

Response to the Site Visit Report

Michael Tooley

The following document is emphatically not a statement by the Department of Philosophy of the University of Colorado at Boulder. For while the vast majority of the people in the Department, in my opinion, think that the Site Visit Report is a very bad document indeed, both in terms of its content and tone, most members of the Department also feel, it seems, that one should not criticize the Report, at least in any thoroughgoing way, at least at the present time.

Elsewhere, I have tried to set out, in an accurate fashion, the arguments that my colleagues have offered in support of this policy, along with my responses to those arguments. For those interested, this material is contained in the document "Should One Criticize the Site Visit Report?"

As I indicate there, I have thought for some time that it was morally problematic to stand aside and say nothing, and see the reputations of innocent members of the Department and their families harmed by the Report. Still, I have hesitated about speaking out, knowing that a number of my colleagues have serious doubts about the wisdom of doing so. The publication by the AAUP on April 17 of its "Report on CU's Treatment of the Philosophy Department," along with the treatment of some of my colleagues, which is described in that document, has convinced me, however, that further delays are not acceptable.

I am therefore setting out an account of some relevant events, along with my criticisms of the Site Visit Report. I hope that doing so will provide those outside of the Philosophy Department with a more complete basis both for evaluating the Department, and also for deciding whether a visit under the Site Visit Program of the APA Committee on the Status of Women is likely to help, or to harm, their departments.

Finally, the opinions expressed here are *mine, and mine alone*, and should not be attributed either to the Philosophy Department, or to any other members of it.

Table of Contents

1. The Office of Discrimination and Harassment, and the Veil of Total Secrecy	2
1.1 The Veil of Total Secrecy	2
1.2 The Irresponsibility of the University Administration	3
2. Actions Taken by the Philosophy Department	4
3. General Comments on the Site Visit Report	5
4. The Main Negative Claims Made in the Report	6
Summing Up	13

The Site Visit Report

1. The Office of Discrimination and Harassment, and the Veil of Total Secrecy

1.1 The Veil of Total Secrecy

First of all, it is important, in thinking about the Site Visit Report, to appreciate how reports or complaints concerning, for example, sexual harassment are handled at the University of Colorado. In the world outside of the University, if one is arrested and accused a crime, reports of the accusation can be published in newspapers, there will be a public trial, and the results of that trial will be a matter of public record. If one thinks in those terms, and one hears, for example, that fifteen complaints have been lodged against the Department of Philosophy since 2007, it is natural to ask, "What on earth has the Philosophy Department been doing? Why has it not been taking action against the guilty parties?"

The system for investigating charges that are made within the University of Colorado is, however, very different from that in the outside world. So let me briefly describe the rules under which the body whose responsibility it is, in the case of faculty, to investigate charges of harassment and discrimination – namely, the Office of Discrimination and Harassment – works.

First of all, at the University of Colorado, there is an absolute obligation to report any behavior that may possibly involve sexual harassment or discrimination, and a failure to do so exposes one to serious sanctions.

Once an incident has been reported to the Office of Discrimination and Harassment, a veil of *total secrecy* is imposed. There is no announcement that a report of any sort has been filed, let alone of whose behavior it concerned. There is no indication of whether what was filed was merely a report of behavior that someone thought might be problematic, or whether it was a case of someone's filing a complaint. If it was a complaint, there is no indication of whether the complaint was determined to be with, or without, merit. If the complaint was determined to have prima facie merit, there is no indication of whether it was resolved informally, or whether there was a formal investigation. If there was a formal investigation, there is no indication of whether the person was found innocent or guilty. If the person was found guilty, there is no announcement of who the person was, or of what punishment was administered.

But not only are the proceedings themselves secret from beginning to end: in addition, there is to be no discussion of the case by those who are not involved. So if one somehow knows that a colleague is being formally investigated with regard to some charge – and, in the absence of leaked information, only those who have reported the complaint, or who are either the victim or the perpetrator, or else the Head of Department, will have such information – one is prohibited from conveying that information to anyone else, and from entering into any discussion of the case.

