

Ten Commandments

(For Academic Life)

Wesley Shrum¹

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I was raised Methodist, as will be obvious from the name. I'm Unitarian now, and yes, I know the jokes. Unitarians have a different—can we call it 'less stringent'?—interpretation of spiritual rules. They are more like collective guidelines, or mild preferences that don't involve very serious sanctions. There are plenty of options, an emphasis on personal growth, and other New Age-type precepts that belie four centuries of history. One early and important figure was a king of Transylvania—which leads some to have their suspicions, but that's as far as it goes. Certainly there's nothing like everlasting damnation involved. It's not so much that Unitarians don't like rules and principles. They have a lot of them and they talk about them all the time. I secretly feel they like them more than some Southern Baptists I know—like my sister who's a Southern Baptist minister, or would be if they allowed it. See, Unitarians are not very certain about their rules and principles, even though they're often very good ones—and Southern Baptists are sometimes very certain about some very bad principles--the prohibition on women ministers being one of them.

Unitarians often think, like sociologists, that a lot of rules could be different, and most

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things would work out just as well. There are a lot of 'engagement' and 'open expression,' 'sharing,' and 'social justice' issues. There's a fairly high level of tolerance for other people's rules, except where the rules are intolerant. I'm not making fun of them. I'm them. I'm on pretty safe ground when I say that Unitarians never use domineering constructs like 'commandment.' That would be off the program.

So it was hard for the idea of Commandments to crystallize in my mind. Maybe it's the mid-life crisis, but some months ago I experienced a bizarre hankering for the Ten Commandments I knew as a youth at Asbury Methodist Church in Kansas City. Just so you have the context here, I haven't had much in the way of crises these past few years, since the family homicide. I've been what is called 'very involved' professionally. My vita is OK, maybe even pretty good. I bring it up because I probably wouldn't listen to Commandments by anyone who hadn't served time, and Hurricane Katrina was time enough for anyone. I've worked in a few different areas, but never mind about that--I'd rather you didn't know. More important, I have the best job in the world, as a professor of sociology at Louisiana State University. My job is secure. It pays well. I have no real worries except my family gene for cancer and my weak second serve. I'm a white male of primarily European descent who may or may not have Native American blood as well. Back in the Oklahoma territories where my grandfather was born they didn't brag about that.

What's important is that there is an order to the following Commandments. The last one is the most important.² The problem with putting the most important one first—I think it was a

² I should distinguish these Commandments from some others I read after I wrote them (unless I 'received' them). Donald Black's call for a "purification of sociology" involves commandments. This retrograde and mildly fascist polemic seeks to remake sociology along the lines of a mythologized science. The short sentences and surety of opinion give his final injunction to "Obey these commandments" a mildly frightening quality. Black commands: 1) Leave home: Find subjects in other times and places. 2) Be a nomad: Move from subject to

big problem for Moses—is that it is usually the most obvious. I mean, heck, if you don't agree with that one, why even talk? Just as versions of the Golden Rule are found in all world religions—according to Unitarians at any rate—the simplicity and truth and brilliance of the idea itself is endlessly endangered by blandness and trivialization. The trick of preaching is to make the old new, as David Edge has argued (1994). The last Commandment is the root of all others, but it is only in their wake that it emerges clearly.

(1) Thou shalt not work for deadlines.

Why not? Because your best work is not done in haste.³ Your best work is done when you think about it, when you act as if you have all the time in the world. When you think about it, this might not even be a candidate for a commandment—there is no deadline for contributions to knowledge, only deadlines for meetings, edited volumes, and the like.

Two corollaries may be of some help here:

- (a) Do not volunteer to present papers at scholarly meetings unless they are already written or sure to be completed well in advance.

I don't know what to tell you on this one. Maybe agree to write a paper for a meeting, do it, then skip the meeting and submit it for the next one. You'll be one ahead.

subject. 3) Be a parasite: Subsist on the findings of others. 4) Avoid intimacy: Do not get too close to your subject. 5) Avoid people: Study social life. (2000: 708-9) The issue is not whether these five are good guidance for students—I don't think so myself. The issue is whether they are "commandments" or just advice. And besides, there are only five.

³ One friend offered that the 'best' should not work against the 'good,' and good papers are often written for deadlines. But he then reflected that "otherwise, they may not get drafted at all." In that case, how likely is it that such a paper needed to be written at all? A good idea is a compulsion.

