

Taking Back Philosophy—Through Reform, Not Revolution

DAVID SELTZER

Drexel University

Taking Back Philosophy is a popularly-written but seriously-intentioned book by noted Chinese philosophy scholar Bryan Van Norden. The book is interesting because of its combination of radicalism and conservatism. On the one hand, Van Norden suggests making two radical changes to academic philosophy as it is commonly practiced in America: (1) vastly expanding the canon to include Chinese, Indian, and other non-mainstream forms of philosophy; and (2) changing the main focus of philosophical inquiry from specialist debates in metaphysics and epistemology to the practical question of how to live one’s life. On the other hand, Van Norden argues for these changes on the grounds that they are demanded by a consistent application of the standards of mainstream Western philosophy and have precedent in the past of mainstream Western philosophy. This mix of radicalism and conservatism allows Van Norden to keep the best of both worlds. He moves beyond the exclusivism of mainstream philosophy without sacrificing its intellectual rigor.

The book arose out of two circumstances. The idea for the book started with a half-joking suggestion by Jay Garfield that mainstream philosophy departments should rename themselves “department of Anglo-European Philosophy.” Van Norden liked the idea, and Garfield and Van Norden developed it into a short online piece for *The Stone*. That piece ignited an online firestorm, which threatened to leave the realm of academia and enter the popular consciousness, and convinced Van Norden (Garfield had other obligations) to develop it into a book advocating for the place of Asian philosophy and other less commonly taught philosophies (LCTP) within the mainstream philosophical canon.¹ This topic would eventually become the focus of chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 1 looks at the arguments made against including LCTP in philosophy and shows that none of them hold. Chapter 2 then shows the benefit of expanding the canon by providing examples of Chinese-Western comparative work and the developments to which it leads.

While Van Norden was at work on the book, a second major event took place: the election of President Trump. This made it important for intellectuals to enter the public sphere and engage

with ethnocentrism in the wider world, and to defend the importance of the liberal arts in what figured to be, and has been, a hostile political climate. At the same time, it also showed the need for soul-searching on the part of the progressive left. These became the topics of chapters 3 through 5. Chapter 3 draws the analogy between intellectual wall-building within the philosophical profession and physical wall-building in the wider world, from Trump's wall to China's Great Wall. Chapter 4 then defends the relevance of philosophy for practical economic gain, civic engagement, and against scientism. Chapter 5, finally, develops a conception of philosophy that will allow it to best address the world at large.

In chapter 1 Van Norden lays out the arguments made against including LCTP in the canon. These arguments generally fall into two main strands. The first is quality: critics hold that LCTP doesn't measure up to the standards of mainstream Western philosophy. They generally support this claim by citing a few out-of-context examples of apparently nonsensical Asian thought, and sometimes also by maintaining that Western philosophy uses logical argumentation to address carefully defined problems in core subdisciplines while Asian philosophy consists of sages sitting on mountaintops dispensing obscure and quasi-mystical pearls of wisdom for their followers to meditate upon.² Van Norden takes evident delight in showing that canonical Western figures like Heraclitus and Parmenides can be made to look nonsensical when taken out of context (3, 45); that Chinese philosophy sometimes proceeds in rigid syllogistic form while major Western philosophers such as Plato often rely on poetic suggestion to make their point (144–147); and that the ancient Chinese engaged in highly technical discussions about topics in logic and the philosophy of language that Western philosophy has only recently begun to address (6–7). Mainstream philosophers who doubt the merit of LCTP either haven't read any at all, or have looked briefly at a few of the less approachable texts (Van Norden mentions the *Analects*, *Daodejing*, and *Changes*, but the *Upanishads* are equally puzzling at first) and then given up without bothering to consult commentaries or secondary sources, as we would do with any major Western philosopher we didn't understand. Those who do put in the effort to understand LCTP invariably find much of value (16, 28–29).