The upshot is that in the University of Colorado, in contrast to the outside world, very few people have any knowledge of misbehavior on the part of others.

The veil of secrecy is, however, much more extensive than what I have indicated so far. Consider, for example, the following questions:

- (1) Of the fifteen *reports* lodged against members of the Philosophy Department since 2007, how many of those reports took the form of *official complaints*?
- (2) Of the reports that did take the form of complaints, how many were immediately judged to be without merit?
- (3) Of the complaints that were judged to have merit, how many were dealt with informally, rather than by a formal investigation?
- (4) Of the complaints that were formally investigated, how many resulted in a guilty finding?
- (5) How many different people were involved in the complaints that resulted in a guilty finding?
- (6) In the case of those complaints that did result in a guilty finding, what sanctions were applied by the Administration?
- (7) Of the fifteen complaints lodged against members of the Philosophy Department since 2007, how many have been lodged, say, in the last four years?

These questions are purely statistical; answers to them would not provide anyone with any information about who the guilty parties were, let alone who the complainants were. Why, then, hasn't the Philosophy Department at least asked for such purely statistical information? The answer is that it has asked for such purely statistical information, and the result is that the Administration always refuses to answer such questions, claiming – very implausibly indeed in my opinion – that it cannot provide such information.

1.2 The Irresponsibility of the University Administration

Here, then, is the situation. Reckless and unjustified charges have been made by a site visit team, and charges that are very damaging indeed to at least all male members of the Philosophy Department. The University possesses information that shows, for example, that since 2007 only one member of the Philosophy Department has ever been found guilty of either sexual harassment or discrimination. The Provost has access to that information, but refuses to release it. He will say that, because of the nature of that information, he cannot make it public. But how is it that he can release the first of the following pieces of information, but not the second?

- (1) Since 2007, fifteen reports/complaints involving members of the Philosophy Department have been lodged with the Office of Discrimination and Harassment.
- (2) During that period of time, only one member of the Philosophy Department has been found guilty of either sexual harassment or discrimination.

The Provost should address such questions. He should say why he refuses to provide purely statistical information that would show that very few people indeed have been guilty, for example, of sexual harassment. But he does not do so.

Here is another example. It is possible to write to the Office of Discrimination and Harassment, asking for a letter indicating whether any complaints have ever been lodged against one. Suppose that one receives a letter stating, for example, that there has never been any such complaint. At the end of the letter one will be told that, unless one asks for, and is granted, express, written permission, one is prohibited from circulating the information in question to anyone, including, therefore, one's spouse and family. Then, if one does ask for such permission, the result is that one is allowed to make the information public, but not to circulate the letter containing the information!

In short, both the Provost and the Office of Discrimination and Harassment have acted and continue to act in ways that have had the result that innocent members of the Department and their families have been seriously harmed, when the Provost and the Office of Discrimination and Harassment could easily have prevented such harm.

2. Actions Taken by the Philosophy Department

Because of this veil of total secrecy, most people in the Philosophy Department were, for a number of years, completely unaware that any of their colleagues had behaved in unacceptable ways. Gradually, however, information leaked out. Thus there was a case involving some unprofessional and uncivil remarks, and there was a case involving the use of 'Borat'-style humor in a class. These minor cases were, as was totally appropriate, dealt with informally.

One male member of faculty has, however, been charged with sexual harassment on more than one occasion. First, there was a case involving a female graduate student, and that resulted in a guilty finding. Then there was another case that may have happened around the same time, and that involved a female member of faculty. Rather than reporting it immediately, however, the faculty member waited for some time, at which point she and a female professor at another university both filed complaints. Those two complaints were treated together, and the outcome was that the male professor in question was found guilty of sexual harassment and of unprofessional conduct in that second, combined case.