(b) Write two manuscripts every year for the rest of your life. The reason is that you will be relaxed. Two papers is not a lot. What will probably happen is you will write more than this. But you won't have to. That's the key. You will be able to accomplish all your scholarly goals by writing two papers a year for the rest of your life.⁴

Now, don't you feel better already?

(2) Thou shalt not accept prizes or awards.⁵

Bestowing no honors keeps people from fighting.
Tao Te Ching (6th century B.C.)

At one university with which I am quite familiar, there are more than a dozen distinguished faculty awards, four awards for faculty excellence from the Alumni Association, up to four President's Awards from the Athletic Foundation, a prize for Distinguished Faculty Teaching, one for Faculty Excellence, and one for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching. The monetary stipends attached to these awards are not large. Of course, these do not include the more numerous departmental awards, such as the one given by my own every year.

Honors and awards involve unnecessary evaluation and differentiation in the context of a profession that is often overwhelmed with necessary and required evaluations of all sorts: manuscripts, proposals, people, departments, and universities. They are necessary because colleagues must be hired, graduate students recruited, papers graded, manuscripts rejected,

⁴ You might also want to make one movie a year, as well. It won't hurt anything and more people will watch it than will read your article.

⁵ As one reader said, "there's a typo: you probably meant 'do not seek awards'." Nope. The commandment is not to seek or accept them. Another said she now agreed with the commandment on prizes and awards after her experience winning a faculty teaching award last year: "No one feels good because of it, and it won't make me or anyone else a better teacher. It just creates unnecessary tension, differentiation, and backbiting (e.g., the negative assumptions about those who win teaching awards - must be an easy grader, not a serious researcher, etc.)."

proposals funded, faculty tenured. These evaluations inhere in organizational and disciplinary evaluation processes. Even more numerous are the internal, informal, and social judgments that are part of reading, research, and writing. Evaluation is not bad as such, but certain forms of it are inimical to personal development. It is bad when it takes the form of formal honors and awards, replacing the intrinsic evaluations and rewards of scholarship--work that is used by colleagues and appreciation of ideas that is freely, even unintentionally offered. Extrinsic rewards bear only a very loose relationship with scholarship itself.⁶ The purpose of this commandment is to allow the intrinsic motivations of scholarship to dominate and replace the extrinsic motivations that are unimportant and distracting.⁷

Moreover, honors and awards have a number of negative indirect effects. You have heard the explicit argument that "we [our department, university, specialty] need to give awards, and we [our category of] need people to receive them to indicate [to the university, the public, the legislature, other disciplines] what good work [research, teaching] we do." The motivation is besieged by absurdity: "Let's create an award club—I'll give one to you and you give one to me." Quite recently one colleague was nominated for a distinguished professorship by someone in another department who had been so nominated by that colleague. Following that, there was arm-twisting to get the necessary letters of recommendation—even among some that did not wish to write them. You know the pattern. The simple response is that awards do indeed serve external symbolic functions—a simple, sociological fact—but this has no bearing on how one

⁶ Let us be honest about it. When someone in your status category has received an award and not you, you are sometimes jealous. When you have received an award over others, you have been proud. These feelings are relevant and express, at an individual level, what is precisely the problem.

⁷ From the late 1990s onward there have been books by popular authors such as Daniel H. Pink (Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us) and academic controversies between scholars such as Teresa Amabile ("How to Kill Creativity" Harvard Business Review) and Robert Eisenberger (taking the opposing view that incentives motivate). The argument of the present essay is fundamentally ethical—the vision of a better academic world. Given the ambiguity about the evidence, it is reasonable to argue from the exceptionality (structural

should live one's life. Do not make yourself eligible for honors and prizes. As the honorable Pat Paulsen once said (stealing the line from Sherman), "If nominated I will not run. And if elected, I will not serve."⁸

Perhaps the most negative effect is on potential awardees, when they begin to view those honors as ends in themselves, and begin to position themselves to win awards.⁹ One may ask why, with all the necessary and time consuming judgments that are part and parcel of scholarly work, one should time producing unnecessary and pernicious rulings about quality? The answer is that we need not and should not. Can we change the system? It seems doubtful, yet some leading scientists in China have called for the cancellation of most scientific awards in their country in order to prevent academic corruption.¹⁰ For Richard Feynman, one of the most renowned physicists of the twentieth century, the avoidance of awards was constitutional:

conditions) of the academic pursuit and the obvious negative impacts of creating unnecessary inequalities.