The second argument is definitional: “philosophy” is a Greek word which refers to a particular intellectual tradition beginning in ancient Greece.³ To counter this argument, Van Norden looks back into the history of ideas to show that what we think of as the established philosophical canon

is actually a quite recent invention. In the Enlightenment, philosophy was generally understood to begin in either Egypt or India and to include Chinese Confucianism (19–21). I would add that the Enlightenment canon also included women like Margaret Cavendish and Anne Conway, whose views Leibniz described as close to his own,⁴ that Moses Mendelssohn associated with the leading figures of the German Enlightenment⁵ and that Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* was translated into English in 1708 as a forerunner of Enlightenment natural religion.⁶ The exclusion of African and Asian thought from the canon began in the 1800s due to a combination of factors. Outside the academy, as Europe shifted from trading with other cultures to colonizing them, it became less important to understand these cultures on their own terms and more important to justify colonialism by showing the superiority of Western culture. Within the academy, a group of Kant scholars realized they could increase the value of their intellectual capital by rewriting the canon to make Kant the culmination of Enlightenment thought. Over time this new canon ossified to the point that philosophers now take it for granted and no longer recognize it as the product of deliberate choices made on philosophically irrelevant grounds (21).

This history helps to explain the vitriolic and sometimes silly nature of the responses to Garfield and Van Norden's editorial, such as the person who argued that they wouldn't fly in a plane made with non-Western math, not realizing that our numbering system comes from India via Arabia (11–12). Actual differences of interpretation can be resolved through calmly reasoned academic debate; when debate becomes shrill, it is often a sign that something else is really at stake. Garfield and Van Norden's editorial challenged established power structures both within academia and in the wider world. It was this, rather than the actual call for the inclusion of LCTP, that provoked the response. The history of the canon also helps to explain why Garfield and Van Norden got such a huge reaction to a partially tongue-in-cheek editorial. Institutional resistance—which Van Norden (150), following Lyotard, calls a form of terror—can always overcome rational arguments, but is far more vulnerable to humor. The idea that philosophy departments should rename themselves makes Van Norden's point in a clever way that sticks in the mind as a reasoned argument would not. Thus the popular and often “cheeky” (xxiii) tone of *Taking Back Philosophy* does serious work: it helps to dislodge us from our habitual and nearly invisible assumptions. It's important to note, however, that Van Norden uses humor fairly. He answers serious arguments with serious counter-arguments, and only mocks statements that are obviously false or stupid.

Having rejected the objections to studying LCTP, Van Norden can talk about the benefits it would bring. In the wider world, China and India are increasingly becoming powers that can influence our daily lives (as the threat of a trade war with China has shown), and one way to better understand these societies is to understand their philosophical underpinnings. Van Norden shows that Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism still exert a significant influence on modern China (3–4). The same may be true in India: I’ve had international students tell me the caste system is far from dead in practice. The study of Islamic philosophy helps to counter the image of Islam as a religion of fundamentalism and terror, and the narrative of a clash of civilizations falls apart when we realize medieval Islamic philosophy is in fact a branch of Western philosophy. In the classroom, students are increasingly diverse, and they connect with writers like Beauvoir and Fanon in a way they don’t with white male writers. In my own survey classes, I’ve often seen Beauvoir and Fanon generate the most class discussion, and I’ve had multiple students thank me for teaching them. At the faculty level, teaching LCTP will encourage more women and minorities to enter the field, which is particularly important given that so much of philosophy depends upon thought experiments designed to clarify our basic intuitions, and a diverse field will help to ensure that those intuitions are broadly held, and not just the unquestioned background assumptions of a particular group.

The main benefit, however, is that studying LCTP opens possibilities for interesting comparative work. In chapter 2, Van Norden gives several examples of comparative philosophy using his specialization, Chinese philosophy. The key for this kind of comparative work is to find two traditions that “are similar enough for comparisons to be legitimate, but different enough for both traditions to learn from each other” (5). Some of Van Norden’s examples work better than others. There is really no need to appeal to Buddhism to critique Descartes’ conception of substance and the soul when Hume’s criticisms will work equally well. It would be much more interesting to see a discussion of Buddhism and Hume, or Hinduism and Descartes. Similarly, it would seem to make more sense to compare Hobbes with Xunzi, Han Feizi, or Mozi than with Mencius, and any Anglo-European communitarian could make a relatively similar critique of Hobbes coming out of Aristotle. The most interesting parts of chapter 2 are the sections on ethics and weakness of will, in which Van Norden runs Aristotle and the communitarians against Mencius and the Neo-Confucians. In these sections, because the philosophers’ views are suitably close, we are forced to see differences of nuance, and comparative philosophers have invented new

concepts in order to describe these differences, such as the distinction between development, discovery, and re-formation models of ethical cultivation (66). The key point is that these concepts can then be turned around and used to understand Aristotle. Thus comparative philosophy also helps to improve our understanding of *Western* thought.

