

**Interviewee: David L. George, Ph.D.**

Interviewer and Interview Logger: Bradford James Morith

Interview Sessions:

1. Session One (March 15, 2015)

a. Part One (1:05:39)

b. Part Two (0:59:57)

2. **Session Two (March 22, 2015)**

**(1:38:59)**

Total Running Time: 3:44:35

Location: Conference Room 308, Student Union, La Salle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Recording Equipment: Olympus Digital Voice Recorder and iPhone 5c

Abstract:

Dr. David L. George is currently professor emeritus of economics at La Salle University, having begun teaching at La Salle in 1979. Dr. George holds a B.A. from the University of Michigan, a M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, and a M.A. and Ph.D. from Temple University. He has published approximately thirty scholarly articles, twenty book reviews, and two books during his career. His first book is *Preference Pollution: How Markets Create the Desires We Dislike* (University of Michigan Press, 2004), and his second book is *Rhetoric of the Right: Language Change and the Spread of the Market* (Routledge Press, 2012). His primary foci of research include meta-preferences in the free market and economics rhetoric. Dr. George has been a longtime member of the Association for Social Economics (ASE), including being this association's president in 2005. Dr. George was also honored by this association in 2011 when he won the prestigious Thomas F. Divine Award, an annual award that recognizes ASE members who make significant contributions to social economics. Dr. George currently serves on the editorial board of *Review of Social Economy* and *Journal of Socio-Economics*. At La Salle University, Dr. George was an engaged member of the faculty senate, and he won the Distinguished Faculty Scholarship Award in 2012. Dr. George was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1947, where he was also raised. Today, he lives in Melrose Park, Pennsylvania, and has two adult children. His hobbies include classical music and Russian studies.

## Interview Log: Session Two from March 22, 2015 (1:38:59)

0:00:00            *My name is Brad Morith, and I am the interviewer. I am here with Dr. David George, emeritus economics professor here at La Salle University, and this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> scheduled interview session with him. Dr. George is the narrator, or interviewee. Today is Sunday, March 22, 2015, and we are in the La Salle Student Union to do this interview. Do I have your permission to record?*

Certainly.

0:00:30            *We're going to focus on scholarship, publications, scholarly societies, and your two books.<sup>1</sup> We're going to begin this session today in 1982. In 1982, Professor Mark Lutz from the University of Maine wrote you a letter in response to an article you wrote. The article was entitled "The Market System and Second-Order Wants." Professor Lutz said your article and ideas were "too much ahead of our times"—quote. Why might he have said this?*

George thinks Lutz suddenly liked it, and it took time. Economists are so certain—the whole culture has a way of defining free choice, and it doesn't look into this choosing one's inner self, so to speak. So, George thinks Lutz was right. It was kind of flattering to have it said that way. But, George thinks Lutz is correct. Since then, it has become out there now because of some very big names—Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, who often times is cited for it.<sup>2</sup> George understands how these things work. He gets some credit, but George thinks that what he saw was very much a new idea and one that was difficult to fit into the dominant Gestalt—how people were thinking at the time—and still today, to a large extent.<sup>3</sup>

0:02:07            *Do you agree with his [Professor Lutz'] assessment of your ideas being ahead of its time? Why or why not?*

George would like to because it is flattering. But, yes, George does. George thinks a lot of evidence has come forth since then which supports

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. George's two books are as follows:

George, David L. *Preference Pollution: How Markets Create the Desires We Dislike*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, 2004.

George, David L. *Rhetoric of the Right: Language Change and the Spread of the Market*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Amartya Sen (b. 1933) is currently a professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University. He won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998 for his work in welfare economics (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Gestalt is German, and in this reference, means framework.

it because the whole problem of addiction—in fact he has this in his book on rhetoric, evidence—were much more concerned.<sup>4</sup> We talk about our bad habits, about our addictions. So to some extent, yes. Even now the weight epidemic, the standard economist’s explanation for overweight is that food’s a lot cheaper—which is maybe part of it. But, it has more to do with marketing. That’s the classic case of where people are driven to move by these desires. That’s marketing at work. When George goes to Wawa, he likes it very much.<sup>5</sup> The woman at Wawa—who George is very close with now—she actually borrowed his book on *Preference Pollution* and liked it. Every time, they laugh because every time he is thinking: Should he choose one of these croissants this morning with bacon, egg, and cheese? And he often does. He had no intention of doing so a minute before. So his preference is badly shaped by the market. That’s marketing at its best today—where to put things where people will find a sudden desire for them. That may be good or bad; George gets back to that, too. If George could put economics books that would stimulate people to want to read them, that is not easy to do. It has come more into the public mind—these kinds of issues—again, without being necessarily meta-preferences, which he could explain right now. The so-called two-selves models or multi-cells where one wants to do this while the other wants to do that, that’s a very popular way of thinking about this. Conflicting selves, now that’s all right in some contexts. But, in what George was trying to do—to indeed show that something bad was going on here—George could not use this two selves idea. After all, who is to say that the smoker deserves to be not respected as much as the non-smoker? “I want to smoke. Yet, I don’t want to smoke.” So, when one uses just these two-selves way of approaching this problem, one cannot draw normative conclusions. One cannot say that this situation is better than this. Whereas with meta-preference, one can say: “Here, this person who has a preference that he or she embraces”—He was happy to have; that’s a good thing. So, that’s the advantage, George’s has—mainly from a normative side.

0:05:20

*Describe any influence of Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith on you as a professional.*<sup>6</sup>

George forgets when he first read Galbraith’s book, *The Affluent Society*.<sup>7</sup> It was written in ’58. George really doesn’t remember when he first read it. George thinks he read it before he started meta-preference stuff.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. George is referring to his 2<sup>nd</sup> book, *Rhetoric of the Right*. See note one for full citation.

<sup>5</sup> Wawa is a convenience store chain predominantly in southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey.

<sup>6</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith (1908-2006) was an economics professor at Harvard University for half of a century. Of note, Galbraith published his book *The Affluent Society* in 1958 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> See note six.

Galbraith essentially started the discussion. He spoke of manufactured tastes. The dependence effect—Galbraith said in effect what you do depends on what the market has told you to do. In other words, “They make my tastes. They shape my tastes.” And Galbraith saw this as a bad thing. He spoke of early societies; you couldn’t shape a person’s tastes. After all, they had to have water. You do not need to tell someone that they should have water or basic food. So, Galbraith saw it as a modern problem, where tastes are created. Here’s where Galbraith went wrong, though. That was an inspiration to George because you can’t say that to have your tastes shaped is inherently bad. George loves classical music; he is very fortunate. That taste had to be created somehow. In other words, he had to take classes in music. He had to be around some folks who made him have it. George doesn’t want to say that it is a bad thing to change somebody’s tastes. What’s bad is that if you change someone’s tastes, and they don’t like what you have done to them. If you are making their tastes better, that is perfectly fine. George thinks Galbraith missed out in not seeing that changing tastes is not inherently a bad thing. “It’s how well we change tastes—change each other’s tastes, so to speak.”

