

Eli Kramer: I thought this was, less common, but now that I've looked at more of the Johnston memorial stories about him, I'm realizing it's a really interesting theme with Kevin: of having perhaps only a few classes (or none at all) with him at Johnston, and yet him stepping in and being a mentor at a crucial moment in your Johnston education. I really only took one full registered Johnston course with him. A May Term course on "The Fate of Reason," during my Junior year, as I was starting to plan for graduate school. I talked to him after one class session. I was thinking about what I needed to do to have a chance for a Master's and PhD in Philosophy, and asked if he could help. He worked with me in independent sessions to, through a lot of iterative and frustrating drilling, get my writing into graduate level shape. And it was pulling teeth to reorganize my thinking into something more linear and propositional, with a clear thesis that was really grounded in a narrow set of materials.

Matt Greene: essential. I think it was one of the reasons I got in, because I knew how to present myself, and he just spent the time.

Eli Kramer: Same. It was After Johnston that I developed a closer relationship with him. First was the Death in Philosophy and Popular Culture Alumni Summer Seminar. Which was a profound experience for me, it was also where I got to know his wife Dorothy. Out of that Seminar, Rabbi Patricia Karlin-Newman and I began to do more work alternative ed. There was this Philosophy of Education Society meeting, the first year of graduate school, where I thought about doing a Johnston themed panel. So I invited him, and he came.

He also helped me plan graduate school projects. You may not know, but he has this unfinished, translation project of this, philosopher of education, disability theorist, Eduard Segan. He has one of his books that's never been translated into English that he has completely translated. We even wrote a scholarly introduction for it..

We used that project to write some papers and do some very cool work to build up my graduate philosophy research chops, and that's how I got to learn more about his philosophical orientation, He has this, I mean, very interesting history with both the tradition of American philosophy, but also this sort of performative way he does philosophy.

Again, looking at the memorials, it really strikes me how many Johnstonians shared my experience. There's so many people who have said, "I took one course with him, and I was trying to figure out what to do with my life. And he offered crucial mentorship work or advice." I don't know how he found people at these moments, but at these sort of pivotal inflection points, shook them loose from their "dogmatic slumbers", but also helped them orient and find meaningful direction for the next phase of life. I knew this was true for Rabbi Patricia, They were having some meeting her senior year, she knew she wanted to do work building community, and being supportive of people. He knew of her Jewish heritage, and although she was not very religious, told her "why don't you become a rabbi (at a time where there were no women Rabbis)?" And it was really that simple statement that actually had her consider something she had never considered, that was totally off her radar as a vocational path.

Gaelan Walker: Very cool. Yeah, I mean, I can talk a little bit about... Meeting Kevin, so... I remember I put together a... Really poorly thought out. Alright. First draft of a graduation contract my freshman year. And I... I brought it to Ashley Townsend, and it was all about... I had just taken Einstein to Heisenberg, like, the Helix, how... patterns come and go, but even when it returns to the way it's been, it's moved forward in time. It was really abstract and not as deep as I thought it was. But she said, the only way you're gonna develop these ideas is if you take a class with Kevin. So I took... Intro to Philosophy. First, And, in that class, he had the entire class wrapped. All the way through. And I hadn't ever... scene... A class as engaged and having as much fun as everyone was in that class? And... I remember I was wearing a t-shirt that was, like... The wizard has turned you into a whale, is that awesome? And he used that just... and he spun off of that for the entire class. And, yeah, there are other moments, too. Like, I was a desk sitter in Beacons, And... I think I saw more of Kevin... interaction with the community as a death sitter, because he really enjoyed talking to people who were just around in the lobby, so in the Beacon's lobby, he would go, he would talk to me, he would talk to whoever was in Java, he would talk to... Tabitha, over at the... Office? And I have this very clear memory of him. Talking to her, and intuiting All of these... impressions of what her childhood would have been like. And in a way that, at the time, it was, like, clearly making me feel... It was like watching the way Kevin... he used to say, like, my eccentricity has become, normal or accepted by the people around me because I've gotten old. And it's true, like, he would do things that... he would have conversations that were... very... they could be very intense, and I remember she said, are you psychoanalyzing me? And he said, no, I'm just giving a phenomenal read. And but... Yeah, so... I think he was so unorthodox, and in a way that... Grabbed people's attention. I took American philosophy with him next, and... He would always call people by their last name. So he would call me Harmon Walker, call Jake Candle. And he would sort of try to get a sense of everybody's... General perceptions of philosophy and play them kind of play the ideas off of one another, and create a model of how we thought about things. It's just a very dynamic, very intense. And personal way of teaching. that... I learned a lot from. I think it's... I don't know, honed from so many years of... of Johnson and being at the university, but... yeah, and then he was on my grad committee, and... he was there when I found out I got into grad school, and it was... it was a very close time, but I also used to... take... like... Illustrations of animals, and then superimpose their skeletons over them, and then put them up on his door. And we would do that, and then he would just add one or two to them all the time. And, See how he would react, and he always had interesting ways of reacting to the chaos of the community. Anyway, those are just the impressions that come up.

