

Foreword

Do Ask, Do Tell: To Sustain Ourselves as Individuals, We Must Become Social Creatures (again)

A PROLOGUE:

I noticed today that the Introduction to my first *Do Ask, Do Tell* book had been titled “You Didn’t Ask, but I’ll Tell Anyway.” And one particularly critical reviewer on Amazon noted that I didn’t give her a reason to “care” about my views, on anything.

Actually, I thought that the first chapter, giving the chronicle of my William and Mary “expulsion” in 1961 and setting up my stake in the debate three-plus decades later on “gays in the military,” imputed a reason to care. The reviewer didn’t mention that incident in her discussion of the book, yet it’s the most critical of all.

But, in “retirement” 15 years later, it’s a fair question that I get. Why do I keep “speaking,” regardless of the lack of financial compensation and perhaps declining audience numbers (so much competition with newer social media)? Why don’t I join up in groups so I can “help people” more directly? Why won’t I embrace some of the other compelling specific causes of others – when, as one can see from the media every day, there is so much “need”?

It’s a bit of a course reversal. In the past, if I had presented myself into various personal situations, I would have had to fit into someone else’s bureaucracy (still true) and run the risk of being seen as “butting in” when not personally welcome. You have to develop your own voice first before you have something to offer others, right? Yet, I get these personal entreaties, some of them coming with veiled threats. Free entry may not be around forever.

I did have my own talents, even as a kid (starting with music). But “you” kept coming after me, to learn to take care of other people, even physically and taking risks, first. Over time, that contact morphed into “demands” that I enter the world of emotional complementarity with other people, and find doing so personally satisfying. Sometimes “you” practically called me a coward or mooch for not doing so enough. These words aren’t used much today the way they were a half-century ago. But “you” kept suggesting that I could present a hazard for the family or group, either by not carrying my weight of the “risk” or by burdening it with needs, or undermining it by standing out alone.

This was not a matter of being responsible for the consequences of choices. These were pre-existing conditions of socialization. To not fulfill them would leave the physical risk-taking to others, and disrupt (at least by distraction) the complementarity that sustaining families requires. To run from them when challenged and retreat into apathy or aloofness would seem almost non-human.

But what I think is important is that “you” (that is, everyone who interacted with me over the years this way) be able to articulate what you really want and need, without leading yourself into

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contradictions. And I think that the progressive part of the social and political spectrum, which might see “your” behavior as bullying or a bid for social control and superiority, should listen to what you say. By writing and publishing my own perceptions, I can help and even make “you” say it.

I think “your” idea is something like this: People have to “step up” to challenges, related to the real needs of others around them, often in circumstances that they don’t get to choose. (A particularly striking example in my own life concerned the Vietnam-era military draft, countered by deferments.) “You” see making everyone “pay his dues” as a way to bring some underlying fairness and common meaning into the lives of others whose circumstances will always be economically and politically unequal. “You” believe that navigating this test satisfactorily tends to lead one into stable, permanent relationships that express emotional complementarity or “polarity” – usually traditional marriage with children, and responsibility for other generations, in both directions. In time, the unchosen challenges become more about emotion and domestic needs, and less about external threats – for example, the increased need for eldercare with longer life spans (when people have fewer children).

At some point, my reaction to all this, as it played out with considerable irony in my own life, suggests principles – moral or ethical, social, political, and maybe legal – that would apply to a lot more people than just me. Call it a use of “inductive reasoning.” It becomes a systematic examination of the question as to how people who are “different” should behave and deploy themselves, at least when capable. People like me. Oh, I know, we are all “different” in some way.

But the basic reason that this “matters” to “all of us” is renewed concerns about sustainability of freedom, from all kinds of influences (climate change, and terrorism driven in part by indignation), as well as the opportunities provided by modern medicine, which demand unprecedented personal attention from others.