⁸ The question has often been raised by readers: Is there is any kind of recognition that is appropriate to accept, in the spirit of scholarship and collegiality? I am convinced that the LSU Rainmakers program was conceived in such a way, as an annual dinner for two persons in each university department. When departmental chairs rotate this opportunity among all their faculty, this program serves as a valuable mingling event and gesture of recognition that does not create unnecessary inequality and hard feelings among the faculty. One of the original designers of the program characterized its motivation as a question: "if we (the administration) want to recognize the continuing and important contribution of the faculty to this university, what else do we have to give?"

⁹ In a 2003 case, the father of a disabled student sued a school district for \$200,000 because his daughter had not received an award, which he thought merited had they given extra credit for her disabled status. The disabled status gave her an exemption from physical education requirements and enabled her to stay home to take academic classes that were weighted more in the calculation of the GPA. What the father objected to specifically was the school system's proposal to name co-valedictorians (two other students who had not had the opportunity to take multiple advanced placement classes were invited the share the status). This is not to enter arguments about credit for disabilities—it is to marvel that a purely honorific status was so important that sharing it would diminish the award and the student's academic career and to argue that a system without any such awards would be better than a system that has them.

¹⁰ Hu Yan reports that since the 1980s, Chinese governments (central and local) have set up hundreds of scientific awards, in the belief that it would encourage innovation. These awards are then used to evaluate the quality of research done, such that researchers are under pressure to win awards for funding and promotion, have faked results, and even hired public relations specialists to lobby for them. As Huang Shanglian put it, "Chinese scientists spend too much time and energy applying for [awards] instead of doing research." (accessed 3/20/2006; Science & Development Network report "Chinese Scientists Need 'More Time and Fewer Awards'" 15 March 2006 <http://www.scidev.net>).

I don't like honors. I'm appreciated for the work that I did, and for people who appreciate it and I notice that other physicists use my work, I don't need anything else. I don't think there's any sense to anything else. I don't see that it makes any point that someone in the Swedish Academy decides that this work is noble enough to receive a prize. I've already got the prize. The prize is the pleasure of finding the thing out, the kick in the discovery, the observation that other people use it. Those are the real things. The honors are unreal to me. I don't believe in honors. (National Public Radio, 26 Oct 2012, "The SciFri Radio Falls for Mr. Feynman.")

Since this is a religious essay, we could end with Ecclesiasticus:

And some there be which have no memorial; who are perished as though they had never been; and are become as though they had never been born. But these were merciful men [sic], whose righteousness hath not been forgotten. [chapter xliv, verse 9]

But, for my money, Martina Navratilova put it better: "The moment of victory is way too short to live for that, and nothing else." She should know.¹¹¹²

(3) Honor thy forebears and colleagues regardless of status.

Praise thy colleagues for their successes and be not jealous. Be generous with their work.

When you need a rhetorical setup for your essay, an "approach" is as good to demolish as a person and less mean-spirited. At the very least, be no meaner than necessary, especially when you review anonymously.

For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Matthew 13:12.¹³

The Matthew Effect is a well-established phenomenon in the sociology of science. The

¹¹ In his review of general components of "happiness," Arthur Brooks confirms the point that "events" (e.g., getting your dream job), has a significant role—but the impact wears off quickly. If prizes **do** bring satisfaction, it is short-lived.

¹² It should not be necessary to add that one is not morally obligated to act in ways that would cause one to lose one's position--unless they are morally reprehensible. But that is increasingly rare. Your job provides the freedom to pursue your intellectual goals. But in following the Ten Commandments it is necessary to ask how your fulfillment of them would affect others, mainly in the collaborations that are increasing important for science and scholarship. Especially when your collaborators are junior, their views on the issue count. If their receipt of a prize would help them to get a permanent position, or if they feel differently from you, you would truly be a curmudgeon to refuse on principle. It should also be noted that once you make your position on this clear, your colleagues very quickly stop talking to you about putting you up for awards, and writing letters to promote them for their own awards. In this respect it is a moral principle that becomes dramatically easier over time. You will eventually just forget about them. What will you do instead?