0:07:17

*In January 1991, Galbraith wrote you a letter praising an article you wrote. What is the story behind his letter?*

This was about George’s 2<sup>nd</sup> main project of his, rhetoric. Galbraith was quite old at the time.<sup>8</sup> George does not like to think of himself as a pushy person, but he knows how to buttonhole, so to speak. It is better to see people face-to-face— or talk to them on the phone. It is very difficult to reach people electronically today. Galbraith was at a conference. When the conference ended, George went up to him and gave him the paper. George said, “You might be interested in this.” And Galbraith wrote George that very flattering, short letter of how much Galbraith liked it. And that’s partly because Galbraith was marginalized to a large extent. He had been the president of the American Economic Association.<sup>9</sup> But the mainstream, the neo-classical crowd, the mathematicians—who were running the field—really rejected Galbraith. Galbraith became popular. Sometimes, people would say if a scholar becomes really popular, then what good are they. Maybe, it makes some people jealous. George doesn’t know. So, Galbraith wasn’t completely forgotten by any means. He welcomed George’s kind of work. It played up to Galbraith’s way of thinking, so that is not too surprising.

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<sup>8</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith was in his early eighties in 1991.

<sup>9</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith was president of the American Economic Association in 1972 (Wikipedia, 2015).

0:08:57 *In a 1995 letter from Galbraith, he queries, “Why not write for both economists and the public—much better.” Is this in reference to your book Preference Pollution?*

George doesn't think it was. That's when he was just starting to write his book.<sup>10</sup> In retrospect, he probably didn't do that. There is always that fine line one has to walk between good scholarship and something that is more—digestible. And he thinks, all academics—it isn't vanity. It's being thrilled by complex things that one comes up with. He wants to say, “This is really interesting!” So, people have to often times be patient. And the average reader—how patient can the reader be? George understands why he is not going to get as much reading if one is complex in one's ideas. So, there is an art of making things really accessible. But, that often requires too much compromise for some. Some would say—One would do a simple paraphrased version here. That's quite an art. George is reasonably confident in his writing ability, but he's an academic. Like all academics, one tends to get a little verbose. But, George is just happy Galbraith said that. He doesn't recall if they had communication after that. Some, George is sure, but he doesn't recall.

0:10:47 *Would you describe Preference Pollution as being made for scholarly publication?*

Yes. As George mentioned, academic work can be obscure, but George feels he is kind of lucky because the things he does are not as obscure—than what the mathematicians do. People don't know high-level math. George feels bad for mathematicians sometimes. They get a lot of respect from their fellow thinkers, but it is much harder. Whoever picks up *American Economic Review* and reads an article in that—One cannot do it.<sup>11</sup> So, on the one hand, George can reach out to more people, including his students at La Salle. He could present his ideas. The book itself, in retrospect, George wishes he had said up front that one might just wish to read the introduction and then skip over to chapter five. This is because chapters two, three, and four were the theory chapters where George felt the need to get the ideas out there. Consider what the critic might say. Look at the subtleties. George can understand that some people read something and then put it aside—never go back to it. In retrospect, George wishes he had brought them in more early on—brought the reader in—and then reserve what George said in the early chapters for an appendix or later chapter.

0:12:26 *Moving on to Preference Pollution now, your first book Preference Pollution was published in 2001 by the University of Michigan Press. Discuss the main point of the book.*

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<sup>10</sup> Dr. George is referring here to his first book, *Preference Pollution*. See note one.

<sup>11</sup> *American Economic Review* is the journal of the American Economic Association.

The main point is that the market forces shape our tastes badly, as we discussed before. Another important point is—A philosophy friend whom George met when he was working at Social Security, he was a La Salle student originally. This was before George was at La Salle, though. Anyway, Dan Casey was his name.<sup>12</sup> Casey had alerted George to an article by a philosopher named Harry Frankfurt.<sup>13</sup> George has never met Frankfurt. George first began writing down his ideas in '72 or '73, and Dan Casey said that there was this Harry Frankfurt who had written this article on this very thing. Casey was exactly correct. This article by Frankfurt—George couldn't agree more, but Frankfurt didn't touch on market forces. Here is what George found really exciting. He hadn't been able to communicate this simple point well. The economists who are interested in meta-preferences never seem to take up this kind of idea. What Frankfurt said was that the ability to like your desires, or not like them, is what is uniquely human. Frankfurt said, "What makes a human different than an animal?" Frankfurt stated that animals had preferences. Animals have desires. An economist would say that they are doing what they want. And that may be true. But an animal would never stop and say, "Gee, do I really want to be doing this? Do I want to be overeating?" They can't do that. George even saw a great cartoon about that that he should have included in the book—which showed a man with a thought bubble above his head. He did something and then 2<sup>nd</sup> guessed himself. "Why am I eating this? What am I doing?" And it showed next to him a pigeon and a thought bubble above its head. And it was eating, and there was nothing in the thought bubble. So, in other words, the pigeon couldn't care less what it was doing. The pigeon wasn't going to say whether it was eating too many of the breadcrumbs that were tossed this way by this person sitting in the park. That captured it perfectly. Cartoons can be an incredible art—especially editorial type cartoons—express a complex idea quite simply sometimes. So, George ended up concluding—the most important point to George—markets give us what we want. However, what we want depends on what markets do. Markets don't give us the wants that we want. So, markets create wants, desires, that we sometimes wish we didn't have. Or, they do that too often—that is how George ended up phrasing it. Markets are too prone to changing our tastes for the worst—in the wrong direction. They sometimes change them in the right direction, but George could prove that there is market failure. This is a technical point; meaning markets fall short. They don't claim to do what they claim they do sometimes.

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<sup>12</sup> Daniel Casey, M.A., is a 1971 graduate of La Salle University in the discipline of philosophy. He is currently an adjunct associate professor at Drexel University ([www.drexel.edu](http://www.drexel.edu), 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Harry Frankfurt, Ph.D., is an emeritus philosophy professor at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey. One of his areas of interest is moral philosophy (Wikipedia, 2015).

0:16:31 *Have you seen the documentary “Super Size Me”?<sup>14</sup> I was just wondering your thoughts on that.*

George thinks if he were younger he would say that why does this popular artist get all the attention? He understands it now. This person was a good writer. George doesn't believe the writer was trying to make a compelling, clear case that something was wrong. If one is a social commentator, one doesn't have to. “Look at this, we're all getting fat!” That's fine. People don't feel the contradiction. “If you are an economist, you feel the contradiction.” An economist would say that people are complaining, but what are they complaining about. An economist would say that if someone is smoking, then that is what they want to do. If one says to them that they are shortening their life, the economist would say, “So, what?” One drives a car that assumes a risk of one shortening one's life. He doesn't want to maximize his life and stay in bed with a cover over his head most of the day. He is sure he won't get killed if he does that. Economists were skeptical of this idea that people were too fat. What does that mean to an economist? That's why among economists this is important. Among the likes of Eric Schlosser, he didn't have to confront the difficulties.<sup>15</sup> He could just lay out for us brilliantly of how bad that was. He tried to live on a diet of McDonald's for a month or something?<sup>16</sup> Yeah, *Super Size Me*—That's where the title came from. George still goes to McDonald's. He says, “What the hell?”