Eli Kramer: Yeah, Matt, what about you?

Matt Greene: Yeah, I don't think I was as close with Kevin as either of you, or as a lot of folks in the community, to be honest. But he was someone that I always looked up to, and someone that I really cherished as a teacher, and I think, like, you know, the main thing I think about is, like, I teach college now, and he's probably the professor I think about the most, even though I don't teach philosophy, and he's also the professor I probably bring up the most in my classes. Sometimes, because, you know, I talk a lot about writing and feedback, and giving students feedback, and I'll like to share that, like, I had a professor who'd just give me papers back with, like, a triangle, or a plus, or a squiggle, and I would come up to him and be like, what does this mean? And he clearly had no idea

what it meant. I think he did in the moment, but by the time I brought the paper back to him, it was gone. Yeah, a lot of your stories, I think, really rung true to me, Gaelen. The first class I took with Kevin was 17th and 18th century philosophy, and so we read... we read Kant. And we read Hegel, and those were both, like, very intense. I was a sophomore, or I believe, actually, maybe even a freshman, it might have been spring of my freshman year, and I... regardless, I was not ready for those texts. it wasn't my first philosophy class, but it was my first philosophy class with Kevin. And... you know, I think a lot of what was happening went over my head, despite how much I tried to engage, but I do think he found a way to try and make things very... personal and engaging, as you will say, and I, like, I remember, I don't know how it was related to class, or what we were talking about, but I remember him, like. In one discussion, calling me by my last name, I think when he thought I maybe was, like, zoning out or something. But maybe I'd responded, I don't know, but he was like, green! And he just started describing what kind of car he thought I would drive. And it was like... he assumed it was, like, a piece of shit old car, maybe that shouldn't go in the memorial. He assumed it was, like, a very beat-up old car, one that, like, had, like, freckled gray carpet, and had, like, transmission problems, But he described my car, like, down to the last detail in a way that was, like. funny, but also, like, it felt like he saw through me, I guess, and, like, knew me deeply. And I think, given that I was in a community of people who looked up to Kevin so much, even that felt, like, kind of nice. Like, I could tell he cared, and that he was engaged, despite the fact that I wasn't maybe one of his, like. closest... acolytes or people. And the majority of our conversations were kind of more along those lines. I took, I took a, I'm spacing out here. It's Sunday. I took a Kierkegaard class with him. And that was great, and I was either a junior or a senior, and Jake and Patrick were also in that class, and it was nice, and I was, at that point, like, ready to read a text like that, although I think Kierkegaard's also just a lot easier than... Cotton Hegel, which probably is, again, not fodder for the memorial. But anyway, I took a Kierkegaard class with him, and that was great, but my, like, fondest memories of him are... weird interactions just, like, in the lobby or the copy room, and I remember him, like, talking to me about smoking cigarettes, and about, like, the veneer that you can put between yourself and someone else, and I remember him... Talking to my partner, who's still my partner, in the copy room, and, like, asking her about foreign films. And he... he knew she ran the Johnson Film Collective, it was just kind of like... asking these, like, silly but pointed questions that I think kind of got at the core of, like, what she loved about film, and the summation of it was when he was, like. You like those foreign films where they stare into space, huh? But he found really funny ways, I guess, to show and, like, to have fun with all of, like, the strangeness and diversity in our community, I guess? And he really, I think, made me feel, like, seen as a person. And I will say, I did an independent study with him the spring of my senior year, and he... I think he was trying to get me to write some kind of grad school writing sample like you, Eli, but I think I was sort of, like, allergic to it in a way that is probably why I have an MFA. But I remember being in his office, and he was just kind of, like. A, he was shocked I wasn't already applying to grad school, which I had no plans to do at that time. And B, he was like, well, what are you gonna do? He was like, you're gonna... you have to be in academia. And I was like, I do? And he was like, obviously. And that is now, you know, what I've spent most of my adult life doing, is teaching college, and he... I guess he, like, saw that, and he believed in me in a way that I didn't, definitely. At that time, so, you know, I think that was nice.