As more and more people in the Department gradually became aware of such cases, there was overwhelming agreement that the Department needed to consider what it could do in order to discourage harassment and other forms of problematic behavior, beyond what it was already doing, namely, reporting unacceptable behavior to the Office of Discrimination and Harassment.

The first thing that the Philosophy Department did was to create, in December of 2011, an *ad hoc* Departmental committee to look into the issue of behavior that the Department considered unacceptable, including behavior that is highly undesirable in spite of the fact that it does not violate any of the University's policies. (This *ad hoc* committee was subsequently replaced by a *permanent*, 'Climate Committee', within the Department.)

That committee immediately began deliberations, consulting with the Office of Discrimination and Harassment as it did, and the result of that committee's deliberations was a recommendation to the Department that led to

the adoption by the Department of a detailed “Code of Conduct Concerning Relationships,” which was posted on the Philosophy Department website along with links to the AAUP Statement on Professional Ethics, as well as to the discussion, in the *CU Faculty Handbook*, of Principles of Professional and Ethical Responsibilities, together with the University of Colorado’s official policies concerning sexual harassment, discrimination, and amorous relationships. (That detailed “Code of Conduct Concerning Relationships” document has, however, been taken down by the current External Interim Chair, Professor Andrew Cowell.)

In addition, Professor Graeme Forbes, who was Head of Department until the University Administration replaced him – and quite unjustifiably in my opinion – with an External Interim Chair, made it very clear that unacceptable behavior would not be tolerated. Thus, when one member of the Department behaved in an uncivil way during a Department meeting, and stormed out, Professor Forbes took immediate action, forbidding that person from attending meetings, and also from using the Department’s email lists, the use of which had sometimes generated friction. It is widely thought within the Department, moreover, that this action on Professor Forbes’ part resulted in significantly improved behavior on the part of the individual in question.

Next, the Philosophy Department, because of its concern about the underrepresentation of women in the profession generally, and in graduate programs, organized a colloquium on the topic of “Philosophy and Inclusion,” which was held in April of 2013, with two invited female speakers who addressed the question of why there are so few women in philosophy, and whose talks were followed by a panel discussion on that topic.

Finally, one member of the Department’s Climate Committee had heard – as she thought – that the American Philosophical Association *itself* had instituted a site visit program, under which a number of academics would visit a department, conduct extensive interviews with the goal of detecting problems, and then make suggestions and recommendations. On the face of it, this idea sounded very appealing, and after discussion in a Departmental Meeting, those present voted *unanimously* to have the Head of Department, Professor Graeme Forbes, explore whether such a site visit could be arranged. The result was the site visit that took place on September 26-27.

3. General Comments on the Site Visit Report

One of the striking features of the Site Visit Report is the more or less complete absence in it of any reference to the steps that the Department had taken, and that I described in the previous section, which included the formation of a Climate Committee, the production of a detailed “Code of Conduct Concerning Relationships,” the posting of that document along with other documents dealing with sexual harassment on the Department’s website, the holding of a colloquium on the topic of “Philosophy and Inclusion,” and, finally, a unanimous decision to request a visit as part of the Site Visit Program. *None* of those things is mentioned in the Site Visit Report.

In addition, in the group session with the site visit term that involved full professors, many positive things were said about the Department, and about the

relations between its members, and I would be very surprised if the same was not true in other group sessions. Yet, again, none of this made its way into the Site Visit Report. The result, accordingly, was that the site visit team produced a report that was almost entirely negative. Anyone who is inclined to think that the Site Visit Report is fair and unbiased needs to explain how that can be so in view of the preceding facts.

Another striking feature of the Site Visit Report is that a very large proportion of it consists of negative opinions expressed by some faculty and some students during the discussions with the site visit team. There is no indication of the extent to which other people agreed or disagreed with the sentiments expressed, nor is there any discussion of whether the criticisms appear justified.

In short, the site visit team ignored virtually every piece of positive information that they received about the Department, while making use of any negative opinions that were expressed, never checking whether those negative opinions had any sound basis, and never indicating whether the negative opinion was expressed by a single person or was more widely held.

