in the NYT, William Jefferson Clinton called for a new beginning to the 21st century in which color is not the problem, but the promise, of America. A far cry from pleading for voluntary deportation, he spoke of the urgency to close “intolerable gaps” between the advantaged and the disadvantaged -- within the criminal justice system, in voting rights, in education, and health. The harder task we face is how to discover and, how to come to terms with the other, the some-groups-are-superior Lincoln that also resides in each of us. That is a task of our research program, geared as it is to discover the minute ways in which mental due process is denied.

III.

From Lincoln and the nation, we now visit a place and time closer to our own, given the occasion for this lecture: Yale College in mid 20th century and its explicit and implicit anti-Semitism. Yale, a Jewish friend and colleague tells me, was well known to be inaccessible to Jews and especially

so if they carried the double stigma of a public education. His father, he said, graduating salutatorian from the Bronx High School of Science in the late 1940's was explicitly advised not to apply to Yale, for with his name, photo, and home address, he would be wasting his time. Tony Greenwald, my mentor and collaborator, also public-school educated, did apply and was admitted to Yale. I share an email message with his permission, sent to me a couple of years ago. (SLIDE: GREENWALD EMAIL). READ E-MAIL A person of great integrity and objectivity, I will be the one to mention that he graduated near the top of his class and is now an eminent scientist.

These anecdotal accounts, I was impressed to discover, fit well with the historical account provided by Dan Oren in his book "Joining the club: A History of Jews and Yale". The expressions of prejudice ranged from explicitly degrading comments of applicants such as noting an applicant's "thick Mediterranean lips", to explicit anger voiced by a member of the Yale Corporation in the 1960's to Inky Clark regarding changes in admission policies: "Look around you at this table. These are America's leaders. There are no Jews here. There are no public school graduates here."

Many things changed the status of Jews at Yale --- most notably, the persistent and high-volume voices of Jews and non-Jews in administrative and other positions of power. The most eloquently outspoken voice was that of the young Eugene Rostow, who later rose to be Dean of Yale Law School, and who pointed out the insidiousness of hidden discrimination. He wrote: "While a realistic defense of Jewish segregation might be offered on the basis of a melancholy resignation to unalterable fact, no such proposal has ever been officially advanced. Authorities prefer a pretense of idealism to the forthrightness of a denial of an uncomfortable democracy, a dubious shadow of nobility to the honesty of consistent illiberalism. These policies, wherever they exist, represent a secret prostitution on the one principle which universities assert to be inviolable, the axiom, namely, that before all else, the University is a center of education and that no vitality in education can exist in an atmosphere of pious deceit and hypocritical profession of faith."

In addition to the passionate voices such as Rostow's, an action on the part of Dean DeVane after whom this lecture series is named caused a dramatic change in the entry of Jews to Yale. According to Oren, William Clyde DeVane asked the university's president that Yale seek "an intellectual eminence as great as her athletic or her social or her eminence in activity of all sorts". To do so required a change in admission policies that favored academic achievement and merit over photo, name, and address. Once Dean DeVane's belief that Yale ought to be a leader in intellectual matters caught fire and was instituted into the practice of admissions, the new meritocracy changed the numbers of Jews at Yale. Within two generations it ceased to be the embarrassment it was.

I have the greatest admiration for this university; let there be no mistake about it. But in the unmasking of institutions we learn even more than we might from the unmasking of single individuals. Institutional behavior, whether it be private or public, whether it be a club or a college, has higher velocity impact. So Yale is included in this discussion because in celebrating its 300th anniversary and its unparalleled achievements, it is wise to remember that by active prejudices and passive ones, it slowed the speed of democracy by opening its gates slowly and reluctantly to each of many groups: Jews, Catholics, African-Americans, women. All these make Yale's 300-year old skeleton an interesting study in the development of democracy.

We have spoken of the past and the less distant past; of the nation and of this university. A quick peek at the 24th century is surely in order. To do so I'll need to confess that I am a nerd. I have watched every episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation and other associated series. For those of you who have missed this experience, you have my condolences, along with some background. In this clip the character called Data is an android; he has been assigned to temporarily captain a Starfleet ship. What you see in under 2 minutes is the resistance he encounters on account of his not being human, and his enviable response. (DATA VIDEO).

In one form or another, we have been interested in such beliefs that Klingons can't be counselors, that Borellians are not suited to be engineers, that an androids are not fit to lead. Replace Klingons with the category "male," Borellians with the category "female" and androids with your own favorite statistical minority and you have the groups that we work with.

Lt. Commander Hobson's choices, as you heard in this clip, we will call *stereotypes* which are colder beliefs, leaving the term *attitude* or *prejudice* to refer to the warmer aspects of the mind – that is to say, feelings.