¹³ In my hotel room this Sunday morning in Accra, this is the version that will have to do, though it is not the version I remember.

tendency is to throw the citation to those that are well known—even for ideas that are patently obvious (maybe the Matthew Effect may itself be one, but I would normally cite one of my mentors, R.K. Merton)—and to neglect the work of insignificant people. Why not read and cite more evenly? You don't have to. This is not a commandment. But recognize that the work of splendid folk is not mostly splendid—it is mostly average, with a few splendid ideas. And often the most thorough work on a subject is by a graduate student writing a dissertation, who has had the time to search the literature properly, especially in a complex field. Often that graduate student is following the First Commandment better than the prominent scholar.

This Commandment enjoins you to cite others and to say something nice to them if you like their work. Divorcing yourself from the prize system does not mean losing rewards, but participating liberally—indeed, relishing—the true rewards of scholarship. These are the original and genuine pleasures that involve the esteem of those who benefit from your work. It may be that the esteem is mutual. Certainly that is the best of all worlds, a world in which one likes the work one reads, uses it, and produces something of value for those whose work you yourself have used and admired, in a mutual cycle of intellectual profit. (And it will be much better if you are not competing for awards!) For several reasons--competition among them--one often profits a great deal from the work of those not directly in one's circle. When you get the chance, tell them your views. When someone does this to you, be gracious.^{14 15}

¹⁴ Once I sat across the table from someone whose work I admired. At a quiet moment in the conversation, I said, "You know, I've read a lot of your stuff, and I like it very much, about as well as anything in the field." His response? "Well, if you like it that much, why don't you invite me to that workshop you are organizing."

¹⁵ Praise can be overdone. Current debates on childrearing have drifted away from the philosophy of constant praise. Brian Martin has been a good friend in discussing this point.

(4) Thou shalt not compete for recognition.

Scholars with such disparate approaches as Randall Collins and Bruno Latour use a metaphor to emphasize the importance of competition for recognition in intellectual life.¹⁶ In the metaphor of the plain, individuals are widely dispersed in a vast open space, each isolated but within shouting distance. In order to get the attention of our peers, we must yell forth our views. Some of those in the neighborhood wander over to hear more. Gradually a small cluster of people forms, growing largely as others witness the movement. Other small clusters form around those shouting forth the intellectual alternatives--when any cluster gets too large, it is difficult to see within the circle. At the limit, Collins suggests from three to six major positions may define themselves in relation to one another within the attention space. Although the number may grow or shrink it rarely goes below three or above six--the Law of Small Numbers.

While Collins has captured an important dynamic in intellectual life¹⁷ the prescriptive that results is simple modesty. If the number of major philosophers that have ever existed in the history of the world is on the order of several hundred, the probability that you will be one is vanishingly small. The danger for one who studies social life is much greater than, say, for a physicist or a chemist, that one will seek recognition by claiming to discover or conceptualize 'basic processes,' 'fundamental principles,' or 'underlying reality' (Rule 1997).¹⁸ The danger is so great that one is tempted to view it as another Commandment: Thou shalt not build fields or

¹⁶ The competition for recognition was a cornerstone of Mertonian sociology of science, best exemplified in Warren Hagstrom's beautiful 1965 book, one of the first volumes of sociology I ever read as an undergraduate.

¹⁷ Collins remarks at the end of chapter one are conducive to a realistic assessment of anyone's prospects, and support the idea that one may not lose anything from being gracious and modest, since one is not going to be famous anyway, in the long run.

¹⁸ See in particular Rule's discussion concluding the first chapter.

paradigms.¹⁹ This was especially popular during the hegemonic regime of Thomas Kuhn, whose idea of a 'paradigm' stimulated the thought among numerous social scientists that if they just had one, the field would be a better place. It would not. Do not shout loudly on the intellectual plain. Built a small fire for warmth. When your colleagues visit from time to time, bid them welcome. You may need theirs.