Eli Kramer: I realized something about Kevin as a teacher listening to both of your stories. I'm not sure Kevin ever really built an intense community of students the way Bill McDonald did of literature and writing folks. Bill really provided close relationships for people who really love literature. He still welcomes you in, even if you're not someone who's a part of that Bill community, and it is both intense and inclusive in that sense. I'm not sure anyone was Kevin's student in the same way. He was rather a wandering Cynic-Socratic on the agora of the Johnston/Redlands campus. He is very distinctive in this way. He thought about outside of class, class, and daily conversational engagement as one continuous space for philosophical exploration.

Matt Greene: I don't feel like I knew how to write a paper until grad school, and like, I feel like, you know, now that I teach writing, maybe Kevin could have helped with that, in a sense. But on the other hand, like, because he knew how to write, and he was a good writer. And I was not, you know? And I... but... But, like, I guess I say, like, I bring that up because I don't know that that is, like, the real value that he gave his students. He made philosophy so engaging and exciting, and I mean, I had philosophy as a part of my, Johnston degree, my concentration, or whatever, because, like, I was a little kid who, even at 3 years old, would lie awake at night and be like, well, there's no God, that's obviously stupid, and death... Then, must be annihilation. But I can't comprehend anything except the color black for that, but I understand that that even won't exist, and I, like... like, I had chronic insomnia at a young age, and I think this is also a result of, like, other things going on in my life. But, you know, I feel like... I wanted, in college, to be able to, like, tackle those big questions and think about that big stuff. And Kevin made that very, like... engaging and personal. And I took classes, other philosophy classes or other theory classes, where maybe, like, the theory itself Or, you know, a more traditional academic kind of disciplined way of teaching was the focus. But I think in Kevin's class, like, the ideas felt real. It didn't feel like something written down on paper. It was exciting, and it was engaging, and it was silly, and I feel like I do try and borrow, like, the vibe of Kevin's class a lot in the ways that I try to, like, break concepts down to students, the ways that I maybe try to, like, circumvent some of the norms of academia that might feel, like, exclusionary. and try to make it, like, a classroom that's inclusive because it's fun, and because students feel seen as themselves. I think that answers your question. We did have an offer during the middle of that rant, though.

Eli Kramer: That's so Kevin. Any weird interjections we have will only enhance the Kevinness here! We have to at least include a few of those in the transcription to make it a proper Kevin experience, but keep going.

Gaelan Walker: Yeah, I mean, he was really interested in... Obviously, death, he was very interested in the physical, cultural. kind of manifestations of death and graveyards, and he brought that into both the classes I was in, but he also... he spoke a lot about Catholicism, going to different... Going into church, and the... the difference, sort of, between believing in the space versus the... more of the existential cigarette smoking. Doubt outside. But he also... I think he... he would come to class, and we were... our reading would be... like William James, and he would come in and he'd be like, I went and I took my car into the shop over the weekend, and you know what the guy said to me? He said, struts! Your problem is struts. And I said, I don't know what that is! And he just, he would... he spoke about that for the whole class, and he would weave it, you know, back to some extent to the James. But, I mean... It worked out. because I felt like I was intuiting, or how I was reacting to the

reading, genuinely connected in an authentic way, and I think it only works because he himself had such a deep understanding of his core ideas, or whatever he was working on. And I feel like whatever he was really delving into, that's what he was able to teach about. And, so he brought the passion of what his focus was into the class. But yeah, I mean, that dynamic of being less linear and just taking in... and letting whatever the topic be, what moved him in that day. As a professor today, I've... would struggle, because I think about, what does this course have to achieve? And I have this... Like, the, the, the...

Eli Kramer: I know that in the small Redlands philosophy department, the other philosophy professors, where, to say the least, were often frustrated with Kevin. They had to assign him traditional content driven courses in the domains of philosophy and its history. And of course, there's no promise that the ostensible subject matter of a Kevinc course will be engaged with in a linear content-driven way. So many stories I have received about Kevin began by highlighting that experience as not only not a negative, but a distinctive value to his pedagogy. "Well, I took a Medieval Philosophy class with him. I don't remember anything about Medieval {hilosophy, but I have this memory of him talking to this student, or this way he did that provoking question that hit something really fundamental, and sort of threw me off."