If one follows those strategies, as the site visit team did, it is not surprising when the result is an extremely negative and completely one-sided account.

4. The Main Negative Claims Made in the Report

The Report advances serious criticisms of both the University Administration and the Philosophy Department. The Administration treated the latter as if they were holy writ, and continues to do so, never asking the Philosophy Department whether they thought that the criticisms in question were sound. On the other hand, the Administration happily swept aside the Report's criticisms of the Administration as virtually unworthy of comment, even though the site visit team's method was the same in both cases, being based almost entirely on opinions that were expressed by some unknown number of people, and not subjected to any fact checking or other critical scrutiny.

Let us consider, then, the main negative claims that the site visit team advanced in the Site Visit Report concerning the Philosophy Department. (The order corresponds more or less to the order in which they are first mentioned in the Site Visit Report, rather than that of relative importance.)

Charge 1: The Department of Philosophy is maintaining an environment that is undesirable in a number of serious respects.

. . . it is our strong conclusion that the Department maintains an environment with unacceptable sexual harassment, inappropriate sexualized unprofessional behavior, and divisive uncivil behavior. (p. 3)

Response

My response to this charge is, first, that the Department does not "maintain" an environment with these features, and, second, that what one is dealing with, in all of the cases taken together, is behavior involving a *very* small number of people.

In more detail, the facts are as follows.

First of all, as regards the cases of sexual harassment, all of them involved a single perpetrator, and no one other than the harasser and his victims had any knowledge that any harassment was taking place. So there was no failure on anyone's part to report the behavior in question.

It is the Dean who decides on the punishment in such matters, and in the case of the sexual harasser, some people in the Philosophy Department thought that the penalty should have been greater. Thus, as the Site Visit Report puts it, "The perception is that the perpetrators were given a slap on the wrist for even the most well-known cases in which there was a finding" (p. 8). Like most of the Site Visit Report, however, this grossly misrepresents the situation. In the first place, the punishment that the Dean decided upon was no slap on the wrist: it involved a *very* substantial period of suspension without pay, and thus a very substantial loss of income. In the second place, the Head of the Philosophy Department, Professor Graeme Forbes, also imposed an additional, quite significant punishment, of which only a very few people have knowledge, but which will have an ongoing effect over the years that the person remains at the University of Colorado. So it is simply not true either that perpetrators get off lightly, or, as is claimed in effect in the Site Visit Report, that Professor Forbes failed to respond effectively to such cases during his term of office.

Second, as regards "inappropriate sexualized unprofessional behavior," members of the Department strongly disapprove of such behavior. Thus, when it gradually became known that there was, in the Department, a faculty member whom it was thought had entered into casual sexual relationships with students, more than one member of the Department talked to that person about his behavior. Moreover, as mentioned above, the Department posted documents on its website, including a "Code of Conduct Concerning Relationships," which discussed the harms that can result from such behavior.

Because of this concern, members of the Department explicitly asked the site visit team what could be done about this situation. But, as one can see from the Site Visit Report, the site visit team had nothing to offer. The Department was committed, however, to continuing to canvass possible sanctions, such as not allowing the person to teach any graduate classes. It may well be, however, that this will not be necessary, since it appears that the individual in question has now come to see the problematic nature of his behavior.

Third, as regards "divisive uncivil behavior," such behavior is *extremely uncommon* within the Department, and when one member of the Department behaved in an uncivil way at a Department Meeting, Professor Graeme Forbes, the Head of the Department at the time, and as noted earlier, responded quickly and vigorously, and the result was a significant improvement in that person's behavior.

Conclusion

The site visit team's contention that the Department was "maintaining" an environment that was undesirable in the ways mentioned was inconsistent with

the evidence that was available to them, and in advancing that claim, they were extremely unfair to the Department.

Charge 2: The Department of Philosophy is characterized by a significant level of incivility of some members towards other members.

