

Let me begin with an anecdote. Some 30+ years ago I was heading up the educational foundations program at Virginia Tech. I was fortunate to have five faculty positions to hire in order to launch this program. One of these hires was a very promising woman who had already compiled an enviable record for an assistant professor. At that time, her academic inclinations might be described as radical; she was a strong feminist with distinctively socialist (in the enlightened sense of that term) leanings. On finding we had several areas of interest in common—though we did not share the same political-economic views—we thought it would be mutually beneficial to team teach a graduate seminar.

For my part in the seminar, I asked students to read the work of Thomas Green, a philosopher at Syracuse (now deceased) and John Goodlad. As I explored this work with the students and my young colleague, she must have detected a sense of awe and reverence as I discussed the readings. At one point, she interrupted the discussion to say, “My, my, Gary, you treat these scholars as cultural heroes.” This was said with a part-mischievous, part-mocking smile, implying how quaint of me to have cultural heroes.

I paused, at first feeling some embarrassment, then surprised myself by saying, “Yes, indeed, they are my cultural heroes. They have had enormous impacts on my scholarship, my teaching, and even on how I think of myself and what I seek to be as a philosopher and person. Furthermore, I believe they ought to be regarded as heroes in the academy”

I have never doubted or regretted this utterance. And as time has passed, I believe it more fervently. John Goodlad, as one of the two heroes, has taught us so much about teachers, teaching and schools that he deserves to be ranked with Hutchins, Barzun, Dewey, Rousseau, and other timeless greats in the literature on education. There is more here than his studies of teaching and schooling, though these studies have been enormously instructive standing by themselves. Behind these studies lie a profound commitment to the moral potential of the person and the social and political potential of a democratic nation.

You cannot read the Goodlad corpus and miss his immense regard for human potential—of the student, the teacher, the parent, the school administrator—and his bedrock commitment to democracy. His empirical studies of teachers, teacher education, and schools have been highly instructive in their own right, but what makes them even more compelling is how they are situated in ethical and political theory. No scholar I know—save for Plato, John Locke, and John Dewey—has done this as well as John Goodlad (odd, is it not, that three of the four are named “John”?).

My first meeting with John occurred in 1967, at an interview for an assistant professor position at UCLA. John was dean of the Graduate School of Education at the time. Two weeks before that interview, when I received the interview schedule in the mail, my wife noted that I was meeting with John Goodlad. “John Goodlad!” she exclaimed, “you’re meeting with John Goodlad. Oh, wow, I wish I could be there.” This adulation surprised

me, as I did not have the foggiest idea who John Goodlad was. But my spouse, being an elementary school teacher, was very familiar with his work—especially the seminal work on the non-graded classroom. As I had very little preparation in the field of professional education (trained instead as a philosopher), I went into the interview with John as if he were just another stop on a hectic schedule—except, of course, for the fact that he was the dean.

I was offered the position at UCLA and accepted it. The finest and most lasting aspect of that position was—and still is—John Goodlad. He was much more than a dean; he was an extraordinary mentor, superb colleague, very good friend, and yes, my cultural hero. He encouraged my interest in teaching and teacher education, he offered me innumerable opportunities to develop my ideas, my experiences in school settings, and my leadership abilities. But perhaps best of all, he served as a model for educational policy and reform that is evidentially grounded, morally robust, and democratically compelling. So much so that I believe, had we listened to and modeled educational reform on the ideas of John Goodlad during the late 1970s and through the '80s, a far larger percentage of today's children would enter school ready to learn and graduate from school prepared for successful entry to college or career.

As for humorous incidents, John and I have shared some laughs together but I doubt you will find incidents of humorous delight that rise to what you may have learned about David Berliner or Lee Shulman. John is neither humorist nor jokester. His extraordinary wife, Lynn (deceased), played that role for both of them. She brought much of the levity and delicious humor into their relationship. John always enjoyed that humor, but he seldom—at least in my experience—took it on as part of his persona. Instead of 'fun' or 'funny' being words I associate with John, the words "magnanimous, considerate, generous, serious, discerning, committed, brilliant, gracious"—these are the terms that come more readily to mind.

To give you a sense of what I mean, here's another anecdote to show the kind of person he is. Two years after coming to UCLA our 18 month old son suffered a highly dangerous condition that threatened his life and placed him in pediatric intensive care for a long stretch of time. About a week after his hospitalization I received a call from John's administrative assistant who asked if I could meet him at his car at the parking garage at 6 o'clock. She described the exact location of the car and repeated the time.

Mystified by this request, I accomplished little for the rest of the day. Meet the dean in the parking lot??? Whatever could that be about??? At six I arrived at the designated spot, and John arrived a moment later. He greeted me, opened the trunk, and took out the most beautiful stuffed toy (a dolphin) I had ever seen. On handing it to me he said something like this: "Lynn and I are so sorry to learn of Kurt's illness and we hope this gift brings him some pleasure. Please let us know if there is anything at all we can do to help you."

I was dumfounded at this gesture of kindness. I'm sure I mumbled thanks and looked suitably grateful, but the truth was this struck me so deeply that I still tear up when I

think of it.

Much later it occurred to me that we met in the parking garage because John did not want to be seen carrying a stuffed animal across campus and into the building, explaining to everyone he passed what he was doing with such a thing (an explanation which might also have provoked a measure of distress from some who may have felt the dean did not do that when their child was ill).

By the by, that dolphin was Kurt's favorite toy until it disintegrated years later. Though the toy is gone, the incident itself defines much of what I'm trying to say about the man.