One can see hints of where this came from in his childhood. In the long form obituary Dorothy write for him she noted that his mother, and grandmother, really gave Kevin a lot of engagement with the arts, including reading poetry to him, but also having him memorize pieces and perform/share them. This authentically performative element seems to have gotten deep into his bones.

He once told me he had a philosophical pedagogy of "templates" (I think he may have an unpublished work on the subject). That he felt like his job was to provide a sort of gestalt, a field that both he performed, but also sort of put you in touch with, so that it was not important whether you understood each Medieval Philosopher, but for the real people in the room whether you could sense its problem and way of philosophical seeing and engaging with the world; to help you feel some of the problems out. I often think that he of course often just focused on what he was passionate about at the moment. But there is something about this performance element that sort of reminds me of Socrates or Diogenes of Sinope. He was a pedagogical performance artist. He was so out in the broader world and in the classroom seamlessly. That was really important to him, and that was felt inside his classes.

He was a master of the tragicomic dialogue, the serious stuff and the fun stuff together., I know from other Johnson College alum, that he did a famous class on "War" that included a war exercise at the end of the class (with teams, water balloons and equipment). There was something in that spirit, the irreverent and the serious as serving each other, that continues to speak to me.

I remember in "The Death in Philosophy and Popular Culture alumni seminar," participants were really going through those big rites of passage in relation to mortality, having parents die, etc. It was profound to see how Kevin held the classroom and living/learning space for them. He allowed us to

be open and exposed by being so open with his own wounds and experiences, sort of unapologetically. He told us for example about how his Irish Catholic mother well prepared him for the harshness of life and death (and how going to Irish Wakes inspired some of his early interest in death), but that she left him completely unprepared for the love and loss of his beloved pets. He described just how gut wrenching and heartbreaking the loss of the animals in his life had been.

He felt very honest, authentic, and deeply philosophical in a classical sense; philosophy as people in public life in ancient Athens who were willing to have frank (parrhesiastic) direct discussions in their communities, be gadflies, and challenge you a bit, and challenge themselves too. In the alumni seminar he really treated us as fellow thinkers and community members with perspectives to contribute. He would also hold the honest things others were trying to say, and speak his avowed truth (for example, that he was an atheist who did not believe in any continuation of consciousness after death). But instead of dismissing or challenging participants who believed in an afterlife or some extension of consciousness, he just wanted to know more about it. He was genuinely fascinated about how they saw things, even if it didn't feel real to him. This was something really distinctive about his pedagogy. His ability to foster opportunities for life, the street, the classroom, the personal, the private and the public to be sites for deep learning.

I don't teach with his sort of deep performative poking and prodding, but I learned from this approach something about making something "alive" and "real" in class. He was also one of my first examples of philosophy as a way of life (a central topic in my own work). In his performative Diogenes style, he made philosophy feel real, and not as content to "know". No "you need to memorize Kant's Categories, or here's what some goofy philosopher thought about acts." No, philosophy should speak to the things, as you said, Matt, that, eep you up at night. And we all have those in different ways, and feel weird. He especially liked those mundane but odd and uncomfortable things we push away from our conscious thought. I remember some lively discussions about picking boogers from one's nose or popping zits (his Cynic spirit again showing here).

Gaelan Walker: Yeah, I mean, he really did seem genuinely fascinated. In every single person in the room. And... I feel like... I don't know, it... it, it... You felt like when he would... Zoom in and ask a question about... Home, life, or religious conviction, or, He would pose some... whatever the abstract concept, and then he would hone in on a perspective that he's picked up And then he would ask if that was right. He wouldn't assume that he knows. He would say, Green believes that when you're dead, you're dead. Roadkill, right? Lack. Nothing. Is that true? And he would kind of give it back to the students. To, to ask, or to answer. I don't know, but yeah, he definitely... I got the sense that he would really slow down and zoom in on each perspective in the class when he could.