It's worthwhile to think about the benefits of reading LCTP within the canon in more detail. LCTP is a catch-all category, and different branches of LCTP have different relations to mainstream (MCTP?) philosophy, which means that they will have different effects when added to the canon. At one extreme, Van Norden discusses Chinese philosophy, which has, as far as we know, no significant historical connection to mainstream Western philosophy. The same is true of the indigenous philosophies of the Americas, Australia, and the Pacific islands before contact with the West, and of African philosophy before the introduction of Christianity and Islam. In these cases, because there is no historical connection, comparative work must necessarily be organized around some problem to which historical figures from various traditions reply. This is how Van Norden organizes chapter 2, with sections on metaphysics, political philosophy, ethics, and weakness of will. He also suggests the same comparative approach when talking about African philosophies and the philosophies of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas (83, 149). On the one hand, this kind of comparative work should produce many new concepts because of the juxtapositions it creates. On the other hand, it does not contribute to our understanding of the development of the history of philosophy. The same is true in the classroom: these types of philosophy could be integrated into a problems-based course, but because they are not part of the same story, they are hard to fit into a chronologically-ordered historical survey course.

At the other extreme are works that fit seamlessly into the mainstream canon but were excluded for reasons that had nothing to do with merit. A good example is Beauvoir's mid-1940s ethical writings. These were explicitly intended as philosophical works along the same lines pursued by contemporaries like Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. They are clearly works of the first order: *The Ethics of Ambiguity* stands as the main statement of 1940s French existentialist ethics. They engage with canonical figures like Kant, Hegel, Marx, Husserl, and Heidegger, and address central issues in philosophy like ethics, political philosophy, phenomenology, and ontology. Including these works in the canon would give us a more accurate picture of the history of Continental philosophy. They also fit easily into survey courses on ethics or the history of philosophy. (I have taught *The Ethics of Ambiguity* many times and "Moral Idealism and Political Realism" once, generally to favorable

reviews.) Finally, we might get a better translation of *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Having said that, while there are important differences between Beauvoir's ontology and Sartre's, they are so closely related that reading Beauvoir as well as Sartre will not create the same type of juxtapositions as cross-traditional work, and thus will not lead to the same conceptual advances. The same could be said, in a previous generation, for Cavendish and Conway—their work fits nicely into the Enlightenment canon as two alternative replies to the mind-body problem.⁷

Contemporary Africana, feminist, and LGBTQ philosophies are historically grounded in mainstream Western philosophy, although it's worth noting that they are often grounded in Western Continental philosophy, and that many of the schools Van Norden (163n8) mentions as teaching Africana philosophy have Continental or at least pluralistic departments. Reading these works as philosophy clearly enriches our understanding of them because it allows us to see the connections to the Western tradition. It also highlights the need for philosophically competent translations: the Parshley translation of *The Second Sex* was notoriously bad. At the same time, these works not only respond to the Western tradition but also help to advance it. For instance, the early Continental tradition tends to conceptualize self-other relations in abstract and thus symmetrical terms, whether we look at Hegel (the reconciliation of consciousnesses), Sartre (an endless oscillation between subject and object), Merleau-Ponty (all consciousness is embodied), or even Levinas' account of politics. The best statements of an asymmetrical notion of the Other really do come from Beauvoir and Fanon. Both recognize that, beneath the abstract symmetry between all people, there are concrete asymmetries, which prevent symmetrical relations from developing in practice.