0:18:28 *Going back to Preference Pollution, in the acknowledgment section, you mentioned the importance of Professor Joe Flubacher to create a climate of moral inquiry in the economics department.<sup>17</sup> Could you discuss his influence further?*

One of the reasons George was hired here at La Salle was to fill in for his late colleague, Mark Ratkus.<sup>18</sup> George knew that Flubacher read that short piece he did in '78—the first one George did on meta-preferences.<sup>19</sup> And George knew when he was applying that Flubacher saw something that George had written. Maybe, he read it. The fact that Joseph Flubacher was in that same association that he was in, and later [George] became the head of that association in 2005,

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<sup>14</sup> *Super Size Me*, produced and directed by Morgan Spurlock, is a 2004 documentary that explores the fast food industry's encouragement of poor nutrition for its own profit (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Eric Schlosser (b. 1959) is an American investigative journalist, known for his book *Fast Food Nation* (2001) (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Dr. George is confusing here Morgan Spurlock and Eric Schlosser. Please see notes fourteen and fifteen.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Flubacher was an economics professor at La Salle University. He has a scholarship named after him. He passed away in 2003 at age 89 ([http://articles.philly.com/2003-06-26/news/25446612\\_1\\_economics-students-honorary-doctorate](http://articles.philly.com/2003-06-26/news/25446612_1_economics-students-honorary-doctorate), 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Mark Ratkus was an economics professor at La Salle University beginning in 1973. He passed away in 2010 (studentaffairs.lasalle.edu, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> The article mentioned here was in the newsletter of the Association for Social Economics.

this meant that George and Flubacher had this Catholic, at least on social issues, meeting of the minds.<sup>20</sup> George recognized that there is going to be moral inquiry at any institution that claims any connection with any kind of religion. So, that to a moral philosopher type—George has always been happy to be here. In fact, when anyone suggests that since George is at a Catholic school that he has to watch what he says—at least, the things George wants to say. They are welcoming, and they are radical ideas some times. To George, the greater constraint on his freedom—the one he fears getting worse—is the corporate influence, the influence of big money on what is said or done in universities. George states that the constraints do not come from what the Catholic church is saying. Perhaps, this would be different if this were the Middle Ages when they had such power. But there is nothing that is leaving George to be disappointed.

0:20:52 *Describe the influence of your late uncle, L.J. George, in your development of this book and as a social economist as a whole.*<sup>21</sup>

George's father had two brothers and a sister. Lebid was his name—Lebanese background. Lebid got the name that was least Western, so in his professional life, he chose to go by L.J. So, George respectfully includes that.<sup>22</sup> L.J. was a really good influence—he and his cousin. They grew up in Johnstown.<sup>23</sup> They were at the top of their high school class in 1933, or something. The Middle Eastern folks who came to this country were very ambitious. L.J. was a real thinker, a real thinker. George and L.J. would get into all kinds of arguments, and George loved it. In fact, the other aunts, uncles, and cousins—when they were together—would say, “There they go again—They are gonna go start talking about ideas.” When George worked in the family store, L.J. had finished his college work. At that time, L.J. was in his forties, and he became an accountant for the government. George believes it was the I.R.S.<sup>24</sup> L.J. had left the store, but he still came in on Saturdays to work. That was the day George worked at the store. That was the busy day. They got into great conversations while filling orders. L.J. usually disagreed with George, but they remained very close. To this day, L.J. taught George to defend his position. George thinks this was very helpful—very helpful—no doubt. George does not think there has been anybody quite like that in his life. He has had friends and colleagues to discuss things with, but L.J. was the one who just kept going—kept going—forcing George to defend himself—not because he was trying to teach George, but that was L.J.'s nature—Socratic, back and forth. Why this? Why that?

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<sup>20</sup> The Association for Social Economics was initially the Catholic Economic Association (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> The interviewer is referring here to Dr. George's first book, *Preference Pollution: How Markets Create the Desires We Dislike* (University of Michigan, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Dr. George references Lebid George as L.J. George in *Preference Pollution*.

<sup>23</sup> Johnstown, Pennsylvania

<sup>24</sup> Internal Revenue Service (I.R.S.)



0:23:09 *Does he influence the way you teach today?*

L.J. probably did, but you never know. That's the whole thing about our past. George thinks that's why "teachers should not feel frustration. You never know what difference you make." "You don't get cited, do you?" "Oh, I heard that in class on this day." No, you don't. So, you never know, but George would have to think so—in only a positive way in the way of his uncle. George is very grateful.

0:23:41 *Now, regarding some of the people you corresponded with when writing this book,<sup>25</sup> discuss the role of Professor Timothy Brennan at the University of Maryland-Baltimore in developing your meta-preferences positions.<sup>26</sup> There are a number of letters between the two of you from the 1990s.*

Yes, Brennan is still at U. Maryland-Baltimore. George has not seen him in awhile. Brennan wrote an article in economics and philosophy in defense of the two-person view of internal conflict. George does not remember the article explicitly. Brennan wrote a lot, and George persuaded Brennan, as George recalls, that the meta-preference approach to the internal conflict was better than just saying there's two people. In one way, George put this as saying imagine going to a psychiatrist and telling the psychiatrist that you feel you are two people. The psychiatrist says that you are. Then says, "Next." George feels that this is not resolving the conflict. But if you went to a doctor, and said that you feel like two people, the doctor might explain that you are doing what you want, but you wish you didn't want that. That is a little different; that's an explanation. But he might say, "Oh! I get it! I'm smoking because I want to, but I wish I didn't want to." The richness of the meta-preference relative to those two selves thing—that must have come up in George and Brennan's correspondence from the 90s. Brennan is a very nice man. George liked him a lot.

0:25:23 *Another professor, David Colander at Middlebury College in Vermont?<sup>27</sup>*

Yes. (Pause) He's a workaholic. George likes him a lot—a very colorful man. Once George asked him how he did so much. Colander said that he was addicted and that he could not stop writing.<sup>28</sup> George would think that that is a certain kind of a writer. Most of us who write have to get up the energy. "You wish you wanted to write, but you don't want to write." You do it eventually. But, when you have somebody who just can't stop writing, Colander has that quality. He is very nice guy. He understood and liked meta-preferences. He was

<sup>25</sup> The interviewer is referring here to Dr. George's book *Preference Pollution* (University of Michigan, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Timothy Brennan, Ph.D., currently teaches at University of Maryland-Baltimore in the School of Public Policy (<http://publicpolicy.umbc.edu/>, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> David Colander, Ph.D., is currently a distinguished college professor at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont ([www.middlebury.edu](http://www.middlebury.edu), 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Colander has authored, co-authored, or edited thirty books ([www.middlebury.edu](http://www.middlebury.edu), 2015).

a bit of a loose cannon sometimes. Maybe, he overpromised. He was going to include George's ideas in his textbook, which is really a well-regarded textbook. That was just thrilling to George—to get into a textbook—bringing a new idea into a textbook. Wow! This is because usually the textbooks in economics could have been written in 1920. That is not a bad thing, necessarily. They take what's established long, long before and convey that to the student. Anyway, Colander didn't do it, though. He let George down, and later, Colander invited George to speak at Middlebury College in Vermont. But, that fell through, too. But, George still sees Colander a lot, and George likes him.