I’ve always viewed the questions around “dangerous difference” through a moral lens. That’s how things were seen as I grew up in the 1950s. The idea of mandatory sharing of sacrifice was very real then. In more recent years, as appreciation of diversity has grown, there has developed more interest in learning the science of “disability,” which often masks hidden gifts that add to diversity. I don’t have a clear medical explanation for my own physical difficulties, which kept me from physical competitiveness, learning to swim, and which made normal social competition a source of shame – meaning I needed an alternate path in life – which in my case worked, but which could be taken away if I have to fight other people’s battles. Was my problem a kind of mild autism or Asperger’s? Maybe. Could it be circulatory? Possibly. Motivational and attitudinal? At some point in my later life I should do a full medical workup to find out.

If I’m able to grasp the significance of my “difference,” does that increase my responsibility to “step up” to meet the needs of others when challenged? I certainly see that recalcitrance in going along with the need for interdependence, forgiveness and acceptance of attention from others when really needed, can put others in jeopardy, too. Perhaps if I don’t respond when I could, I forfeit any chance to claim victimhood later when something happens to me.

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In order to provide historical perspective, I'd like to summarize the progression in the "direction" of my thinking since my first book.

The 1997 book started with an effort to anchor basic fundamental rights to "private choice" for "homosexuals" (whether the term refers to immutable traits or deliberate desires). It focused on "due process" rights, protecting people with certain patterns of adult intimate interest from government (or systematic societal) intrusion. Quickly, I saw how protecting these rights correlated to anchoring fundamental rights of individuals in all kinds of contexts (particularly self-expression, self-defense, and faith or its lack thereof).

There used to be, a few decades ago, a cloudy perception that "homosexuals" might undermine the reproductive future and emotional solidarity of a community, even though (ironically), "they" didn't directly threaten specific marriages in the usual sense. (The distraction seemed to be a more dangerous threat then.) So police raids and the various tactics of McCarthyism were seen as making "examples" of nonconformists based on presumptive (but not direct) evidence of supposed wrongdoing. (We saw that thinking with the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.) So the basic personal rights of "homosexuals" needed to be protected. In a broader implementation of the same idea, the fundamental rights of all those who were "different" needed to be formally strengthened, perhaps with a "Bill of Rights II" (although maybe the government wasn't the only party with threats to parry). At the same time, the practical problems that "traditional" families faced in an increasingly permissive and individually competitive culture needed to be addressed. These were posited in terms of the economic aspects of most "family" issues. For example, "inequality" in wages, benefits and taxes or even partnership (marriage) rights of "single" people (loosely equated to the childless) needed to be balanced against increased disposable income.

After 9/11, and the evolution of many issues during the past decade (including the way social media is interpreted) and my own prolonged experience with eldercare (which I could not "choose"), my view of the whole process went into retrograde, rather like a palindrome. The basic moral conflicts came between the need for the individual to be and express himself, compared to a valid need for society to have people submit their egos to the common interest sometimes (often posed in religious terms, like Allah). This conflict seemed to co-exist with an increasing need to treat people as equally as possible in public policy with regard to any characteristics (biology class!) that seemed largely immutable and beyond the purview of choice (sexual orientation). But the biggest concerns go deeper than economic parity, derived from equal protection, which had followed behind due process (for example, Sandra Day O'Connor on *Lawrence v. Texas*). This dichotomy had morphed, away from economics, to following a map of the human heart.

AN INTRODUCTION (Finally):

So here I am, tinkering with my fourth (or third or fifth, depending on how I number opuses) book, probably "just" an e-book, bringing up to date all the "libertarianesque" materials of my other books, and drawing together all of my media efforts, including my blogs (over the past five years) and plans for a film on my *Do Ask, Do Tell* story.

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But why another non-fiction “book” first? I do think I have a somewhat modified message, compared to the optimizing (and talk of rights-affirming constitutional amendments) back in 1997. A lot has happened since then, some of it not good. In fact, I have to write to examine another “inconvenient truth,” or at least a most inconvenient hypothesis.