IV

To understand stereotypes and prejudice, and especially to understand how they operate in unconscious form, we can look at some general examples from psychology of phenomena that largely appear to occur unconsciously. I hope to make the point that social acts with moral consequences are rooted in ordinary cognition --- that is to say in the mental processes of attention, perception and memory. Let me lead you through a few demonstrations.

[BASKETBALL VIDEO: Task of the audience is to count number of passes. Check what was seen and what was not seen; show video again to demonstrate the presence of a woman walking with an umbrella]

Why are we surprised by this? We expect our visual system to detect and our minds to interpret the data that come before it. To discover that by counting passes, you've missed seeing something so strikingly odd (in Dan Simon's experiments a gorilla walks into the game, thumps his chest and walks off). Such intriguing phenomena as inattentive blindness are intriguing in part because they give psychologists a clue about the structure and function of the mind. In the social world, do we likewise not see those we are not attending to?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER VIDEO: You will see a woman being asked for directions by a construction worker (who is on the experimenter's team). As she gives directions, other workmen pass through them with a door and our construction worker is replaced with a new person. What you'll see is her inability to have noticed this change. This is from the research of Dan Simons, kind enough to loan me this material.

The demonstration points to the importance of what psychologists call top down processing. If you have a model of the world as stable you will see it as such. For the study of the social world it points out the degree to which our minds will not recognize change (i.e. that we can be blind to change) especially if such change occurs in a situation where no change is expected.

SHEPARD TABLES: 1 and 2. The two table tops are equal in shape and size, but you do not seem as such. What causes the illusion in this drawing by Roger Shepard (Yale Ph.D., talented psychologist and artist)? Perspective -- given by the placement of the legs (one table is parallel to line of vision other perpendicular); the image on your retina is identical, but your mind, overextends the one that is parallel to the line of vision in line with the expectation of objects in this orientation.

STROOP Effect: Slides 1 and 2. The first shows that it is easy to name the color in which a word appears (the words are nonsense words). The second shows that it is much harder to name the color in which a word is printed when the word itself represents another color – seeing the word BLUE printed in red ink and having to name the color of ink is hard because the meaning of the word (i.e. blue) interferes with the naming of the color. And it does this automatically – that is to say, you cannot easily put aside the meaning of the word.

V.

We use an idea similar to this Stroop task except that it concerns social groups (Male, Female Old, Young, Asian American, European American). We do ask people about their conscious views about these groups – is this person or group American? Is this person or group strong? Is this person or group "good"? But we also do something else and that's the part of interest here. We make people respond under some time pressure. In the Stroop task you just saw using colors, the task would be possible if you slowed down – in fact with enough time your performance in the easy and hard conditions would not be detected. But when you go fast, when you bypass a feature of consciousness that we call control, it turns that we see an interesting

picture. If I asked you to rapidly pair faces of elderly people with good things (like peace, love, joy) you would do this more slowly than if were pairing youthful faces with good things. And we take this as an indicator that the first pairing is harder to make and further that it is harder because the two don't go together in your mind. Old is not good, it is bad. Young is not bad, it is good.

(A brief discussion using slides of Madeline Albright and Wen Ho Lee, both naturalized citizens of the United States, but one who is seen to be a trusted American the other falsely accused of sharing American secrets to a foreign government. The "burden of suspicion" as Claude Steele has called it in the paper you are assigned for this week, is exactly this – Wen Ho Lee by his very ethnicity carries a higher burden of suspicion.)

Let me briefly mention a few results, although I will mostly reserve discussion of them for Thursday's meeting.

1. There is a basic inability to associate the qualities of good/bad to different social groups equally. This is well established. (CUNNINGHAM DATA on ethnocentrism).
2. Sometimes unconscious preferences are related to more conscious ones (Brian Nosek showed this with preferences for Bush and Gore – the person you consciously report liking is the person you unconsciously also like). But at other times they don't go in the same direction. On the slide you see that conscious liking for disadvantaged outgroups is high, but unconscious liking for the advantaged ingroup is what is high.
3. Do these implicit preferences vary as a function of the group to which one belong? Does it matter if you are yourself Black or White, Asian or Hispanic? First of all, yes, the group to which you belong does indeed predict the preferences you are likely to show. In the first studies done using this idea, Tony Greenwald showed that Korean and Japanese Americans showed strong preferences for their ingroup.

But let us look at two groups that don't show quite this effect. With race, we see that Black Americans show overall no preference for one or the other group. What this means is that half of them are showing small to large preferences for Black while the other half are showing small to large preferences for White. Age is a most interesting case, because one is not born into that group but is gently pushed into it. The data from this graph about implicit attitudes toward the elderly show that although positive attitudes increase with age (there is indeed an increase in liking for the elderly as one's own age increases), implicit attitudes do not change with age at all. Those who are elderly show the same negative attitudes toward their group as you the young.