Some faculty are unaware of how much their incivility towards one another and other types of unprofessional behavior harm their graduate students. (p. 4)

We heard numerous reports of faculty engaging in behaviors that involved incivility, a lack of collegiality, verbalized disrespect for one another, and sexism. (p. 6)

Response

The first statement here is characteristic of the type of statement that the site visit team makes, where one has expressions – such as “*some* faculty” (emphasis added) – that provide one with no idea of how many people it is being claimed are guilty of the problematic behavior.

The second statement then refers to “numerous reports.” Now I have certainly heard of various cases, of which there may well have been more than one report, but all of those cases involved the same person. The wording that the site visit team has chosen to use here tends to suggest, without actually saying it, that *many* people in the Department are guilty of this sort of behavior. I have seen no evidence at all that would support the latter claim.

In addition, behavior in Departmental meetings, for example, is extremely civil, even though matters sometimes arise concerning which there are very significant disagreements about how best to proceed. Aside from the one instance mentioned above, however, there have been virtually no harsh words, no shouting, and no angry behavior, in evidence at Department meetings.

Charge 3: The Department of Philosophy is “hostile to women.”

The site visit team’s statement here is more indirect and guarded, since rather than asserting that the Philosophy Department is hostile to women, they instead refer to what they claim to be the Department’s reputation, both nationally and internationally. Thus they refer, on page three, to “the national reputation of the department as being hostile to women,” and then on page four they say, “Finally, we note that the department has a reputation in the international philosophical community for being extremely unfriendly to women.” But the site visit team must surely think that this reputation is fully deserved, since if they thought that this reputation was undeserved, they should certainly have said so, and, given their failure to do so, readers of the Site Visit Report will surely conclude that the Philosophy Department has not only a national, but an international reputation for being hostile to women.

Response

First of all, if the Philosophy Department had such a reputation, would it be justified? It does not seem to me that it would be. For example, female philosophers in the Department have in recent years been the recipients of very

high honors in the University, including being selected as a Distinguished College Professor, and receiving a Boulder Faculty Assembly Award for Excellence in Research, and the nominations for those awards have either been made by, or else have been strongly supported by, male professors.

Second, does the Philosophy Department have such a reputation in the international community? The Site Visit team does not offer any support for this claim, and it is surely true that it should have done so, given the seriousness of the charge.

Third, *before* the Site Visit Report was made public, I did a number of Google searches for websites where it was claimed that the Philosophy Department here is hostile to women. Those searches drew a complete blank. (If one does a Google search now, of course, one will certainly no longer draw a blank!)

Charge 4: Many members of the Philosophy Department are not aware of the harmfulness of sexual harassment, both as regards the person being harassed, and as regards others.

We observed that many faculty members are not knowledgeable about the harms of sexual harassment on the person being harassed, on all women in the department, and on all department members through the extreme negative effect this behavior has on the department climate. (p. 5)

Response

This is such a strong claim, and such an implausible one, that one is rather taken aback by it. First of all, most people know of individuals who have been sexually harassed, but even if one doesn't, sexual harassment is not a rare phenomenon, and one often reads about such cases, and about how disturbing such harassment is. I would find it very surprising if there were even a single person in the Department who did not realize both that sexual harassment is almost always a very traumatic occurrence for a person, and that, because it is traumatic, it can seriously affect women, especially if, though they have not been harassed themselves, they are in an environment where sexual harassment has occurred.

But second, what the site visit team claims is that "many" people in the Philosophy Department are not aware of these things, and this strikes me as incredible.

Charge 5: Members of the Department who do not themselves engage in sexual harassment are complicit in such behavior.

Here the site visit team, in referring to bystander training, says that such training "will help remove perceptions that those who are not engaging in sexual harassment are complicit with sexual harassment" (p. 5).

Response

First of all, in the cases of sexual harassment in the Department of which my colleagues and I are aware, there were no bystanders who observed the

behavior and who could have intervened, but failed to do so. No faculty members were “complicit” in these cases of sexual harassment.