0:27:13 *And Professor John Davis at Marquette University?*<sup>29</sup>

Davis is a very old friend, although they had something of a—going our separate ways—in recent years. They were the candidates to take over the editorship of the *Review of Social Economy*. The *Review of Social Economy* is the journal of the Association of Social Economics—the association that Joe Flubacher was in.<sup>30</sup> The *Review* was their main journal. George and Davis were the candidates to become the editor in '85. He got it. Right away, that gave them common interest. Davis was also a philosophy major and a vigorous philosopher. But, he never took much to preferences—not that he has to. He published, accepted the article George wrote—a couple of them on George's work. In recent years, George has gone the route of being very critical of post-modernism, which George sometimes defines as a view that there is no real truth to be discovered. Not every post-modernist would agree with what George just said, but there is some truth there. But, that undermined a lot of the work that George was trying to do. So, George thinks that John [Davis] and he have had quite a cooling off over the years in their interests. George did a paper when he was head of the Association for Social Economics in 2005. He gave his so-called president's address. By the way, George wishes to state that this is not a huge association. He does not wish to sound too boastful here. When you're active in it for many years, you publish and have a good shot heading it for a year. The year George was heading it—the paper he gave was something new. The paper was called "Social Class and Social Identity."<sup>31</sup> George does not feel that John was sufficiently supportive. In that paper, George knows that they had a difference in thinking. What George was arguing was that in identity politics we're doing pretty well. What George means are African Americans, gays, women, the handicapped have made advances. Some would dispute it—especially with what's going on right now racially. George means with the violence. "Percolating racism is pretty nasty." George states that African Americans have

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<sup>29</sup> Marquette University is located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. John Davis, Ph.D., is currently an economics professor at Marquette University (<http://business.marquette.edu/>, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> See note seventeen.

<sup>31</sup> George, David L. "Social Class and Social Identity" *Review of Social Economy* 64, no. 4 (2006): 429-455.

seen their average overall income rise—as have women. There is clearly less discrimination against gays. So, George has tried to make a case. At the same time in our society, we have seen advances for excluded groups—not to say they don't have complaints. They do, of course—but, we have seen advances. At the very same time, we have seen a decline in the status of the bottom part of our population. You can draw a line wherever you'd like—bottom half, bottom sixty percent. You can define 'bottom' in different ways—level of education, income. It's pretty clear. George thinks that we give less status to those who are not terribly successful than we've ever done as a culture. George thinks we have discrimination that is of a greater sort directed at the lower achievers. That is what George tried to stress in this article. Why is it that groups who tend to be at the bottom more have improved their overall condition, when those in the bottom half have gotten worse off?

0:31:27 *Are you speaking socio-economically?*

Yes. Well, the African Americans—more of them were able to not be at the bottom. But those who were still there—not through faults of their own—they are worse off. The incomes for the lower twenty-five percent are lower. It is terrible what is going on. So, you have this paradox that even though women and African Americans are more represented in the bottom half, than in the upper half, and even though the bottom half is doing worse, they've had more opportunities to move into the upper half. And some Anglo-Saxon males, hetero-males, have fallen to the bottom half. That's not a bad thing. Fairness leads us to have a different mix, but it doesn't mean there is going to be more equality of incomes or of status. So, George's point was that we are less respectful to the less accomplished—than ever. That's the bottom line, if you will. As an economist, George feels we need to have redistribution. We have to set up our social structures such that the most talented or fortunate certainly have more than the less talented or fortunate, but not as much more as they have now—which is now completely out of hand, as far as inequality is concerned. So, that's what George did in that piece from ten years ago. George has continued it since. It came into play in what he has done since. It is very much on his mind, still.

0:33:09 *Going back to Preference Pollution and some of the letters—There were some letters from psychology professor Richard Herrnstein at Harvard.<sup>32</sup> I was curious about those.*

Richard Herrnstein was a controversial figure. He co-authored a book with Charles Murray about hereditary intelligence.<sup>33</sup> It struck many as truly a racist

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Herrnstein (1930-1994) was an American researcher in animal learning in the Skinnerian tradition. He was one of the founders of quantitative analysis of behavior (Wikipedia, 2015).

tract. George knew him through his other work. From what George knew of Herrnstein, he was a very good thinker, but it wasn't regarding racial differences. Herrnstein had written something that got very much into the whole idea of meta-preferences. So, George wrote Herrnstein, and he wrote George a long letter back. It was nice getting those kinds of communications. George says it still goes on. But, as he got older, he didn't do as much—and with the Internet. There are other ways of corresponding. George doesn't want to romanticize it too much. It's not like people were writing letters that much in the 80s or 70s. George was certainly not a letter writer of a casual sort, but he wrote these long letters to some big names. And George's showing them his interest enough to write them a letter looking at their work, oftentimes led them to flatter him by writing back. And we did have exchange—not a lot, but some very important things that contacts, et cetera, and interchange. And Herrnstein was one of those. He died, by the way, in the 90s—not long after we had our back and forth.<sup>34</sup>

0:34:47 *Is there an influence of psychology in your book?*<sup>35</sup>

Well, there is but it is not of the psychology as it's come to define itself. The reason George didn't pursue a Ph.D. in psychology is he wanted to do this stuff about preferences. He was suddenly inspired to go into economics. But also, with psychology, because of the behaviorism of psychology, where you didn't accept the idea of the internal self, you proved theories. You proved ideas through empirical evidence—behaviors, how they are manifested in something that another person can see. George saw that his work on spatial orientation: That was very much an introspective thing. So, it certainly was psychological, but not the dominant psychology of the time. So that partly pushed George out of psychology. Now, what George ended up doing in economics was also of that nature. You can see a regular preference. It's expressed through a behavior. Somebody selects something that's seen. Look there; he took that. You don't see clear behavioral manifestations of a meta-preference. You see some very indirect things through what people say. But, people don't go around buying a preference. You can't go and purchase your inner desires. Your inner desires happen to you from your environment. Now, if we could, then you'd have people say, "Yeah, I'm going to buy this preference to not smoke." This would be the end of the problem. The person has now just bought the privilege of not wanting to smoke. You see that's not easy. George still thinks like a psychologist in some ways—a psychology student. But, George was really more in touch with philosophy that would be more accepting of the non-empirical. George did not

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<sup>33</sup> Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

<sup>34</sup> Richard Herrnstein passed away in 1994 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> *Preference Pollution: How Markets Create the Desires We Dislike*. See note one for full citation.

require a lot of empirical, factual supports for what he argued. It was in the logic of it.