In chapter 3 Van Norden moves from exclusion within academia to exclusion in the wider world. The chapter is synthetic in character: Van Norden sees the resistance to including Asian philosophy within the canon as reproducing, in microcosm, the resistance to globalization in the wider world. Van Norden starts with Trump's promise to build a wall along the Mexican border. He easily shows that the wall has no rational justification and is instead a cynical attempt to appeal to racist and nationalist sentiment. In this sense, Trump is not an outlier within the Republican Party, but rather the logical outcome of the "southern strategy" which the Republican Party has used, in a far less overt form, since Richard Nixon's campaign in 1968 (85–89). I would add that Trump's success is actually part of a much larger phenomenon, on all sides of the political spectrum, which

also includes the Brexit vote, the election of far-right nationalists in Hungary and Poland, the near-success of the Scottish independence referendum and the subsequent overwhelming victory of the SNP in parliamentary elections, and the failed Catalan independence movement, among others. Van Norden cleverly juxtaposes this Western nationalist turn with a discussion of a similar phenomenon in China. China is rapidly expanding, it is ethnically diverse, and cracks are forming in the social fabric. To hold his country together, newly-appointed dictator-for-life Xi Jinping cynically uses the *Chinese* canon to appeal to nationalistic sentiment (91–97). Van Norden’s discussion of China forces us to see wall-building from the other side: not only are we building walls against the world, but the world is building walls against us.

Conservatives from Edmund Burke to Allan Bloom defend this kind of wall-building because it promotes adherence to the norms of one’s own society and culture. Van Norden, however, responds that the most vibrant cultures are constantly evolving. They hold strong communal norms, but they constantly question, evaluate, and refine those norms (99–105). They are also outward-directed. The early Ming dynasty mounted massive maritime expeditions, Rome was cosmopolitan, and America was built by immigrants. Societies only build walls when they have started to decline and want to hold on to what they already have. This attempt to hold on to the past only serves to accelerate the decline: the Ming dynasty was successfully overthrown shortly after constructing the iconic sections of the Great Wall,⁸ and Trump’s attacks on immigrants will deprive America of cultural exchanges and the innovations that arise from them. Instead, Van Norden claims, history shows that societies which do not make gradual and intelligently guided adaptations eventually change cataclysmically and disastrously. This is what happened in the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and Mao’s Cultural Revolution (102). As in the macrocosm so in the microcosm. *Taking Back Philosophy* repeats the warning from *The Stone* editorial that the philosophical field must voluntarily change before change is forced upon it. In this sense, *Taking Back Philosophy* is not really a call for change: the change will happen regardless. Instead, *Taking Back Philosophy* is a call for the professoriate to intelligently integrate LCTP into the philosophical canon, using the standards and methods learned from mainstream philosophy, before this change is forced on them by poorly-informed student agitators and money-hungry administrators.⁹

Chapter 4 seeks to defend the value of philosophy and the liberal arts generally. Philosophy has come under attack from right-wing anti-intellectuals, but also from scientists who don't see the value of the liberal arts given that science seemingly furnishes a better tool for understanding the world, and most concerningly from students (or, more likely, parents) who don't see why they should spend God-knows-what on tuition only to leave college with a major that appears to have no practical value. Some of the attacks are easily dealt with. Marco Rubio's claim that welders make more than philosophers is simply an alternative fact (1–2, 110–111). The idea that philosophy has no practical value is also mistaken. Philosophy may have almost no direct practical value, except to the few people who go to graduate school, but it is particularly effective at developing a set of general skills—reading, writing, and reasoning—that are essential for advancement in almost any career (113–114). At a deeper level, the liberal arts are necessary for democratic citizenship. Democracy places substantial power in the hands of the people; it is therefore necessary for the people to be able to think critically and independently and to be used to encountering views beyond their own. This observation has its darker side. Van Norden, like John Dewey and Plato's right-wing Straussian interpreters, recognizes that the liberal arts can serve as a tool for manipulation. If the study of the liberal arts becomes a luxury confined to the elite, they could use it to control the masses, who would be given the technical training to serve the elite but not the critical thinking skills to question the status quo. At the extreme level, the anti-intellectual rejection of the liberal arts produces blind faith, conformism, and intolerance: it is consistent with, and leads to, fascism (127–130). As for the critique that science renders philosophy obsolete, Van Norden's strongest response is that philosophy is a form of what Thomas Kuhn would call pre-paradigm science.¹⁰ That is, we do philosophy when we haven't yet developed a method for investigating a particular question. Over time, as various fields of inquiry become more systematized, they break off from philosophy and become their own disciplines. The discipline of philosophy, as we define it today, is simply what is left over (133–134, 142–143). Thus “philosophy is like a glacier: it moves so slowly that it appears to be going nowhere, but in the long run it radically transforms the world you live in” (143).