Eli Kramer: I mean, it's amazing so many of the stories were people who felt seen that way. I'm not sure I know many teachers who had the ability for each person to not feel dismissed. Even though he was irascible, even though he had hard questions, he made so many feel really seen. For so many people he was a pivotal teacher, just by the way in which, even if he was annoying, you knew he

wanted to talk to you. He was actually interested in a discussion with you. I don't know very many people were able to hold that genuinely, and with such a feeling of authentic interest.

I was also reminded in the obituary of his participation in Civil Rights protests when he was teaching in El Paso in the 60s. He was in the civil rights marches there, and that was a big moment for him. I also remember from his grad review (and from other discussions), that one of the reasons he liked the philosophy of Richard Rorty was his recognition of community and being in solidarity with each other through the weird absurdities of existence. The ability to do so was really important to him. There was something really fundamental to him about being interested in everyone, really caring about them as persons; that really mattered in a very big way for him.

Matt Greene: I'm just thinking about, like, an icebreaker I do often, where I ask students. what the... well, I asked them a series of questions that are from the Colbert report, and the first one is, what is the best sandwich? And... you know, I... in terms of what we were just talking about, I guess, that's the only time I poke and prod, really, you know? And, like, so I had a student a few weeks ago who said the best snack was kombucha, you know? And I was like, is that a snack? You know? Do you ingest kombucha? Is that a food? And, like, I guess I was making fun of him, but also I feel like I was trying to, like, get to know him. I tend to ask a lot of follow-up questions. One of the questions on that list is what happens when you die, and I never asked that one, but I do usually ask. Like, is this all a computer simulation, or what's the deal with Bigfoot? And we tend to get some pretty, like, weird, wild answers, and it's the first day of class. And I don't know, maybe that's just, like, goofing off, but I do feel like it's important, maybe, to, like... Both make students feel seen and known, but also maybe get them sort of slightly out of their comfort zone immediately, because it's like, this is gonna be a weird, radical space of learning, and... you might just get asked this strange question, but I only... I don't know if that's useful, but I'm bringing that up just because it seems like Kevin would do, I guess.

Eli Kramer: I think Kevin was really committed to the authentic learning space, not the bullshit class, and used whatever means at his disposal (ways that were exciting in the 70s and today would be hard to replicate. I'm committed to fostering that space, though I do it in very different ways. I really try to get students to not think of their college experience as a series of credential hoops to jump through. For that reason I begin the semester with a discussion about frank communication. I would much rather you say, "I had had a hangover, or I stayed late with friends, so I forgot to turn in the assignment", than have your fifteenth family member day tragically. I try to find ways to reward them if they're honest with me. I try to reinforce in class a more conversational approach, especially with European students who can be more formal and distant.

But I think Kevin, especially the Kevin we got, seasoned from experience, was good at this. Even if he was poking in a way that was hard for the student, he was aware of the person in front of him. He really spoke to what students were actually trying to figure out in life, I don't think I have the breadth of his skill set to be a gadfly and poke people and get them into this other space. But I do appreciate it, and still try to figure out ways, especially when I do online courses to capture this spirit. This is such crucial work in the age of AI, to get away from the clean and polished product, and back into authentic engagement. Philosophy class ought to speak to our deep seated needs in

life, and build meaning for that, and philosophy teachers and students should have enough trust between us that we can speak frankly about it.

Gaelan Walker: Even all of this, I mean... I... I imagine... going in, and I teach art therapy, right? So, it's ripe for... the intensity on the level of what Kevin would bring to his classes, but I imagine getting in there And speaking directly to individual students. And posing the question directly to a student and say, what do you think about this? As opposed to opening it for a discussion and having this... because even at Johnson and community meetings, we... if we had a discussion. It was sequential, people would raise their hand, they would... he would come to people directly, and that pedagogical move is so... intensive, and it was so effective, because everyone was wrapped in I think generally felt safe, because he... I don't think... I don't think I ever saw him push it too far, and when someone wasn't there with him, ready to go, he would kind of move on or transition pretty seamlessly, but... I think he was so committed to that move that he would... Spend the entire class, half the time, engaging Individuals, and bringing the personal into the space of the classroom. Just like he would bring himself into the public space, he would kind of pull people into the space of the class, and it was so effective, at least in my eyes, just as an observer. In the American philosophy class, I mostly observed. Because in most classes, I was always talking, but in that class, I just sat back because of the way he was orchestrating these really intensive conversations.

Matt Greene: Okay.

Eli Kramer: Oh my god.