0:37:34 *And I noticed a missive by Robert Heilbroner?*<sup>36</sup>

He was a wonderful writer. He wrote the *Worldly Economists*.<sup>37</sup> George applied to Heilbroner's institution, the New School for Social Research,<sup>38</sup> at the same time he applied to Temple.<sup>39</sup> George was looking for a graduate school. This was in 1974. George met Heilbroner when he went up to the New School and was thrilled to meet him. To this day, George remembers Heilbroner telling George that he should buy some boots. It was snowing, and his feet were all wet. So, it's the funny things we remember. But, George didn't go to the New School, he went to Temple for a number of different reasons. He chose Temple. He still read Heilbroner's work, and George sent Heilbroner some work of George's. And, Heilbroner responded to it. The article he responded to was in a handwritten note, which is rare today. He was very supportive of what George was trying to do. The article Heilbroner was commenting on never went very far. It was published, but it never got the recognition that we all think everything we do deserves. That was an honor to have. Heilbroner was quite a remarkable man.

0:39:04 *And in 1996, Professor Timur Kuran at the University of Chicago?*<sup>40</sup>

Yeah, Timur is of Turkish background. He was heading up a series that the University of Michigan Press was trying to put together—merge—on psychology and economics. He was a wonderful editor. They accepted George's proposal. It reminds George of something, and George plans to get back to Timur Kuran in just a second. One of the referees—when George sends in a proposal—was just incredibly dismissive, which was great for George, because it was like George just set up the 'straw man'.<sup>41</sup> This is because he got it all wrong. He was saying that this guy's telling us what we want. "No! No! No!" George believes that was James Buchanan, but George feels he has to be careful.<sup>42</sup> Buchanan was a conservative economist. He just scratched a rejection letter. George was simply put in the position to take it point by point. To say, look at page this. That was

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Heilbroner (1919-2005) was a famous historian of economic thought. He wrote twenty books including *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers* (1953) (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> See note thirty-six for the correct title of this book.

<sup>38</sup> The New School for Social Research is located in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City.

<sup>39</sup> Temple refers to Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>40</sup> Timur Kuran, Ph.D., is currently a professor of economics and political science, and he is Gorter Family Professor in Islamic studies at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> A straw man argument In polemics is a creating a fallacious argument based on false representation of an opponent's argument (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>42</sup> James Buchanan was a conservative economist who won the 1986 Nobel Prize in economic sciences. He passed away at age 93 in 2013 ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com), 2015).

very fortunate. Timur Kuran was a wonderful editor. He made extensive comments. We've had a little contact since, but not much. He was at the University of Southern California for a few years. I'm not sure where he is now.<sup>43</sup> But, George liked his work a lot. He's a very, very good thinker.

0:40:54 *Alright, moving on to La Salle—a panel discussion and a lecture you gave—in March 2007, you participated in a La Salle panel discussion entitled “The Social Role of Higher Education in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America.” What was the main argument of this discussion?*

George does not remember, but he knows what it must have been because for years he has been very upset by letting the employment side of education dictate the whole way we think ourselves. We now face a situation where ninety percent or more of our population truly thinks that there is not much else in education except getting a job. And that is dreadful. Now, George feels he is portrayed as a snob by saying that. That's not snobbery. As George likes to put it, and he is sure he brought this up in this panel discussion, to have a liberal education and the full meaning of that is for privilege. But, it should be for everybody in a very rich society like ours. The people who were able to afford to study poetry and history in 1850 certainly did not have more buying power than those today who work in a McDonald's. We have to realize that incomes are higher now, but for social reasons, we seem to say that these people are workers. They don't deserve a good education. That's how George reads it. In the whole national discussion, how do we value education? Through how much it adds to earnings—Stop and think about it. If somebody could set up a university where you go in and you take a pill, and we have proof that you are going to earn more money—No need to be concerned—Job training is great. We all need our jobs. And in professional education, we all need very complex things. But the fact that we let liberal education slide is just a disgrace. And, it's going to continue. La Salle is probably better than most schools. We hold the line as best we can at preserving our liberal arts background. But it's been a very bad development George thinks nationwide. And that is sure what George was discussing in '07 at this panel discussion.

0:43:40 *Is there an importance to a liberal arts education to a student?*

Let's put it this way. If it registers—if they feel that they've really been engaged, then certainly. Nobody's going to say that it was a waste. You might say that if you are trying to be a brain surgeon. You could be an excellent brain surgeon, but not find it very fulfilling. It is of a different nature. But, George has never heard of anybody who developed a love of poetry. By the way, George does not understand poetry at all. George always wants to show that he is not a terrible

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<sup>43</sup> See note forty.

snob. He may be a little bit of snob, but not a terrible snob because he judges poetry as a wonderful thing that he lacks the ability to appreciate. It doesn't mean he doesn't want it—end of discussion. He values it, but he can't quite conquer it or appreciate it.

The liberal arts are of this nature. Nobody has ever discovered a love of Beethoven and then regretted it. Has anyone ever said, "Oh! I listen to this Beethoven stuff. It's so stupid, but I can't seem to turn it off!" No, of course not. They like it. Everything in the humanities by its nature is something that you value highly when you get it. I think what's happened is that we've changed. In fact, an article George did on students as consumers—He did a couple of articles on that. And George said that it used to be a university was not a—You got an education primarily to help you lead a good life when you weren't working. Now, that may sound snobby, but the people who used to get the education were those who didn't have to work. They were the wealthy. Back in the time when to be wealthy was to say, "Look at me. I don't have to work." George is not saying that he embraces these people. But, the people who could afford an education were those that didn't have to work—but they still got an education. Now, George would have thought that we would find that those who had to work advanced themselves socially. They want to have this education that these rich folk were getting. That was in the arts. That was in the liberal arts. Instead, George thinks the market has taken over what liberal arts used to do. Liberal arts shaped your values. Liberal arts gave you meaning in life. Well, the market is trying to do that now, and it is pretty much all over. So, the advertising— Instead of liberal education, we have the consumer society: the ads, the ways of thinking that have taken over that role. So, you used to be taught in the liberal arts tradition. You were really being taught to know how to live. "In the new tradition, you are just being taught how to work—to make money, to then live with that money." So, in the old tradition, you learned how to enjoy stuff that maybe was available for free—the museums, the sky, nature. You'd understand life. Well now, instead, you study strictly to get a job. George says he shouldn't speak for everybody, but too many of our students are being urged to just think of that. Good jobs, fulfilling jobs—Then, take the money. Then, you will buy stuff that will help you to enjoy the sky and the history. But, that's not the case. George thinks that it is more ephemeral things that people spend their money on.

0:47:50 *In 2005, you became president of the Association for Social Economics. Explain this experience.*<sup>44</sup>

That was very good for George, and partly because George is not by his nature a leader type. George was president of his eighth grade class. That was his

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<sup>44</sup> The Association for Social Economics is a scholarly society founded in 1941 in New York City (Wikipedia, 2015).

position of leadership prior to this. He won by a vote of 15-14; that was eighth-grade president. And some students got mad at George because he voted for himself. And, he won 15-14. George thinks he beat Pat Jones.