Van Norden also, however, thinks that some of the problems of philosophy, and the liberal arts, are self-inflicted, and he discusses these in chapter 5. In the first place, Van Norden thinks that philosophy has become overly technical and remote from daily life. Analytic philosophy, at its worst, can become an exercise in solving abstract thought-puzzles; Continental philosophy, at its

worst, can become an exercise in using complex jargon (151–153). Van Norden doesn't exactly say so, but this is probably connected to the rise of the academy and the subsequent cloistering of philosophy within academia. This created a situation where academics write to impress other academics; they are positively rewarded for displays of intellectual virtuosity while the topic they display it about is unimportant. The anti-intellectualism Van Norden (119) notes in American culture might be a reaction to this tendency. It's important to remember that, until the rise of the modern research university (which took place in the late 1800s in America), most philosophers worked outside the academy and wrote for an educated but non-academic audience. Philosophers like Locke, Mill, Marx, and Sartre wrote not to impress their fellow academics but to persuade people to change the world. Even professional academics like Dewey and (when he wasn't being fired) Russell devoted a considerable amount of their work to influencing public opinion.

To address the problem of relevance Van Norden suggests that philosophy should focus on the question "What way should one live?" This does not mean that we should entirely neglect philosophical thought-puzzles, but rather that we can never allow these thought-puzzles to become ends in themselves, apart from the practical concerns which motivated them. It is important to note that this suggestion is not particularly new. Van Norden correctly traces it back to Socrates (151–153), but it motivates much of Ancient and Hellenistic philosophy down to Augustine and Boethius. Philosophers of that time saw philosophy primarily as describing a way of life, and sometimes even withdrew from society in order to live an alternate, philosophical way of life. The same approach can be found in the Existentialists, as well as in Chinese and Indian philosophy. Van Norden also, importantly, shows that the question of how to live our lives motivates some of the most seemingly abstract and technical thinkers of recent times. Bertrand Russell was motivated by a kind of mystical experience; Rawls' conception of justice was motivated in part by seeing the aftermath of the atomic bombs; Hare's prescriptivism was motivated by his experience as a Japanese prisoner-of-war in World War II (153–156). Thus, by focusing on how to live our lives, Van Norden does not seek to change philosophy so much as to restore its original meaning.

Van Norden also thinks the liberal arts have become intellectually lazy. Based on his experience, Van Norden thinks that most fields in the liberal arts have been colonized by some combination of the hermeneutic of suspicion and relativism. The hermeneutic of suspicion attempts to find the interests—economic, psychological, or otherwise—that are served by the text. The hermeneutic of suspicion can be a valuable tool when used in conjunction with other methods,

but when used exclusively, it spares us any need to critically evaluate what the text actually says (139–140). Relativism—from the medieval “two truths” doctrine of Siger of Brabant to contemporary individual or cultural relativism—goes even further by holding that every person or group is entitled to its own opinion, and thus eliminates the need to think at all (18, 140–142). To address the problem of intellectual laziness, Van Norden suggests that philosophy is distinguished by a hermeneutic of faith, or, more simply, by the principle of charitable reading. In other words, we start with the assumption that the author may actually be right, and that it is therefore worthwhile to figure out what the author actually said. Of course, different authors take different positions, so we also need to understand and evaluate the reasons that various authors give for their own positions and against rival positions (159). The hermeneutic of faith explains the practical usefulness of philosophy: philosophy is particularly good at teaching general critical reasoning skills because the hermeneutic of faith holds philosophers to high standards of critical reasoning.