Matt Greene: He wasn't... he wasn't, like... calling on you to check comprehension, and I think that's kind of, like, what felt different. Like, he never was, like. Like, you know, Kramer, did you do the reading? It wasn't that. It was like, he legitimately wanted your thoughts, he wanted you there, and like you're saying, if you weren't there, he would recognize that and start talking about, like, the carpet in your car, or whatever it was. And so, that was a way to, like, pull you in. Because I do think, like, even with that icebreaker I mentioned, like, if a student doesn't feel comfortable, we just pass, you know, which is sad, but, like. I don't think either of y'all probably call on people, and that is pedagogically not something you would really do anymore, but it was a very, like, aggressive way to be inclusive in that sense, because it brought all kinds of voices in that maybe wouldn't otherwise feel comfortable.

Eli Kramer: "Aggressively inclusive" would be definitely a way I would describe Kevin's pedagogy in general, because there is this sort of sharpness, this interrogation that was built in.

Gaelan reminded me of another common theme I have heard from Redlands faculty and staff, their fondness of Kevin as a fixture of the campus itself. That's why one of the reasons why Kevin as an Ancient philosopher in the Athenian agora keeps coming to me: him as a fixture of the Redlands campus, wandering around and having conversations with people. Kelly Hanken in the story she sent me discussed how she will miss him as a fixture in Beacons, wandering around, asking her fun, provocative questions, and having a conversation. It wasn't one particular insight or transformative

notion, it was just his performative presence in the Redlands community that will be dearly missed. That, you know, is really distinctive.

And for many alumni he is a distinctive fixture of their memory of Johnston and Redlands. A regular theme from his students from the “70s, 80s, 90s,” is something along the lines of “I don't remember the content of his course(s), or really most of my classes from back then, but I remember the experience of being in his class, and how it was pivotal. And it shaped my thinking and life. What it fostered was my willingness to explore big questions or challenges, or that weird thing I like to ignore. He showed how all are worthy of my consideration and might contribute something.”

These anecdotes are a good reminder to not always worry so much about internalizing readings in my course, because 20 years from now, what are students going to primarily remember but the things that sort of helped them orient on what was of value? What we're continually pressured to do with outcomes and assessment as teachers all too often gets in the way of that. In seeking to achieve certain kinds of tangible metrics. Kevin's definitely not a spirit of the current assessment regime, the positives and the negatives of how we evaluate ourselves today.

Matt Greene: Yeah, well said. One stray thought that I don't quite have the words for is, like, I almost hesitate with the word performative. It was super performative. But I feel like it also... that, like, The, like, simple... definition of that word kind of misses something that was happening, right? Like, whereas any teacher, any professor, you're kind of in front of the class, and you are a performer in a sense. But what Kevin was doing was almost, like, bringing the audience into the performance. And we've talked about that in different ways, but... I don't know, I don't have the right language for it, but he was doing something that, like, was... it was about you as the audience, and it was about you as the person, you know? .

Eli Kramer: It didn't feel like a mask, either. The images of him is like an actor shaped by Stanislavski or Artaud, these people who thought of performance as an expression of the authentic. It's an inhabitation or habitus. Now, I am getting very philosophical, but Kevin's interest in Søren Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel are revealing. He said to me, when he gave a talk at my graduate school Southern Illinois University Carbondale that Marcel's broader genres of philosophical writing really spoke to him (his plays and narrative exegesis). I'm also reminded of the anecdote about Diogenes of Sinope in *The Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, that he liked to sing a bit higher than and off key from the choirs he was in to provide needed contrast. Kevin liked to perform things in their extremes, absurdities, the comical, but not necessarily inauthentic. It's supposed to point things out. He just wanted you to see things that you take for granted in all their truthful absurdity. It wasn't “I'm putting on the performance of Kant. So let's all pretend we're Kantians.” Rather as Matt said, he lets his class into this space where there's no wall between them. They then experience the problems of Kant in a weird way, I don't know how to describe it either...