Heading up the Social Economics, that was good. It was a good experience for George. They had something of a crisis during George's one year in that role. Our editor, John Davis, he had been the editor of the review for twenty years, from '85 up to 2005.<sup>45</sup> He suddenly resigned. He took over the editorship of a different journal. And frankly, that is one of the reasons why George had a parting of the ways with Davis. It was awfully sudden, and it put us in an awkward position. So, we had to seek new editors right away. George states he was a good diplomat. He tried to get all sides to agree—not ruffle feathers. And, he kind of liked doing that. So, that was George's role. The association is not a huge organization. We have maybe three-hundred members—probably a hundred and fifty in Europe now, or other parts of the world. Some of our editors are located abroad—in the Netherlands and England. George feels this was a good experience for him.

0:49:45 *As part of the association, you won the Ludwig Mai Award. Please tell the story behind this.*

George doesn't want to say it was just an honor for being a devoted member, but that had a lot of that component to it. The Ludwig Mai Award was probably the one about George's scholarship.<sup>46</sup> George then realizes that the scholarship award was the Thomas Divine Award.<sup>47</sup> That was the one for scholarship. It was very gratifying for him to receive that. The Ludwig Mai Award was also gratifying, but it was more for being a devoted member of an organization who deserves recognition for being a devoted member.

The Divine Award was about his work, and that was very gratifying.

0:50:43 *Was that your work on Preference Pollution or your 2<sup>nd</sup> book, Rhetoric of the Right?*

He guesses both.

0:50:49 *Or journal publications—*

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<sup>45</sup> John Davis, Ph.D., is currently an economics professor at Marquette University (<http://business.marquette.edu/>, 2015).

<sup>46</sup> The Ludwig Mai Award is given to an Association for Social Economics member who has given exceptional service to the association. Dr. George won this award in 2007 ([www.socialeconomics.org](http://www.socialeconomics.org), 2015).

<sup>47</sup> The Thomas F. Divine Award is awarded to Association for Social Economics members who contribute greatly to the study of social economics. Dr. George won this award in 2011 ([www.socialeconomics.org](http://www.socialeconomics.org), 2015).



Actually, he did receive that the year before he published the book on *Rhetoric*.<sup>48</sup> You look at a lot of things—citations. But, citations are an imperfect measure of a lot of things. Scholars of George’s type—We value our citations, but they are not like the numbers you’ll see from the really, really well known. It’s just like with money. There’s the middle class, and there’s the billionaires, unfortunately. (laughs) George states that he is a middle-class scholar. George is proud of his citations, and he values them highly—to know that someone is interested in your work. But, he sees classic works. It’s unbelievable. They’ve been cited thousands of—incredible. But we partly look at that. We look at—Well, is a person’s work getting read? As George says, that is the greatest value a scholar takes. George can speak for virtually all, he thinks. Yes, we want money. Who doesn’t want money? The issue is being appreciated for seeing the work you do as being valued. That comes through the citations and that sort of thing. It’s an imperfect measure. So yeah, George was very proud to get that award.

0:52:07 *Who were some of the authors, scholars that have cited you? Out of curiosity, any famous names?*

Most recently, Paul Ehrlich, who was the population person—That was very strange.<sup>49</sup> George couldn’t believe that one. Well, Amartya Sen—Amartya Sen is a Nobel Prize winner.<sup>50</sup> He is a famous economist from India, who has been in the U.S. and in England. And, George had a letter exchange with Sen about preferences. He then cited that a couple of times in the years that followed. That was very exciting for George. The ones George is most grateful for—proud of—are those who never even met him. George only says that because clearly it is not like just having your friends cite you. That would be scandalous for getting cited just because someone knows you. And George worries about that sometimes as a crisis might occur in a self-interested age. People just decide they are going to cite each other. And, oh boy! That’ll give us credit. But, George was very proud when people whose work he did not know chose to pay some attention to it. As he says, Amartya Sen, Colander.<sup>51</sup> But, for the so-called mainstream people, they just have not been as interested. The mainstream, again, George is not dismissing them. But, that is American economics. That’s neo-classical. That’s mathematical. There was one time George was cited in the mainstream journal the *American Economic Review*<sup>52</sup> by a very interesting man,

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<sup>48</sup> See note one for complete book citation.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Ehrlich (b. 1932) is an American biologist and professor of population studies at Stanford University. Ehrlich became famous after the publication of his book *The Population Bomb* in 1968 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> Amartya Sen (b. 1933) is currently a professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University. He won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998 for his work in welfare economics (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>51</sup> David Colander, Ph.D., is currently a distinguished college professor at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont ([www.middlebury.edu](http://www.middlebury.edu), 2015).

<sup>52</sup> *American Economic Review* is the journal of the American Economic Association.

Vivian Walsh.<sup>53</sup> Vivian is a male—Vivian Walsh—who is Scottish—no, English. Walsh cited George in that journal. It is very gratifying, especially when somebody has not met you and has read your work and thought enough of it to cite it. Sometimes, it is just pro forma. They will look up who has done work in this area and cite it.

0:54:37 *Currently, you serve on the editorial board of the Review of Social Economy and the Journal of Socio-Economics. Describe what you do on these boards.*

This is the system of peer-review journals, which is almost all academic journals. George is worried that that will be threatened, but he is putting that aside for a moment. Some of the leading journals pay for this. They get some very famous scholars to review, but normally it is just part of your professional duty or responsibility. It is an honor. So, articles get sent, and we are just asked to review them—to send comments—to check off a box: accept—accept after these changes—reject. You assess it and advise the editor on whether to accept it. George has liked doing it. One thing he has learned is not to insult. Everybody has an experience like the one he told you about for his book.<sup>54</sup> Of course, he did him a favor by being such a jerk in more or less saying that this book was crazy. But, George always tries to be careful not to—George has been tough on some. Some people send articles in for publication when they are not remotely ready, and it's as if we are going to then write it for them. As if, George would tell them what they should do; that's not right. So, George has been harsh, but normally, George does what he can do. Things are so specialized today that sometimes George has to say whether he is conversant enough on this overall topic. Does he know the citations—the person who's been cited in the article? Does George really know his work well enough? That concerns George sometimes. But, all in all, it is a very good responsibility.

0:56:39 *In 2012, you published your 2<sup>nd</sup> book Rhetoric of the Right with Routledge Press.<sup>55</sup> Discuss the main point of this book.*

It started as an article—way back—how the textbooks were biased—or incorrect—or not thinking clearly. What got George started was this. A lot of George's fellow heterodox economists—those who are not in the mainstream—they claimed that the whole mainstream—neo-classical economics—is inherently a defense of free market capitalism, unregulated capitalism. George says it's nonsense. It is not so. Neo-classical economics is an abstract structure. It's consistent with any set of values, George believes. Most of his heterodox

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<sup>53</sup> Vivian Walsh is currently a distinguished visiting scholar in economics and philosophy at Muhlenberg College ([www.muhlenberg.edu](http://www.muhlenberg.edu), 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Dr. George is referencing his book *Preference Pollution: How Markets Create the Desires We Dislike*. See note one for full citation.

<sup>55</sup> See note one for full citation of this book.

friends don't think so. They sometimes don't even like to teach regular economics.