I wonder whether we will be able to maintain our civilization as we know it, and our sense of freedom, if we insist on following the thinking of hyper-individualism down to its consistent, logical conclusions. I wonder if we will care enough about the world that we leave future generations if so many of us have opted out of raising families at all – even though the reasons why many of us did are now pretty straightforward to explain, partly in terms of gender issues, and more recently because of the enormous demand we place on parents to take total responsibility for their own “choices.” I am concerned that many of us who think we behave pretty “responsibly” (as usually measured by FICO scores, for example) are not aware or even concerned about the unseen sacrifices of others that allowed us to remain at advantageous perches, having gotten ahead or butted in line. We do face serious challenges of climate change, resource depletion and infrastructure degradation, and ordinary norms of personal responsibility don’t fully take these into account. We may have a false sense of independence that is really not sustainable.

Sometimes personal accounts, if long and rich enough, can help explain the nature of changes that can affect everyone. That’s particularly the case for someone who is “different.” Now, if one is “unconventional,” one lives far enough away from the center of personal involvement (in the everyday sense) to take in, with some leverage, a long view of it, like an alien anthropologist looking at a planet from a nearby moon, perhaps, and sometimes making inconspicuous, harmless visits. The person who is different becomes very aware of wanting to make and achieve his (or her) own goals, not just those set for him by others. But his needs will expose him to surprising interdependence with others, much of which may be unwanted. He is affected by how well others do. He gradually learns that the family and large community, even country, has to function with some kind of internal consistency and some shared goals that sometimes can require the sacrifices of individual people, including “him” (or “her”). He admits that he shares his own rooting interests, or else his own individualized efforts could become meaningless. He senses that he does need a stake in others.

The person who is “different,” then, faces challenges in responding to what society (including family) may demand of him. These can rise to the level of moral concerns (or have always been seen from a “moral” perspective, regardless of immutability). Yet, preoccupation with morality on the individual level (or even a “pay your dues” type of thinking) can fall short in situations where the long-term sustainability of the “group” challenges everyone.

What do I mean by “different”? I think the word refers to personality and cognitive traits that tend to lead the individual to be particularly interested in self-expression and public recognition, with less interest in “fitting in” and meeting directly the real needs of people in a local (especially) family situation, but with some genuine deployable talent in expressive or innovative arts. The expectation to meet others’ “needs” does not necessarily follow from personal choices or conduct; it has more to do with “common good” at some social level. The person is often less able than average to interact socially

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with others, to share everyday mundane adaptive chores expected by others, and to “compete.” But the individual may understand cognitively (more than usual) that others are vulnerable if he does not react to need when he sees it.

In my own life, I certainly had to deal with demands from others in a couple of areas: in being able to pursue what my first choice of career should have been (music), and later, in settling into my own sexuality. These areas overlap, but they are not synonymous. But it’s obvious that my “difference” and sometimes my desire to have that noticed did make others “uncomfortable.” If I were merely inconsequential, I could safely be ignored and left to my own devices, but sometimes I was not. Others feared that I could compete with them by my own rules, or “step on their toes” without facing the same risks and challenges that they faced (with the gender rules of the conventional heterosexual world, or with the chains of social authority in the family, business, and other areas of community). A good example of how this played out early in my life is provided by my own story of my own experience with the military draft. But then, for about three-plus decades, I lived “individualistically” (and “expressively”) with gradually less intrusion from others, generally. With my mother’s long illness and caregiving concerns, some of this sense of disruption would return and close a “moral circle.”