What about citations? Do we need another corollary Commandment? A simple 'please' should be enough, as Mom would have said. Citation analysis was developed as a research tool in the sociology of science. From that viewpoint—my own viewpoint—they are not to be employed for evaluating the quality of specific people, departments, or work. There are legitimate uses of citations: as an indicator of scientific development and as an indicator of prestige. First, they are useful for identifying clusters of papers representing 'hot topics' or new fields of science, in what are called co-citation clusters. Second, they may be useful indicators of the prestige of organizational units, like departments or universities. However, they are certainly not useful for indicating the quality of an individual's work. In fact, they are a pernicious indicator because some indicators are worse than useless—they are misleading and potential damaging.

Why? Because they are subject to a variety of processes that make them poor indicators. More important, they work against core academic values. To mention a few, there are (1) "Matthew Effects" of accumulative advantage (citations lead to citations); (2) field effects (the number of people working in a field affects the population of eligible citers); (3) delay effects--work 'ahead of its time' is not likely to be cited. We all know work that is highly cited that is relatively empty and all we know others that are relatively uncited in spite of doing good work.

¹⁹ The work of field-building can be quite significant, but like scholarly work in general, should be accomplished with grace and humility.

If you work "against the field" then you should not expect to be much cited and it should not much concern you. There are, if I may be so bold, a lot of fields worth working against.

Citations are pernicious indicators of the "quality" of work. Reject their use. If you can at all bring yourself to avoid it, do not consult the Web of Science to count out how many you have.

(5) Thou shalt not concern thyself with money.

This is a hard one to swallow, I know. It does not mean you should turn down a raise, if one is offered. But it is worthwhile to ask why, in the end, you are in the business? If it is for money—and many have said it—you are in the wrong one. But if it is for love, then it is OK to spend your own money on your own research, including the conferences that you attend and the surveys or fieldwork you do. If you have recovered from the shock, let me say that again. It is OK to spend your own money on your own research.

You don't need to brag about it either. But I don't know. Maybe that's OK, if you have to brag about something.²⁰

(6) Thou shalt not seek to influence students but to convey your understandings and be honest about your ignorance.

{{add}}

One reader said "it's important that we expose students to a variety of views; if there's a scholarly debate on an issue, it's pedagogically unsound not to acknowledge that and present all sides at their best. The students can then decide which approach (if any) makes the most sense.

²⁰ In the words of an eighteenth century gentleman: "As no pecuniary consideration could have induced me to undertake this arduous employment, I do not wish to profit from it." Colonel in the Virginia militia on the eve of the American Revolution.

Some students like the profs that spend every lecture "telling it like it is," but those aren't typically the best students.

(7) Thou shalt not require class attendance or emphasize testing.

Be guided by Socrates on this matter.

((add text & corollary: SEEK IMPROVEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM & pay no attention to course evaluations)) ((The most extreme objections to this commandment I have heard come from high performing students: "acid tests for interests."))

(8) Thou shalt not worry about thy own intelligence or aspire to display it.

The original version of this commandment was on a computer, mysteriously whisked from a deserted parking lot at the University of Ghana. Since there is no way of reproducing the exact text it can only be noted that so many of the commandments (2 and 4) deal with recognition in one way or another that it is tempting to suppose a general ban on the commodity. But I do not think so. "Worry" about one's affairs is a personal thing and I obsess for hours over a passing remark to someone that *could* have been taken the wrong way, as hurtful. Whether others do, I don't know. Display of intelligence is another matter altogether and that is the proscription.

Let's consider the case of Wittgenstein's Poker, a ten minute debate between two of the greatest philosophers of the 20th century. In 1946, just after the war, Karl Popper and Ludwig Wittgenstein faced off during a meeting of the Cambridge Moral Science Club. Both men were arrogant, self-absorbed fighters, whose penchant for attack and verbal brutality was well known. Popper came as a visitor, gunning for Wittgenstein in the presence of Bertrand Russell, once Wittgenstein's strongest supporter, but now turning against him. The room was crowded with

Wittgenstein's disciples. It was very cold, so the coal fire that Wittgenstein prodded with the poker was the only warmth. Popper gave a short paper on the theme, "Are There Philosophical Problems?" a direct attack on Wittgenstein's dogma that there were only puzzles. The job of the philosopher was to uncover their linguistic roots. Wittgenstein immediately began to berate the speaker. As Popper tells the story, Wittgenstein challenges him to provide an example of a moral principle, while brandishing the implement he had been using in the fire. "Not to threaten visiting lecturers with pokers," replied Popper, whereupon Wittgenstein left the room in anger, slamming the door.