Gaelan Walker: And he was often irreverent towards philosophy with a capital P, so he would pronounce almost all of the author's names intentionally wrong, so he'd be like, so this guy can't! You know, he would, make... he would have a structured section of the class. Where if he felt like we

were going too far off the rails, he would come back, and he'd get up on the whiteboard, he'd, like, write the main ideas, and he'd be like, alright, this guy can't thought this. And he would... you know, bring in the comedy. When he was in the structured form, he would kind of make people laugh and pay attention that way. So, I mean, yeah, these were just strategies that worked for him really, really well. Right? If... I think if I tried to make people laugh when I was going through the key ideas, I just wouldn't. I would fail. But he... he was really good at it. He was really funny, he was just naturally funny, hilarious, he had a good comedic sense, and And so, yeah, he had... he was able to be structured when he wanted to be. Often it's sort of a correction to, like, bring... bring everyone back. But even in that, he used his sense of humor to...

Eli Kramer: The other image that comes up is of a stand-up comic.. I feel like his classes were sort of a live stand-up routine with some audience work that made you feel very seen and included.

I remember now that a lot of the Johnston college alumni wrote about doing study abroad trips with Kevin. There was just something about, like, wandering with him in places that was distinctive and important for people. He was a wandering philosopher, dialoguing and performing in public in a way that made you slightly uncomfortable, but good. I also found it striking that Kevin participated in a Johnston performance of Hamlet. I think this was the late 80s or 90s. And he got really into it: his ability to jump into something, even if he sort of openly admitted was not in natural comfort area, was striking and interesting.

Matt Greene: I think one other thing that just popped in my head was, like. I went to grad school in Spokane, which at the time was the smallest place I'd ever lived, and the first, like. not-blue place I'd ever lived. It was very different culturally than what I was used to, but I sort of learned to, like, be able to talk to anyone, and I came to enjoy just kind of talking to a random person at the bus stop or at the bar, and like... at the time, I attributed that to the culture of the place, and also to Larry David, but I think this conversation, like, I'm realizing that Kevin... was a part of that. Like, I realized that I took a lot of joy and just, like. seeing this weird person that maybe, to me, as some dude from Seattle, felt very, like, at odds with my understanding of how a person ought to act, you know? A grown man with, like, you know, a too-tight t-shirt and, like, bedazzled jeans, for example, which is a common look. And it just kind of, like. you know, ask them about their genes, and like, you know, with that, I think the thing is, like. like, what gave me joy, and why I still continue to get to get joy from doing this, is, like, curiosity, and engaging with that other person. And the reason I'm connecting this to Kevin right now is I feel like that was class, right? That was him... asking, you know, about your beliefs, or the carpet in your car, or whatever that was, like, I think, you know, long before I'd watched Curb Your Enthusiasm, or whatever, Kevin was my model for that, and probably that is coming from him, right, in ways that I hadn't thought of before. And I'm definitely grateful for that, because I feel like... It gives me a lot of joy to, you know. Talked to a stranger, and get up in their business, and kind of... See the world from that, you know. That way, they're seeing it.

Eli Kramer: Yeah, same for me. And there's this ability to not do it in a dry, "academic" way. He really wanted to see something of the full person. I find that to be the heart of all holistic or integrative education. It's an education of the head and heart, but more than as a teacher it's really just being curious, getting out of your own categories, and wanting to meet someone in front of you; not the symbol of the person, not some background projection, but attending to the presence with

you now. For me this was Kevin's ethical exemplarity, helping someone to be heard and seen, to give them an opportunity they might not otherwise have in school for that experience (sadly). And he was a really good model of humane care for other people, by even just letting them talk, and asking about the stuff going on for them.

Matt Greene: I think, like, yeah, Bell Hooks talks about holistic teaching as, like, seeing and teaching the whole student as a whole person, like, you know, and I think no teacher or professor probably saw me better than Kevin, despite the limited time I had with him, and I think that was... You know, because of his personal style, and because of the way he engaged. And, like, you know, probably part of the profound effect that he had on so many of us is that, like, it almost maybe is beside the point what we learned, because in his classroom, we maybe felt more like ourselves, you know? And part of that was his focus on the body, too, and, like, the animal reality, and it was funny, and it was, like, this... Sort of base feeling of what it was to be alive, and he was capturing that. in a way that was, like, fun and exciting, but also still very warm, right? Because I think, like, if I'm imagining, like, the Hollywood script about this professor, it would go very dark, right? And they're asking all these dark, horrible questions, and getting engagement, and starting a war on campus, but Kevin was none of that, right? And it was silly, and it was happy. And I think that... for me, touches what feels like a very core part of myself, and I think probably most people are that way, right? It's childlike, and it's... it's great.