Second, there is just no ground at all for the site visit team’s view that there are people in the Department who, if they witnessed an instance of sexual harassment, would stand by and do nothing. This is an extremely damning claim, and one for which there is absolutely no evidence.

Charge 6: Bullying is a serious problem in the Philosophy Department

We believe that we cannot discuss any of the bullying instances without revealing the perpetrators; however, we do believe that those engaged in this behavior are largely unaware that they are perceived as bullies. (p. 7)

The site visit team’s setting out of this charge is rather striking, since it consists simply of the single sentence just quoted. Why do the members of the site visit team not have more to say, before going on to offer their solutions to this problem?

In spite of its brevity, this short passage has certainly attracted attention, most notably, perhaps, from Rebecca Schuman, an education writer for *Slate*, who wrote an article entitled “Nasty and Brutish – A scandal in Colorado reveals that bullying bros still plague university philosophy departments,” (http://www.slate.com/articles/life/education/2014/02/sexual_harassment_in_philosophy_departments_university_of_colorado_boulder.html). This article is accompanied by a memorable picture containing figures with the heads of what are apparently some of the prime candidates for ‘philosophical bullies’ of the past, including Friederich Nietzsche, the source of some oft-quoted remarks about women, with one of the most famous, from his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, being, “You go to women? Do not forget the whip.”

Response

So what is one to say about this charge that there are bullies in the Philosophy Department at the University of Colorado? First of all, I do not know of any evidence that there are multiple bullies in the Philosophy Department. Only one name has been mentioned by the people I’ve talked to. So the site visit team has once again painted an unjustly negative picture of the Department.

Still, Rebecca Schuman might respond, one bullying bro is surely one too many. Quite so. But what is the ground for thinking that there is a *male* bully in the Department? Nothing in the above passage says anything about the gender of the person (or persons) involved.

Charge 7: The climate of the Department of Philosophy is such that it would be morally wrong to make a hire that involved just one woman.

A cluster hire for women should be considered. It is our considered opinion that it is unethical to bring an individual woman into the current environment (p. 8).

Response

Why would it be unethical? The only cases of sexual harassment in the Philosophy Department in the last six years of which I or other members of the Department have any knowledge have involved one and the same harasser. Is that person likely to engage in such behavior again? Given that that person was

found guilty and punished in a very significant fashion, and that the result of another offence would almost certainly be dismissal, further harassment by that individual seems very unlikely.

What, then, makes it “unethical to bring an individual woman into the current environment”? Is it because the Department has a high level of uncivil behavior? During my career, I have been a member of six philosophy departments, all of them characterized by a very good level of civility, and I would say that the Philosophy Department here is as good as any in that regard.

Moreover, if the Philosophy Department did advertise a position, it would seem to me that the Department should provide applicants with a copy of the Site Visit Report, along with something like the present document, so that any applicant, be it male or female, could consider the situation, could talk to others, both inside and outside the Department, about it, and come to an informed decision on whether the environment is, as the site visit team in effect claims, a toxic one in which to do philosophy. I see no reason at all to think that that is the conclusion that one would reach. Members of the Department have absolutely no tolerance for sexual harassment, or unprofessional sexualized behavior, or uncivil behavior, contrary to what the Site Visit Report claims.

Finally, it is worth noting that the University has recently approved the addition of another woman to the Philosophy Department, which presumably shows that the University Administration does not share the view, advanced in the Site Visit Report, that bringing an individual woman into the University of Colorado at Boulder Philosophy Department is in any way morally problematic.

Charge 8: There is insufficient respect for plurality in the discipline.