In my own youth, I experienced some difficulty in competing with other boys as expected. My early report cards show a curious concern from teachers about over-dependence on others (and what I couldn’t do for myself isn’t always clear), but in the main it seems that the biggest concern may have been over my not “doing my part” to look after others in my own environment and family, especially over gender issues. This came to be perceived mainly in moral terms, not as a matter of possible disability. I was somewhat in a gray area; were I raised today, there would be more medical attention to issues like “mild” autism or Asperger’s, or whether there was another physiological – genetic or congenital or perhaps acquired from pollutants or infection – for my falling behind in physical coordination. By third grade, I was aware of my interest in music and had started piano lessons, and eventually became interested in composing, as well as collecting classical music records, as I had a gifted “ear” for remembering and identifying music. Perhaps that talent, through premature pruning, crowded out other developmental opportunities. I was aware that music could become a source of distinction and public recognition for what I would be good at, but I also received a message that this would not be a morally appropriate outcome unless I “paid my dues” and carried out the responsibilities of manhood, to protect women and children (as with the draft issue) and later marry and have children. (While military service and the whole draft and deferment issue had accentuated this sort of problem up through the Vietnam era – a curious paradox given today’s recent debate on “don’t ask don’t tell” –, other “dirty jobs” and regimented, manual labor “real” jobs with low pay overseas that we depend on others to do for us, keep the issue alive.) Otherwise, I would become a kind of “burden” or even mooch, having to be defended when I should be participating in doing the defending. This sort of thinking did, I suppose, contribute to my becoming steered away from a career in music when I honestly believe that I had the natural talent for it and would have worked hard enough. The careers of others in more recent history could provide interesting comparisons. When I grew up, others were concerned about my performance as a family or community “team member” before they would field “explanations,” even medical or immutable in nature.

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Later, as my first book chronicles, my exploration of my own homosexual orientation would meet resistance – to say the least – and a false start, with a “second coming out” at around age 29. I had to “pull teeth” to meet logistically my own social needs, so I could not always be as attentive to the needs of others as may have been expected. I did not have the same opportunity as many people to experience being “desired” by others on a certain superficial level, although maybe that’s a good thing in a way. It could have saved my life (as history since shows), and being judged by looks is not such a good way to live.

Being “different” is not the same as being gay; the Venn diagrams for these regions have their own overlapping and separate areas. In the past, when homosexuality was apparent, it became “the issue.” Others were very determined to see it as a Biblical sin or sickness but could never say why; if homosexuality presented moral issues, they were certainly very distinct from most other moral areas where it is more directly apparent how other people get harmed. Did a lot of it have to do with the “tribal” importance of making everyone share (and not just watch) the (often gender-specific) risks and responsibilities of procreation and generation-raising? I think so. Being able to count on loyalty to other blood family members, important for family survival in the past, was a major factor. Of course, “loyalty to blood” has a downside, of possible neglect of one’s more distant neighbors (very much an issue in the Gospels). Some of what we call “homophobia” or “homohatred” seems to come from social hierarchy or social combat (as related to bullying), the need to find reasons to feel superior to others who do not perform seemingly critical functions for the family.

My experience with eldercare would make a strong moral point: one’s responsibility for others is not always a result of personal choice (as for children as a result of “chosen” acts of sexual intercourse), but is essential to belonging to a sustainable community. One can see that the Gospels make this point repeatedly (as do practically all major faith systems). There was a deeper issue of my experiencing the “expected” level of emotion for other family members (or those in a community) when I had not been directly responsible for creating the situation. The demand of that kind of devotion from me seemed a bit humiliating, inasmuch as I had “failed” to “compete” in a conventional sense for the “right” to progeny as a youth. I became very determined not to let anyone force unwanted emotional encounters upon me or dump them in my lap, which is something that is happening now all the time to other “adult children” as eldercare (especially Alzheimer’s) increases exponentially. In retrospect, this sequence in my life makes me go back and relive the way I felt about people earlier in my life and understand why I turned down some “opportunities” for pursuing marriage and family that others seemed to be trying to steer me toward.

My tendency toward building an emotional life around “upward affiliation” and refusal to bond with others whom I saw as non-intact would become a topic of moral controversy at times in my life, attracting sporadic but inconsistent rebukes from others, but just sometimes. It was particularly an issue during my “hospitalization” at NIH during that “X-men” period of 1962. There was a particular concern that emotional (or internal sexual) response was a passive process, triggered by superficial attributes which then took on existential significance, implying, at least through initial indifference and some subsequent attention-getting, possible hostility to others who, like me, had not “measured up” in some significant area. At the same time, there was recognition – and fear – that one could build a productive

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life and outreach-from-distance from a psychological makeup that had become predicated on a lot of fantasy with relatively little interest in present-tense emotional commitment. This sort of thing can lead to a social value system that lends itself to authoritarian political changes: communism (with ideas like the Maoist “cultural revolution” where everyone [except the highest elite] takes turns becoming a peasant), or fascism, where only individuals who “make it” are considered worthy of attention or even of living. And a dangerous thing is that authoritarian systems, channeling personal motives into obedience, do seem sustainable – until they make enemies and are taken down from without, or, as today with the Arab Spring, can collapse from within with the freer flow of information. But it’s becoming clear that dependable personal freedom depends on some emotional spontaneity among ordinary people. Even as I know this intellectually, I resist and resent demands from others to join in their collective, even “solidarity-based” emotional displays (and demonstrations).