What inspired the book was the belief that it isn't so much the theory that justifies the ruling class.<sup>56</sup> It's casual ways of talking sometimes—that have really quite an influence. George doesn't mean conspiracies to use certain words, but subtleties in how we package—think about things. So, in this book, all George did was simple word search. George feels he is a low-tech person, but he had to rely on technology. George went to the *New York Times* database and saw how phrasing changed over the years. He made comparisons all the time. To give you an example, he compared how often a word was preceded by 'our'—'our' government. Government appeared maybe a million times in the *New York Times*. Well, how often did it say 'our' government? It may not say 'our' government because it's not 'your' government. He tried to take into account all these different twists and turns. But, he did find, no doubt, that the more we sensed something as valued, the more likely we were to call it ours. We have never been less likely to see the word government preceded by 'our'. We've never been more likely to see markets or corporations followed by 'our'. So, we've gone in completely opposite directions. Economics has helped us to be alienated from government and more embracing of the commercial world. That's one thing. He went on all kinds of word choices. One of George's favorites was 'creating jobs'. We never used to say that. In fact, George doesn't think the slave owners would have thought to say that we've created employment for these people. After all, are they not the slave owners? And they are telling the slave has a place—That is just preposterous. We should not speak of an owner as creating a job—a business owner. A job is an interaction of two forces. Somebody wants to hire somebody to work, and somebody wants to do it. In fact, that one time, we used to speak of jobbers. These were people who had jobs to sell. They went out and said that they would work. So, that to George is a prime example of the cultural shift where we never have been so—the opposite of condescending. Business is so condescending to the rest of the culture. To imply that without them there would be no jobs is insane. They happen to own the means of production. If you own the means of production, then well yeah, but you could say that labor employs capital. In fact, George quotes Abraham Lincoln at one point in that book. Abraham Lincoln in 1858 said, "Labor is more important than capital." Not capital—I mean machinery—stuff that aids production. Lincoln said, "Labor has to come before capital."<sup>57</sup> You need labor to make capital goods. You don't need capital goods to make humans. Now, those kinds of things, which may sound radical, but they were

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<sup>56</sup> Dr. George is referencing his book *Rhetoric of the Right*. See note one for full citation.

<sup>57</sup> The precise quote by Abraham Lincoln is as follows: "Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is superior to capital, and deserves much the higher consideration." (<http://laborquotes.weebly.com/presidential-quotes.html>, 2015).

certainly embraced by most Catholic thinkers. Those are the kinds of things George explored. He has a chapter in his book on our language about workers and a chapter on how we look at government and competition. Competition is very 'in'.<sup>58</sup> We speak of cooperation less and less, and we speak of competition more and more—many examples of that. The book has gotten not enough attention, but every author says that. He is hoping it will. It is nice to be proud of what you do. George thinks it's "damn good!" (chuckles)

1:02:03 *In the acknowledgment section, you mention that students at La Salle help their professors with their research. Describe how your students helped you prepare this book.*

The ones—the three students I mentioned—who directly aided me—were helping George because he feels he is a computer ignoramus. They helped George a lot with that sort of thing. With discussions, they helped George think this or think that—the indirect way that students helped him. To George, our students are roughly what you would call average. Average is not a bad word. He likes being an average scholar. That is good enough. When George says 'average', he means that we're not Harvard or Swarthmore.<sup>59</sup> We're not community colleges either. We're not certain universities that have no standards. We have standards. We don't tend to get the students who don't need to be guided much. That is the paradox, or the irony—that students at Swarthmore probably don't even need their professors. You are going to get some very good professors. With students of a more normal sort, you are forced to see how confusing George's economics can be. So, teaching for years, he slowly saw how these words are ambiguous. It was just an ideal opportunity to go in and start thinking more about them. So, some of it may have been obscure. He wrote an article. He didn't get it published. He should try to get it published somewhere else—on how the textbooks foul things up. In some cases, it took George thirty years of teaching to see it. George hopes that is not a sad commentary. It's as though as when you are teaching at Harvard, you don't have to worry about every nuance of what you are saying. This is because the students are going to get the main drift more than they are elsewhere. That's, in many ways, why teaching at La Salle was a major input to George's writing the book.

1:04:29 *You mean the focus on what words you were choosing when you—*

Yes. Competition was a big one because when economists say 'competitive', a competitive industry is an industry with many, many sellers. It's small business. That's what competition originally meant. The opposite of competition was

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<sup>58</sup> 'In' here means in fashion.

<sup>59</sup> Harvard University and Swarthmore College of Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

monopoly and then big business that approached monopoly. Somehow, we've let the big businesses steal the word competitive because we've taken that to mean successful. In fact, it is sometimes Nietzschean: It is the survival of the fittest.<sup>60</sup> These master businesses—that are so competitive—that they are monopolies—that makes no sense. The word has been twisted. “The firm that is least competitive is most competitive.” These kinds of things were what George always brought up to students. Some liked it. Some didn't. That, to George, was what you were not going to get in the textbooks. That was part of our job. George's philosophy of teaching was always to read along with them and question, and question. Let's look at this. Let's look at this. That's really what helped with this book—that whole way he tried to approach teaching.

1:05:57 *When you won the Distinguished Faculty Scholarship Award in 2012, was it for this book?*

It was really supposed to be based on your entire—That was again a great honor. George has a confession to make. (giggle) George was on the faculty senate and was one of the people who promoted us having this award about ten years prior. The reason George did that—We do have the Lindback Award, which George never received for teaching.<sup>61</sup> We do have a service to the school award, which are great, but we didn't have a scholarship. Dr. George cannot recall the name of this award.<sup>62</sup> When you apply to a university, La Salle included, there are these three components: whenever you're up for tenure, promotion, and teaching; service to the school; and scholarship. Now, many will say that universities are too focused on scholarship. They don't care about teaching. Well, that's not true at La Salle. We care about teaching very much, thank you. But, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't recognize scholarship. So, George was in that position where he was just thinking that we ought to honor this, too. And, George too often saw that students were not aware that you were teaching but also doing something else. If that weren't true, then why don't we teach forty hours a week? You know the stories. We have to prepare our classes, but there are other things that we do. So, George said we should have this award, and he helped to get it through. Then, he applied for it a few years later, and he was very honored to receive it.

1:07:35 *Including the books, what are some of the journals you've been published in?*

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<sup>60</sup> Nietzschean refers to German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>61</sup> Regarding the Lindback Award, since 1961, La Salle University has recognized distinguished teaching by members of its full-time faculty. The award is presented annually ([www.lasalle.edu](http://www.lasalle.edu), 2015).

<sup>62</sup> Dr. George could be referencing the John J. Finley '24 Award, which is presented each year to alumni who have exhibited outstanding service to La Salle University or the La Salle Alumni Association ([explorersconnect.lasalle.edu](http://explorersconnect.lasalle.edu), 2015).