The incident is analyzed at length by ? & ? in one of the finest contextual analyses of a brief social interaction ever published. The most striking aspect of the analysis is that even the bare facts of such a small interaction 50 years ago are virtually impossible to establish, even with many of the observers still alive. The interest of the story is the explosion rooted in the social positions of the two men, but the case is complex, involving their status as assimilated Jews, the history of the Vienna Circle that Wittgenstein inspired and Popper attacked, Wittgenstein's heroism in WWI, his rejection of wealth from one of Europe's largest family fortunes, Popper's monetary difficulties. The latter had recently been called to the London School of Economics after a wartime position in New Zealand. Popper's work had begun to receive some attention, and he came with an intention, to strike another blow to the Vienna Circle and to the famous Wittgenstein in front of his bevy of admirers. The combat did not last long but it had an outcome: neither met the other again, in any context. No one would dispute that a preferable outcome to the affair would have been coffee afterwards, or a visit to Wittgenstein's favorite cinema.

The display is the avoidant. It is better to be quiet in the presence of arrogance and wrongness than to attempt publicly to quell it. There is much too much of it to quell, even if it

were possible in the instant. At issue here is the development of Style, an underlying habit of interaction. What will yours be? Are you Witty, or Thorough, or Perspicacious, or Laid Back? Any of these is compatible with sound scholarship and outstanding work. What is not acceptable is combat—a questioning, probing, *civil* mode of discourse is infinitely preferable—and will result in the coffee that Wittgenstein and Popper never had. There are ways of disagreement that are non-political and do not entail showing off for students and faculty and colleagues. There is a general understanding in academic circles that disagreement and debate and the encounter between different views is a *good* thing—which is why the ‘agreement to disagree’ is honorable and even noble. But the battering of your opponent is despicable, and display for the purpose of winning is wrong.

(9) Thou shalt not condemn those with different perspectives.

Seek out those who have something to offer in strange places—like the developing world, for instance. Typically your association with them will give you a different and broader perspective, and may increase one's humility and gratitude. It may provide the motivation you need to try to better the world, or take your work in a new direction. However, there is another meaning of "perspectives"—the ideological, intellectual positions that are more common in the humanities and social science than in the sciences. It seems difficult for most scholars to accept that very few people read their work, and fewer still are convinced by it. Arguments and polemics are of less value than solid scholarship, no matter the field. Most of the time it is better to ignore those on the open plain that are shouting very loudly about what "we" should be doing.²¹ If they are in your face about it, they should be politely ignored.

²¹ At a Washington meeting, one social scientist leaned over during a presentation and whispered that we needed to find “some way to deal with the fact that of the people in our field

(10) SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD

Surely you knew?

One Commandment is sufficient most of the time, just as one Golden Rule will do for most ordinary spiritual problems. But there has been a problem for me, since I entered the University of Kansas forty years ago. I'd like to come to grips with it--for who among us knows if we will have any longer career than we have just at this moment?

The problem is that what are generally viewed and justified as organizational means to intellectual ends often get substituted for those ends--no surprise to sociologists, of course. The end, goal, purpose, and reason for undertaking a career that involves teaching, research, and service to the community is to understand the social world. It does not have to be everyone's reason, but it is good if it is the reason for some of us. There is value in a communicable knowledge of social life. I still have trouble believing, twenty years later, that the Gret Stet, as Earl K. Long called it, of Louisiana would hire me, and pay me money to seek that understanding. But I am grateful for it.

The original Ten Commandments get a lot of bad press for their emphasis on the negative. But that was for effect. These new ones aren't cast in stone, after all. There is a positive side to each of these that crystallizes in the last one. Rule out some bad things—things you feel in your gut are bad—and see what is left. Don't get distracted. What are you going to do now that you are not worried about recognition? What is your objective, since it is not to win honors and see who is citing you? Quite simply, you will work on topics that interest you, not those that interest others. You will seek students and colleagues who can help you in your quest,

only 30% were scientists.”

and those you can help. Sometimes, when the opportunity arises, you may work together. If you need a journey, or equipment, or assistance for your research but there are no external funds, you should see if you can afford it and not whine too much. When you have the opportunity to teach, you will convey what you know with grace and excitement. Take a forgiving attitude towards bureaucratic silliness like class attendance, course evaluations, and program assessments where at all possible.²²

I have to admit there may be an underlying belief in all this. I've not been completely forthcoming in the introduction, since a word search of this document to this point generated the message "Pride Not Found." While delightful, it is not true. Certainly there is Pride in speech, in having the temerity to draft your thoughts on any matter in semi-permanent form. There is pride in wanting others to see your thoughts in print. But my underlying belief is that Pride is bad. Of course, it's the worst of the Seven Deadly Sins, but that's not tough competition. Murder isn't even listed.