The developments of the past ten years or so (since 9/11) have shown that, whatever our practice of “personal responsibility” in a highly individualized sense, we may become more vulnerable to circumstances beyond our normal span of control, and in more need of others (and “God”) than we want to admit. Adversity seems to be increasing again: first because of the asymmetry of terrorist threats but also because of climate change and environmental change, some of it surely manmade, leading to bigger and more destructive storms. The whole libertarian idea of property rights comes under some scrutiny, beyond the old debated objections to regulation and zoning, to include the idea that wealth ought to be perceived as “in trust,” ultimately for the benefit of others, which can arise suddenly because of unexpected circumstances.

When I began to write these books, I felt a conviction that I was indeed adding objectivity and intellectual honesty to the debates on issues that tended to be polarized, victimhood-based, and tribal. My grasp of “personal responsibility” has certainly become more nuanced in recent years.

Some Remarks About How This New Book Would Relate to Previous Books and Web Pubs:

It’s well to recap the books that I have already published.

In 1997, *Do Ask Do Tell: A Gay Conservative Lashes Back*, which took the position of emphasizing personal responsibility for the self, limiting government’s role in the life of the individual, and letting the market handle the more nebulous concerns about socialization and “family values,” while recognizing that they can be significant and long-standing issues that do affect social justice in a broader sense. This book was republished as print-on-demand by iUniverse in 2000 after the first printing ran out, and is available today.

(1) In 1998, *Our Fundamental Rights*, a brief supplement to (1), looking at fundamental rights in a functional sense.

(2) In 2002, *Do Ask Do Tell: When Liberty Is Stressed*, answering 9/11 and other challenges like the COPA issue, analyzing threats to liberty as they had evolved since the first book (replacing a briefer pamphlet published in 2000 before 9/11).

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This newer book picks up on the experience reported in the earlier books after a sobering period in my own life that makes the importance of socialization much more real and immediate to me than they had been in 1997 and even in 2002. One aspect of the past decade is the repeated tendency for people to approach me and try to get me interested in selling their agendas even if it meant dropping publishing on my own. I don't like to be recruited to other people's causes, but I understand some of the needs that drive these personal approaches.

The new book will comprise five new essays that put my "memoirs" (aka "manifesto") in the format of, what (at age 67) have I accomplished with my life?

As I look at this, I see five big areas:

(1) I developed my musical ear and composed, although my work did not get performed professionally. But maybe with technology, I have a chance.

(2) I fought for the end of the military "don't ask, don't tell" policy by relating it in a book and concentric web presence to a critical incident in my own life. That turned into an existential examination of the whole experience of male homosexuality, and how it relates to self-concept, and showed that the military gay ban was indeed a singularity around which other public policies related to individual rights circulated in a kind of "perfect storm" or vortex.

(3) I developed a way of connecting the "content" (or "content instances") of today's major social and political issues and displayed them in a free-entry environment in a manner that forces them to be faced. Part of my self-publication journey, from desktop into the Internet and social media, took me into the COPA litigation, but implicit content and online reputation turned out to be the real issues, mediated by a surprising twist in the development of social networking online.

(4) I had a 31-year "conventional" career in information technology, mostly mainframe.

(5) I took care of my mother. I wouldn't say this is an "accomplishment," but the whole eldercare matter took such an unusual and disturbing course that the story needs to be told.