Eli Kramer: That was really beautifully put. There's something in just talking here that feels like carrying on Kevin's legacy. I think especially now, when it's increasingly easy for that distance to appear between us and student's, and even if you can't do it the same way, I do feel more of a duty to carry on Kevin's pedagogical commitments now. I see how stressed and hopeless many students are these days, and how they long even more to be seen (being over conscious of public presentation because of social media really is an issue here). It is important for me to develop such relationships with my students and I see what a difference it makes to step back and provide spaces for them to be seen that way. There were even a few times this semester where that become poignant for me.

Gaelan Walker: I also think, like... going to how more and more students are using AI. Like, Kevin's final project... or final task was always to do a stream of consciousness Just unconscious spilling of ideas about whatever the final topic was, and that it seemed like he... attended to those from me more than the actual final project that I gave, which I appreciated, because you know, I went through the work, I was trying to construct something to learn to write, to write a good paper, but you look back at those original papers, they weren't particularly good. The... Was it the... what do you call it? It was a manifesto. The manifesto...

Matt Greene: manifesto.

Gaelan Walker: It was honest, it was just honest. expression of what I thought about the basic ideas, and... I think... Students are less in touch with their own sort of stream of consciousness about ideas today, so there's something to be learned from that.

Eli Kramer: Yes.

Matt Greene: Touch, I wonder, or are they... like, and this is my perception, I feel like with... AI, they feel like there is less ability... less... it's less acceptable for them to turn in something like that, almost, you know? It's like... Yeah, that's what I mean. That, like, polished ideal of what a paper is, it's, like, always at hand, and so, like, that permission structure is sort of disappearing, almost, or something. I bet.

Eli Kramer: This actually helps me think about student evaluation in the age of AI. More and more, I see the importance of pushing students to see the value in the rough, uncut, and impromptu exploration. I was thinking about Kevin's manifesto assignment a couple weeks ago as a good model of oral exam for today's classrooms. So many of the discussions in higher ed pedagogy are about the crisis of AI; "everyone's cheating, it's hopeless, we're never gonna really catch the cheaters now." It's the arms race of assessment and cheating. But the question is if students have genuine interest. Are they trying to think about the questions proposed by the class? How do you get them to see the value in the struggle of thinking? That's the important part, you don't have to stress so much on the rest.

Matt Greene: I was thinking about, like, another way that I feel like I'm probably riffing or mimicking Kevin in my teaching, like, when I have to teach research writing, the first thing I do the first day of class, and this may not work now in Seattle, but the first thing I do of the first day of that unit or that class, is I ask them, where bugs go in winter. And then they have to rate how confident they are on a scale of 1 to 10, and then they have to, like, suggest where they think they got that information from. And then we can use that to kind of talk about, like, how our beliefs form, how we gather information, what we maybe take for granted in the world around us. Because generally, most of the students in the class, and I would have been this way, have an incomplete picture of, like, you know, what that... that very simple question, what the answer is. But it's, like, it's silly, and it's stupid, and it's fun, and it, like, it confounds a lot of people, it sort of frustrates, in, like, a fun way, some people, and I feel like that... that's, like, striving toward Kevin in my teaching, I think, you know?

Gaelan Walker: Yeah, in American philosophy, one of his assignments was just to delve into how something worked. So, he talked a lot about, like, radio waves, TVs, laptops, just technology, and he wanted people to delve in as granular detail as they could find, research how things work on a... Which had nothing to do with writing, like, a... You know, a purse, you know, paper, but...

Eli Kramer: That's a perfect example of Kevin's template pedagogy, because it's hard to understand C.S. Pierce unless you know that the experimental science he is doing is shaping his orientation to philosophy. His work for the geological survey is an essential inspiration for what we now call Classical Pragmatism. A good template is not the reading prompt, "What would Pierce think about epigenetic research today?", but living the experimental attitude through classroom exercises. What does that feel like? How do you move through a problem? If you get the broad strokes that's probably the best, not only the best you can give, but that's the thing that will stick with them anyway. You give them that gestalt, that feeling of moving through shit. There's a reason that pedagogy worked at Johnston so well, the same reason why psychodrama was popular at Johnston in the past and during our time there: Johnson had a lot of that sort of... feeling out, moving through, sort of experiential, that sense of experiential. Not quite, like Prescott's experiential

education, but rather a commitment to fostering messy, very layered, experiences, via broad-strokes performance situations. It gives you gestalt modes of exploration to take up throughout your life.