Philosophy as Van Norden conceives it also has a canon: a more or less defined (but never fixed) set of texts from its history that are acknowledged to be of the highest merit. The evaluative character of the canon—a canon implies that some works are better than others—is justified by the hermeneutic of faith; its historical character is justified by the pre-paradigm nature of philosophy. Of course the canon Van Norden suggests is much broader because it includes LCTP, but the LCTP supplements the mainstream canon rather than replacing it. In contrast to “Manicheans” who insist that we should entirely eliminate dead white men from the curriculum, Van Norden (159) holds that we should study all works of the highest quality, including both those written by (now-)dead white men and those that were not. Van Norden’s (124, 195n40) expansive canon includes theists, both from the history of philosophy (Descartes, Berkeley, Leibniz, Kant) and from more contemporary times (Anscombe, MacIntyre, Charles Taylor). It also includes thoughtful conservatives. Thinkers like Burke, Matt Lewis, and Allan Bloom play by the rules of the hermeneutic of faith and advance serious arguments for their positions, so they deserve the same consideration from us. Of course taking an argument seriously, and teaching it, is very different from agreeing with it (82). The inclusion of thoughtful theists and conservatives, at the very least, prevents the pronounced left-leaning tendency of the liberal arts profession from hardening into what Mill calls dead dogma.¹¹ At the most, they may sometimes be right. Transferred from philosophy to the wider world, Van Norden’s position implies that we should take seriously qualified candidates like George H. W. Bush, Bob Dole, and John McCain (again,

taking a candidate seriously is very different from voting for him), although it does allow us to reject out of hand politicians like Donald Trump, George W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, and Sarah Palin (119–121, 125–126).

I find Van Norden's position appealing because it allows for change without falling into the pitfalls of some of the more naïve attempts at reforming the curriculum. Van Norden doesn't exactly say so, but it is possible to construct a kind of history of the liberal arts from his remarks. In the past, most fields in the liberal arts had canons that were as limited as the philosophy canon still is. Literature meant American and European literature; religion meant Catholicism, Protestantism, and perhaps Judaism; women's studies and Africana studies didn't exist; and so on.¹² The reasons motivating this limitation were, again, probably a combination of cultural imperialism and battles over intellectual capital. Then at some point these fields underwent the kind of sudden, undirected change Van Norden warns about in chapter 3. Because excluded voices couldn't gain a fair hearing according to the old standards, the most obvious solution was simply to get rid of the standards. The liberal arts shifted from being reflexively and uncritically Eurocentric to being reflexively and uncritically left-wing. Relativism and the hermeneutic of suspicion replaced the hermeneutic of faith. Van Norden refers to the excesses of this period in his book: he was a graduate student at Stanford when the undergraduates agitated to eliminate the Western tradition from the curriculum (102–103). Philosophy is the last holdout. Thus philosophy, the most intolerant of the liberal arts, is also the most academically rigorous.¹³ Allan Bloom would feel vindicated.

Only afterwards did the problems of this revolution become apparent. With no point from which to gain a critical purchase, postmodernism proved easy to subvert. If everything is discourse, then why shouldn't Russian bots make up an alternative discourse? If science is defined by its institutional practices, then why not eliminate global warming by firing the scientists? If men and women have different values, then what is wrong about excluding women from cutthroat boardrooms? Or, to take an example a bit closer to home, if we should all avoid offending one another in the name of tolerance, then why shouldn't a Christian claim to be offended by an art installation of a crucified frog, and demand that it be taken down in the name of tolerance? The student agitators of the 1960s can hardly have wanted Trump to become president, but they may have inadvertently helped to create an intellectual environment which made the Trump presidency possible.

Van Norden points to a third way. Rather than sudden, undirected change coming from below, we could have intelligently directed gradual reform led by the professoriate. This gradual, Deweyan reform would give us the best of both worlds: it would both expand the canon and preserve the standards of the philosophical field. Because it preserves the high standards of the field, Van Norden's conception of philosophy would be able to teach general thinking skills and develop informed citizens. Because it insists on arguments, Van Norden's conception of philosophy provides a critical purchase. The bare assertion that we should adopt multiculturalism can easily be countered by the bare assertion that we should not. The argument that we should adopt multiculturalism because it leads to innovation and critical self-reflection is much harder to refute. (It also leads to a much richer notion of multiculturalism as cultural interchange instead of bare coexistence). And, because Van Norden's conception of philosophy is oriented toward questions that affect everyone, not just philosophers, it should be relatively easy to communicate these arguments to a general audience.