4. As unconscious as these effects may be, it would be wrong to think that they are therefore stable. We think that implicit attitudes change generationally – we expect that Lincoln's implicit preferences may have shown more negativity than Clinton's in part because of the time at which they live. But I would predict that it is their conscious attitudes that are more vastly different and that this indicates the way in which our conscious thinking about social groups and equality have changed. But there are no good data on that point of generational shifts yet.

But what we do have is new evidence about the malleability of such attitudes. Several students who received their PhD's here, Irene Blair, Curtis Hardin, Biju Dasgupta, Siri Carpenter have shown that interventions of a relatively simple sort can produce greater or lesser favorability toward otherwise negatively construed groups. So, the elderly may be seen as more "good" after brief exposure to pictures of positively viewed elderly (Mother Theresa); more positive associations to Black Americans are after brief exposure to admired Black individuals (MLK Jr. Michael Jordan, Denzel Washington).

This graph shows data from Siri Carpenter's dissertation in which she asked people to imagine for a few moments the qualities of strong women leaders. This relatively minor intervention produces a drop in the stereotypic association of female-weak and male-strong among both men and women.

Brian Nosek, Tony Greenwald and I opened a website (www.yale.edu/implicit) in 1998 at which many have stopped to take a test of implicit attitudes or stereotypes. In just over two years we

had over a million tests completed. Our purpose in maintaining this website is not to proselytize, and therefore we offer so advice as to how one ought to interpret the meaning of any self-discovery that occurs via that experience.

But for myself, I cannot help but invoke Dean Kronman's reference a couple of weeks ago to St. Paul who cried out "I do not what I want but the very thing I hate". I, who admit to showing many of these biases in quite robust ways, see them as saying something about my own mind and what has come to be in it – in part because of the time in which I live, because of the culture in which I live, because of the particular set of experiences I have had (including ones I can't consciously remember). But I conclude that these do reflect a part of who I am – and I also say that they are not only reflections of my culture but through me, shapers of my culture. That they have a life of their own sometimes in opposition to my conscious egalitarian beliefs, gives me pause. And they remind me that if I am to be a participant in the democratic process, that eternal vigilance about the threats to the dignity of the individual is an ever greater need.

VI.

We have covered much ground, and one consequence is always that we've been tourists rather than travelers. But I have been at this task for the past dozen years in one way or another. And I can tell you that from the first experiment we conducted on the unconscious limits on social judgment, it has been clear to me that there is a connection between these nitty-gritty experiments and ideas that lie seemingly far from them. In particular, that these experiments can speak to questions about legal procedure, constitutional development, and the design of social and political systems.

In the year 2001, it is well-understood that any viable nation-state is likely to be composed of multiple ethnic and religious groups that differ in access to resources and that these are the fault lines along which we observe and will continue to observe tears in the fabric of society.

To deal with disparities, societies have each generated their own solutions. The Lebanese constitutional system for example, requires that the president must be a Maronite Christian, the premier a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the National Assembly a Shi'ite, with minor posts for other minorities. In Ireland, the lines were drawn physically – the Catholic south became Ireland, the Protestant north joined Britain but the presence of Ulster county, a Catholic enclave surrounded by Protestant territory continues to pose a challenge. And the most direct such experience for me was living in India at a time when there was an Urdu-speaking West Pakistan and a Bengali-speaking East Pakistan, one country, two locations, separated by 2000 miles of India.

Although the Lebanese, Irish, and Pakistani solutions to diversity are illustrative of the scope and extent of human ingenuity, they are socially unstable and at least to me, morally unsatisfactory. Structural flaws in existing solutions lead me, to thinking along the lines offered by John Rawls, who recognized that social "goods" as opposed to social "bads" are an intrinsic part of the resources that must be distributed fairly and justly. In his classic *A Theory of Justice* he offered the following principle:

RAWLS SLIDE

All social primary goods –liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect – are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favored (p. 303).

If this view is appealing to you, as it is to me, I wonder if we might take it a bit further. I would argue that research on the implicit or unconscious bases of thought and feeling, belief and attitude can be newly used to enhance this notion by the added recognition of implicit mental inequalities.

To make the connection between automatic category-based judgments that happen in 500 milliseconds to the broad design of social systems not only seems, but is, an unimaginable

distance. But I remind us that science has been there before. In the 1930s the astrophysicist Subramaniam Chandrashekar used as microscopic a phenomenon as the orbital mechanics of a single electron to predict the existence of black holes – about as macroscopic a phenomenon as one can imagine. It did not meet with much success initially, I should add because Nobel committees, like God, see the truth -- but wait. It took 50 years after this proposal of using the microscopic to understand the macroscopic that the idea served as the basis of his Nobel Prize.

I admit to harboring the belief that it is possible, even in matters of connections between mind and society, to imagine a bridge between the mechanics of the mind, and the larger universe they reflect and shape, in just that way.