While my ideology in the 1990s stuck to a narrow line on "personal responsibility," I've come to see how, if one doesn't understand the calls to deal with people's real needs, that idea can drag itself down to a totalitarianism "for the worthy." I sensed that even then. I saw the narrative of my book as tracking to a political message, finally ending in my two proposed constitutional amendments. The first four chapters were narrative, like a non-fiction novel; the last two turned toward analysis. (An earlier version had proposed two parts comprising three narrative chapters and four analytical commentaries, a two-movement, "Op. 111" type of structure.) I would supplement this with a second book in 2002, a series of essays to deal with 9/11 and COPA and other issues that had surfaced.

I won't rewrite the first book, but it's interesting to propose a restructuring, with a comparison to chapter numbers in the first book now.

Chapter 1. The 1950s: my early music education, and switch to science under Cold War influences. Key event: my Science Honor Society "initiation" in my own home in December 1960, an incident that foreshadows many others.

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Chapter 2. The early 1960s: the William and Mary expulsion and NIH therapy (Chapter 1 now).

Chapter 3. The late 1960s: graduate school and my Army hitch (Chapter 2 now).

Chapter 4. The 1970s: second coming and stagflation (first part of Chapter 3), ending with a bizarre foreshadow of the epidemic in 1978.

Chapter 5. The AIDS epidemic, and coming back to sanity (second part of Chapter 3).

Chapter 6. The 1990s: gays in the military, and the broader debate on gay equality (Chapter 4, some of 5 and 6 now).

Chapter 7. Revolution: anyone becomes famous. COPA and implicit content, and the process of starting to second-guess freedom after 9/11 (late 1990s to early '00s). This tracks to Chapters 9 and 10 in my second DADT book.

Chapter 8. Eldercare (late '00s).

As I peruse this outline, I notice that my life falls into three periods: The “Music” period, up until my “Second Coming” when my feelings and attitudes were well established without officially accepting my identity; the “Personal Period,” when intimacy was the main issue, and, with my publication in 1997, my “Broadcast Period,” up to present day.

It is still interesting to me, as hinted above, how all of this was generated “concentrically” by a certain link I made in 1993 between the debate over gays in the military and my own expulsion from a civilian college in 1961 for admitting “latent homosexuality,” followed by my own unique experience with the draft and military service. All the other issues built up around this dichotomy, particularly those problems related to the tension between the childless and those willing to commit to and sacrifice for progeny (usually their own children) who will follow them into a future (including the so-called “demographic winter” debate). But my (even) take on the 1993 debate now would be more subtle, as the whole unit cohesion problem seems to bore into our dichotomy as human beings: we must be or become both individuals and social creatures in a way no other “animal” is. (Sorry, cat lovers. I admire lions, too.) It’s interesting particularly how the debate on the right of privacy has taken on so many directions, as the Internet has created a culture of both sharing and necessary public self-promotion – and even questioned the ethics of trying to lead a double life. It’s also interesting how self-promotion can force one to become more social again in order to earn “the privilege of being listened to.”

This new book does not re-iterate or reproduce the personal narratives already covered in other books in detail, but it will refer to them.

My web presence was originally based on my first and then other two books, but expanded into blogs. I admit that I have a lot of redundancies, and need some “consolidation,” rather like that imposed by corporate raiders. Soon, I’ll provide more details (online) on how to navigate through the “restructured” presence.

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In my first book, I proposed constitutional amendments and policies in a few areas where history has proved me “wrong.” These matters particularly include the “federal” provisions in DOMA (the Defense of Marriage Act), the adult verification concepts associated with COPA (the Child Online Protection Act), and a well-founded criticism by one book reviewer on Amazon about my notion that elected representatives could, over time, “deconstruct government.” I’ll take these up in detail in subsequent chapters and explain how history has changed my positions somewhat.

While the first book was motivated by the issue of “equality” (in both rights and responsibilities) for “gays,” the newer book sees being “different” as something much more encompassing, with sexual orientation sometimes a convenient proxy for something deeper. In the Introduction, I presented a summary view that anti-gay views were predicated on the notion that gays, because of some developmentally-related character defect, were mooching or “cheating the system” by evading responsibility for family. In the 1990s, I believed that theory could explain a lot of the past, but wonder if that gives “bigotry” too much credit for any moral reasoning at all. Perhaps I was too willing to look for rationalizations for what had happened to so many others and me. The world had to make sense.