The only question is whether Van Norden's reform can come about. At a purely logical level, there is no reason why it could not. In fact, as Van Norden shows, if we consistently applied the standards of the philosophical field, we would have to make these changes. But the philosophical profession runs on institutional logic rather than philosophical logic. Van Norden writes mostly about top-50 philosophy departments (as determined by Brian Leiter) or sometimes just doctoral programs (2–3, 162–163n3–8). At this level, the prospects for change appear relatively bleak. Because these departments judge themselves mostly in terms of their academic prestige in the eyes of other researchers, they are relatively insulated from the external forces which Van Norden thinks will drive change, such as student demographics and the rise of China and India. At the same time, because these departments already occupy the top positions in the field, they have the most incentive to preserve the status quo. Thus most top programs will probably continue to emphasize Analytic metaphysics and epistemology for some considerable time.

At lower levels, however, the equation changes. Prestige is less important; meeting the needs of students becomes more important. Thus the change Van Norden refers to may already have happened. My department head at La Salle University works in all three medieval traditions with a focus on Islamic Philosophy. My catch-all program head at Penn State Abington specializes in the history of Buddhist medicine. I previously taught at Rowan University, which includes an Asian philosophy specialist in a permanent faculty of seven. The rise of untenured teaching faculty

and adjuncts, problematic as it is, also creates space for exploration. If a tenure-track faculty member researches in LCTP it costs the department prestige. The faculty member could always, as Van Norden (34) suggests, work to develop an area of competence in an LCTP, but even this takes away from the time they could be writing. In contrast, if a teaching professor or adjunct with no research expectations offers a class and it attracts enough students to run, the class can be considered a success, regardless of the topic. In my own experience as an adjunct, I have never encountered obstacles to offering LCTP courses. Penn State Abington allowed me to offer a course in Asian Philosophy, simply because the course description was on the books, and it turned into a regularly-offered course. My program director at Drexel University hired me to teach Critical Reasoning, but regarded my area of competence in Asian philosophy as an advantage, and supported my efforts to offer special-topics courses in Arabic Philosophy and Jewish Philosophy. Of course, all of these opportunities could also be viewed as a sad reflection on the state of higher education: as the institution of the university itself breaks down, the institutional resistance to LCTP is breaking down with it.

Notes

1. Bryan Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), xxiii–xxiv, 8–11.
2. Nicholas Tampio, “Not All Things Wise and Good Are Philosophy,” *Aeon* September 13, 2016, <https://aeon.co/ideas/not-all-things-wise-and-good-are-philosophy>; Jay Garfield, Foreword to *Taking Back Philosophy* by Bryan Van Norden (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), xvi; Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 12–13.
3. Tampio; Garfield xiv–xv; Van Norden 19.
4. Margaret Atherton, ed., *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 2–3, 47.
5. See, for instance, Alexander Altmann, Introduction to *Jerusalem* by Moses Mendelssohn, trans. Allan Arkush (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983), 26–27.

6. Ibn Tufayl, Abu Bakr Muhammad, *The Improvement of the Human Reason, Exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokdhan: in which is demonstrated, by what Methods one may, by the Meer Light of Nature, attain the Knowledg of things Natural and Supernatural; more particularly the Knowledg of God, and the Affairs of another Life*, trans. Simon Ockley, 1708, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/16831.
7. Atherton 5.
8. Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 160, 164.
9. Jay Garfield and Bryan Van Norden, “If Philosophy Won’t Diversify, Let’s Call It What It Really Is,” *The Stone* May 11, 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/05/11/opinion/if-philosophy-wont-diversify-lets-call-it-what-it-really-is.html; Van Norden 36.
10. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), chapter 2.
11. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), chapter 2.
12. Garfield xx.
13. Garfield xx; Van Norden 139.