Here the charge is that people “should gain more appreciation of and tolerance for plurality in the discipline.” (Pp. 6-7)

Response

I fear that I’m not a great fan of tolerance as regards philosophy, and my reason is that, like science and mathematics, philosophy aims at truth. Ideally, one wants to be able to prove that certain things are the case. That, however, is not easy, especially in the case of philosophy. Some philosophers, indeed, such as Peter Van Inwagen, have expressed the view that no substantive positive philosophical thesis has ever been established! That strikes me as a gross overstatement, but what is certainly true is that it is generally much easier to prove a negative thesis, to show that certain things are not the case. Doing so, moreover, by clearing away false views, often helps one to arrive at a positive account that is sound, and sometimes may even point in the direction of a proof of that positive account.

The upshot, in short, is that criticism of unsound philosophical positions and approaches is crucial to philosophy, and it has been at the heart of philosophy since Socrates. The recommendation that one be more tolerant of different approaches to philosophy, that one be less critical, seems to me, then, to be completely wrongheaded.

Although I obviously cannot go into detail here, some ways of doing philosophy strike me as involving fundamentally mistaken starting points, and here I would include, for example, logical positivism, Aristotelianism, Thomism, Kantianism, and idealism. That is not to say that there is nothing worthwhile about the work of philosophers who fall in the camps in question. Thus, although I think that logical positivism is unsound, and that it became possible to *show* that it was unsound once a method for defining theoretical terms had been discovered, I am, for example, a great admirer of the work of Rudolf Carnap. Similarly, I think that idealism is unsound, but Berkeley's work is very valuable, since his immaterialist hypothesis provides the basis of a strong argument for skepticism concerning the existence of a mind-independent world, and one that is not at all easy to answer. Or again, I think that Aristotle made very important contributions to philosophy, but it seems to me that an approach to ontology in which ultimate powers and dispositions play a crucial role, rather than laws of nature, can be shown to be untenable.

My general point, then, is that, notwithstanding important contributions to philosophy that have been made by philosophers belonging to the above schools of thought, I believe that the appropriate attitude toward logical positivism, idealism, and the other approaches that I've just mentioned is a thoroughly critical one, and I do not think that one needs to gain a greater "appreciation" for the approaches in question, since I believe that it can be shown that there are good reasons for thinking that the approaches in question are fundamentally unsound.

Similarly, there are very general ways of doing philosophy, such as existentialism, post-structuralism, ordinary language philosophy, and continental philosophy, all of which I believe can be shown to be basically unsound. So here, too, I do not think that one needs to gain either a greater appreciation for such approaches, or a greater tolerance. I believe that one is justified in thinking that the main achievement of such ways of doing philosophy has been negative, leading many intelligent people to waste their lives, and often bringing the humanities into disrepute.

What about feminist philosophy – the area that, one suspects, the site visit team most has in mind? The answer is that it seems to me to be a mixed bag. The focus on institutional structures that disadvantage women – and often times very severely indeed – seems to me extremely important. I also believe that the differing ways in which boys and girls are typically raised involves a grave injustice to women. Indeed, it is for precisely that reason that my wife and I chose to home educate our two daughters.

But there are types of feminism with which I am not sympathetic. It seems, for example, to be a fairly common view among some feminists today that there is a bias against women in academia, and perhaps especially in philosophy, and the underrepresentation of women in philosophy departments is often cited as evidence for this claim. But, although I have been in several philosophy departments over the course of my life, I have not seen any evidence, for example, that men in philosophical discussions with women treat the views or arguments that are advanced any differently than they do in conversations with other men, or that there is any bias against women in hiring decisions, or in

admissions to graduate school, or in decisions to tenure and promote. It seems to me, moreover, that the different ways in which girls and boys are typically raised provides a perfectly adequate explanation for why women are underrepresented in philosophy, just as I think it does in the case, for example, of mathematics, physics, and chess. (In the case of chess, strong evidence for this environmental explanation is provided, I think, by the story of the three Polgar sisters.)

I suspect that the three authors of the Site Visit Report might very well think that I am mistaken on this matter, and think that, on the contrary, the underrepresentation of women in philosophy is to be explained instead in terms of the current climate in philosophy departments. If that is their view, it would not be surprising if they come to their visits with the firm conviction that they will find bias and hostility to women, and climate problems, in the department they are visiting. Then, given what seem to me to be their very unsatisfactory methods of investigation, I think that they will have little problem 'discovering' such things in abundance.