The first book, in its Introduction, laid out a case for basing legal and moral systems on “personal responsibility,” the favorite buzzword of libertarianism, especially when it refers to keeping promises (whether contracts agreed to or raising children one “chose” to sire). One could extend the concept to incorporate, recursively, responsibility for others just as part of the community, and outside the official “akashic record” (money). Generally, societies have pressured, usually with legal requirements, that every able-bodied adult share some risks and duties (like military service, caring for the elderly, maybe even raising siblings’ children when needed). Modern liberalism (and certainly libertarianism) rejects the idea of legal or political “fraternal” coercion on citizens, most of all those who are a little bit different. Nevertheless, certain things have to get done, for sustainability reasons, and cultures (even though protective of established religious or political power structures) resist allowing distractions from these goals. There is at least a practical need for people to do their shares, and to become socialized in the process. It’s difficult for those who don’t learn “social graces” to escape feeling like second-class citizens if circumstances prevent them from excelling in their own areas. Whatever progressive political correctness says, in practice personal sacrifices happen and don’t result in equal outcomes. This most recent book retreats from legalisms, even righteousness, to look at what we need to face, and whether we want to face it personally.

Sometimes “conservative” politicians make appeals to narrow settings of libertarianism, most notably in recent years with respect to the health care (or “Obamacare”) debate. They say government has no right to take property from one person to meet someone else’s needs. They are certainly inconsistent in the way they apply this idea (although they try to relate it back explicit powers in the Constitution and “original intent”). But the bigger picture is a moral one. As individuals, we must take care of one another, sometimes outside of the scope of our choices; a practical world will pressure us to do that. For someone like me, this comes across as a moral question, which sometimes libertarians want to sidestep. The moral question eventually extends to the ability to care and find emotion in personal involvements beyond one’s own expressive intention (that gets into “extended family” and “fellowship”

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and poses the “chicken and egg” question). Does the libertarian idea of diversity (focused on economic factors) mean that these “necessary things” will always naturally happen? Probably not.

I’m motivated to look at all these things and to write about them indeed because I am indeed “different.” Certainly, I have wondered why others would attack me over my “difference” when I wasn’t obviously “hurting them”. Was I missing something, or were they just “competing” to “survive” by walling off what seemed alien. Why was my exhibiting difference such a big deal for “them”? Maybe we all are different in some way, but I know I don’t experience emotional connection to people in a “conventional” manner and will not permit it if denied my own means of self-expression. So “What is the question?” I think we do have to think about those areas of morality where sustainability and community transcend the narrower ideas of personal responsibility – particularly because we believe we have to recognize value inherent in every human life. How do these regions affect the “different” individual? And how, in an asymmetric fashion, does an individual like me affect everyone else?

When I wrote my first book in 1997, times had changed since my coming of age, and they have changed even more since then, more rapidly than I would have predicted. Some of the narratives of my past indeed make me look cowardly or indifferent, but are predicated on circumstances that would not occur today. Is someone to be judged based on the culture in which he or she was raised, or by what follows? It is striking to me that when someone does not step up to a challenge presented to him, others may have to make sacrifices instead or wind up in the wrong sights. It is easier to follow personal paths that track the needs of others when one knows that others will.

Of course with this, as with any book, there is a “finality” at press time. The only way to update the content subsequently is online. Over time, any non-fiction policy book starts to look obsolete. But this book sums up moral history as best I can.

A NOTE ON CONTENTS

This book comprises two “Parts” The first is the *Do Ask, Do Tell III* sequence of the Introduction, five Chapters, and an Epilogue. The second Part has three fiction pieces. The first is the Chapter 4 of my unpublished novel, *The Proles*, giving much more details about my personal experience with the Vietnam-era draft. The second is a short story called “Expedition.” The third is a shorter short story called “The Ocelot the Way He Is.”

(Online note: the first two stories are in html format; the third story is not yet available online).