Pride is dangerous—and not just in scholarly work. It is but a short step to arrogance, to thinking you know more than your colleagues, to assessing your own work as better than theirs. And here's the worst part. It is an even shorter step to believing your past record of accomplishment means that your human and fallible judgment is superior in the present decision situation. That is a big mistake. Your life history of perfect judgmental landings may be about to end. That is why pride is dangerous. Call it immoral. Call it whatever you like. But in any event, avoid it. This may be the time you crash, and you may need some help getting out of the wreckage.

²² The tenth and most significant commandment does not by any means rule **out** other worthy goals (changing the world, creating beauty, service, and providing tool and opportunities to assist others in understanding, creation, and intervention). The tenth is a “necessary and sufficient” condition, however—and it does rank above the others as the core purpose of scholarly life.

As scholars and sociologists, we should do the best work we can, study the subjects we feel are worth studying, study them in the way that we believe is most fruitful for understanding, and make our work available to the community of scholars. That is the goal of our work. For most of us, it's why we got into the field. It was what we worried about before we knew people worried about citations and paradigms and prizes. We need—but I should only speak for myself—I need the Ten Commandments to remind me that the rest is secondary, superficial, and often harmful. Freedom, for those who like the term, comes from a realization that there really is an attainable goal, or, better, an attainable pathway to the goal of greater understanding. This may involve small acts of an academically bizarre nature, like the refusal of prizes. For many, the goal may have been obtained already, without the realization.

What is knowledge? It is something that we have when we understand the world. It is communicable--otherwise it would be wisdom or transcendental discernment. But whether it should take the form of propositions, thick descriptions, generalized discursive treatments, or box and line drawings is not a key issue in deciding how to live your life. I'm willing to listen or read your stuff as long as you don't tell me you've invented a new paradigm, discovered a fundamental process, revealed an ultimate and indispensable principle. Just say your idea. Say what you did and what you're doing. Write about your research.

I can tell you what I think knowledge is in relation to these Commandments, but I need a metaphor. We are not at great distance from one another on an open plain. We are rather close together, many of us. In the center of Mexico City, the Zocalo is an open square, one of the largest in the world. It is surrounded by the National Cathedral and the Parliament where there are often festivals and political demonstrations. Aztec dancers in brightly colored costumes stomp and swirl. Musical groups blare salsa and tejano from the stage. Break dancers and mimes entertain as many people as can see into their circle. Still, the cotton candy vendors are

the most interesting. Have you seen it made in the open air when the wind is blowing? When you swirl the stick into the metal drum to build up the layers of candy, the wind snatches bits of spun sugar like wisps of smoke, most wonderful and amazing. They drift into you before you realize that they stick—it is not smoke but candy. Why not grab a bit and put it in your mouth?

Of course, children realize this, too. They stand by the vendors, who spin large pink clouds for sale but make no attempt to stop them. The kids jump and chase the wisps. It is not easy. Some kids work harder than others. It's not like you can just stand there, after all. But if you time your jump just right, or stand still and stay alert, you may get one. If you follow the path and predict where the wisp is going you might get there first. If luck is with you, you may collect even more wisps, even a big string of them. And if you are persistent, you may find that a pink ball begins to form in your hands—even without the help of the drum. The very best and very luckiest children are those that find—lo and behold—their very own hands have made a large, pink cotton candy.

There is no point in bragging. You did not do this by yourself. The wind helped you. The vendor spun the sugar you catch. You would never be here without your parents. The city government sponsored the festival that brings the crowd and the vendors. The Spanish built the square four hundred years ago so you could stand here. They used the rubble of the Aztec temples that preceded them. Do not swell with pride but with the honor of being here. You can tell the other kids how you did it. And you may share.

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