Charge 9: There is excessive socializing between faculty and graduate students, sometimes accompanied by excessive consumption of alcohol, which have led to many incidents of sexual harassment and assault.

Many of the incidents of alleged sexual harassment and assault have occurred while faculty and graduate students were socializing after hours. (p. 7)

Response

On the one hand, I believe that this claim is simply false. First, it is false that there have been many cases of sexual harassment. As was noted above, since 2007, *only one* member of the Philosophy Department has been found guilty of sexual harassment. Second, alcohol was not a factor in that case at all, with the harassment almost always being carried out entirely via email.

On the other hand, I think that this ninth charge raises an important, related issue, and one that I have thought about myself at various times. The related issue is whether one's relationships with students should remain purely professional, or whether it is appropriate to enter into friendships with one's students. Such friendships may, of course, develop into romantic or sexual relationships. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the fundamental issue has to do with whether friendships are appropriate, and here I think that there are pros and cons. On the one hand, friendship may lead to a closer and more effective mentoring relation, to a transference from the professor to the student of the enormous excitement of exploring intellectual problems, and also to the development in one's students of the traits that are necessary for significant intellectual achievement. But, on the other hand, friendship may make it difficult to be as demanding as one should be, or as frank in one's criticisms of the work of one's students as one ought to be.

So there are important issues here, worthy of very careful thought. But the fact that some professors in the Philosophy Department do enter into relationships of friendship with some of their students lends no credence at all to the reckless and completely unjustified charge about the existence of many incidents of sexual harassment that the Site Visit Report claims have occurred.

Charge 10: The Head of the Philosophy Department, Professor Graeme Forbes, did not respond as effectively as he should have to the problems in the Department.

Among the faculty there is a widespread perception that **the current chair has not effectively responded** to issues of sexual harassment and lack of civility. (p. 10; emphasis in original)

Response

This charge is grossly unfair to Professor Graeme Forbes. As mentioned above, Professor Forbes acted vigorously and effectively when confronted with uncivil behavior. In addition, he also had serious discussions with individuals whose behavior, though not in violation of sexual harassment or discrimination rules and policies, was undesirable. In my opinion, I do not think that anyone, acting on his or her own, could have done significantly more than what Professor Forbes did.

In addition, if Professor Forbes had failed to respond as effectively as he should have to the problems in the Department, then surely he would have to be judged to be at least partially at fault in that regard. But the following question was asked in a poll that was taken within the Philosophy Department –

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘We do not find Graeme Forbes to be at fault here?’

– and the result was that 20 out of 21 members of the Department agreed with that statement. The conclusion, accordingly, is that the site visit team’s charge concerning Professor Forbes is false.

Finally, here one can see once again the failure of the site visit team to investigate issues in a careful way, and to set about determining whether various claims were true or false. A poll comparable to that conducted by the Philosophy Department could equally well, and very easily, have been carried out by the site visit team. They failed to do so.

Summing Up

The negative charges that the site visit team advanced in its Site Visit Report appear, as I have just argued, to be quite unjustified. Moreover, in advancing those claims, and then in violating their own rules by releasing the Report to the Provost and the Dean, the site visit team has, first of all, set in motion a train of events that threatens to result in the loss of some of the very best members of the Philosophy Department, together with some of our most promising graduate students, and which may even lead to the closing down of the Philosophy Department. Second, the site visit team has unjustly and seriously damaged the national and international reputations of the Philosophy Department and its members, and caused considerable embarrassment and suffering for their spouses, their children, and other family members. Physical violence aside, there are very few ways in which one could produce harm to innocent individuals of the magnitude that the site visit team, with the enthusiastic assistance of Dean Steven Leigh and Provost Russell Moore, has succeeded in producing.