The *Review of Social Economy* is the one he has most—maybe three articles and twenty reviews—in.<sup>63</sup> Also, the *Journal of Economic Issues*—That was a journal of so-called institutional economics.<sup>64</sup> It tends to reject mainstream for a different set of reasons. Other journals with his publications include the *Eastern Economic Journal*<sup>65</sup>—*Journal of Socio-Economics*.<sup>66</sup> The reason George feels bad for people at mainstream institutions—they've got to publish in the journals that have the most status. Those are all mathematical economics. If you think that economics should be mathematical and that alone, you can get yourself into those journals. By the way, there's great talent if you look at one of the *American Economic Review* articles.<sup>67</sup> There's mathematics in it at a very high level. Okay, but it doesn't involve moral philosophy. So, if you want to do those kinds of things, you really—and George is not complaining—have to go for the journals that will be more accepting. Those don't have as much status among the regular economists. So, for that reason, you are in your own space. George is very happy that he published where he did.

1:09:09 *I read that you have a new book contract with Stanford University Press.<sup>68</sup> What will this book be about?*

That's not a contract. He is sorry that he misled Dave Robison.<sup>69</sup> At the time, he thought he was going to do it. He would have had a contract in a minute, but he didn't pursue it. He may still. This very nice editor came to George. She was the editor for two people George knew who recommended George. Stanford is a very mainstream school, but they wanted to have books written by heterodox economists.<sup>70</sup> Those are the ones who challenge the main kind of thinking. So, that's where that came into play here. The book George was proposing is something he is still working on, but in different ways now. We've let a lot of our identity politics—We associate the women's movement, the gay movement, and the civil rights movements with liberals. Those are the people who are challenging authority. However, they've been really in the service. They've been compromised, and that's what George's book was going to argue. It still may. They've essentially been very useful to reinforcing the idea of the survival of the fittest—and the rise of billionaires. By that George means, think of the language we use. What do women who are speaking for a movement—what are they

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<sup>63</sup> The *Review of Social Economy* is the journal of the Association for Social Economics.

<sup>64</sup> The *Journal of Economic Issues* is published on behalf of the Association for Evolutionary Economics (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> *Eastern Economic Journal* is a publication of the Eastern Economic Association (<http://www.palgrave-journals.com/>, 2015).

<sup>66</sup> The *Journal of Socio-Economics* is a publication of the publisher Elsevier (<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/>, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> The *American Economic Review* is the publication of the American Economic Association.

<sup>68</sup> Stanford University Press is located in Redwood City, California.

<sup>69</sup> H. David Robison, Ph.D., is the chair of La Salle University's economics department.

<sup>70</sup> Dr. George is referring to Stanford University here, located in Stanford, California.

prone to say—They want the opportunities. We’re given an equal opportunity. That has nothing to do with having more equal outcomes. Women now have equal opportunity, or they want to. They probably don’t have it, yet, to be CEO’s. As George says, women are saying that there shouldn’t be a glass ceiling. George agrees that there shouldn’t be a glass ceiling. There should be a brick ceiling. Nobody should be able to get through it. Which is to say, CEO’s, to George, are a national disgrace. Don’t get George wrong here. What has gone on in the name of CEO’s are billionaires, which he finds very morally offensive. So, essentially, what he was going to do in this book, and he’s done a little bit in an article, was to try to show that it is not a complete coincidence that the last thirty years have seen such a movement to the Right—economists’ Right, meaning free-market economics—at the same time that we have seen social liberalism increasing. So, not only do the movements he’s mentioned—the drug culture, the counterculture—has been a servant of millionaires and billionaires. It is very strange to say that. But, it is again letting people do their own thing with no social respons—again, hippies. I was a little bit in that culture—not much. But, George does not want to say that hippies are just irresponsible. But, doing your own thing—that whole thing has a lot to do with being a very wealthy person who does his or her own thing. So, that’s part of his goal—to try to show that—we have economic conservatism, and we have social liberalism. So, it sounds kind of balanced. No, they are both libertarian in a sense George finds offensive. Social liberalism and economic conservatism both want to minimize social control, social pressure—the sense of any duty to anybody. They’re both unleashing the individual with the confidence that all will be well—with the fairness to all these different folks. They think that will be a good world. They are not cruel, but it is the world we are seeing unfold before us where we have huge, huge inequality. So, that is what the book was going to be about. And, it still may be. But, he has only been retired a year now, and he’s been hijacked by his concern of the Russian matter.

1:13:56 *Yeah, we’ll get into that. You mentioned you were planning to travel to Russia this year. Please discuss your interest in this topic.*

Okay. George thinks he mentioned to the interviewer George’s trip to Russia in 1979. Now, again, the reason George became a critic of markets—that got him into economics with the ideas he wanted to follow—was that he developed a skeptical eye towards our Cold War.<sup>71</sup> He feared nuclear war, quite simply. Many kids his age did. George remembers reading a book by Thomas Dodd.<sup>72</sup> Chris Dodd, who was trying to get the nomination for president—some years

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<sup>71</sup> Dr. George is referring to the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union here, lasting approximately from 1945 to 1988.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas J. Dodd (1907-1971) was a U.S. senator and representative from Connecticut. He was the father of former U.S. Senator Chris Dodd, whom Dr. George is also referring to in this passage (Wikipedia, 2015).

back, Senator Dodd<sup>73</sup>—his father, Thomas Dodd, wrote a book that George saw in his teens, and it really made him mad. It was just pure propaganda. But at that age, George saw: “Why do they talk this way?” So, he just became a skeptic about being taught that he should hate the communists.

So, George went there in '79.<sup>74</sup> That was the year he started at La Salle. He managed to put enough savings together to take a trip by himself to take a tour of the Soviet Union. He saw the bad side of it—inefficient side. He didn't see any gulag, of course. But, he wanted to get just a handle on it. Given the fall of communism, which most of us didn't foresee, most people thought Gorbachev was an improvement. Gorbachev was the head of the Soviet Union at the time of its collapse.<sup>75</sup> He certainly wasn't a Stalin.<sup>76</sup> He wasn't a Khrushchev.<sup>77</sup> The communists were mellowing when it comes to things like justice, humanitarian thinking. Gorbachev was a good person. George saw that clearly. What happened after the fall of communism, the worst features of capitalism took over.<sup>78</sup> Some are calling it 'cowboy capitalism'. It's what we've lived through now. It started with the Reagan administration.<sup>79</sup> But, it really took off in the 90's, and ever since. Not only that, George had reasons—based on the work of others—to see that he doesn't do work in this area. This wasn't his specialty, but he reads. And from what he was able to piece together, we really exploited Russia in the 90s. In fact—a very hidden fact that George knows from reputable sources—Harvard University made a huge settlement with the Russian government because some went in there to make a fortune in Russia.<sup>80</sup> The 90s were a disaster. This was partly a disaster because the economists who were advising the former Soviet Union on how to reshape their economy were very much free marketers. Anybody with a mind at the time was saying that you had to be careful. What they wanted was what they were calling 'cold turkey'—where you just (pause) free markets. There was exploitation that one couldn't believe. And by the time that Putin became the president, George thinks in 2000

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<sup>73</sup> Chris Dodd (b. 1944) is an American lobbyist, lawyer, and former U.S. senator from Connecticut, who served for thirty years in that state from 1981 to 2011 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>74</sup> Dr. George is referring here to going to the former Soviet Union.

<sup>75</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev (b. 1931) was general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1991. This was the most powerful position in government in the former Soviet Union (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>76</sup> Dr. George is referencing here Josef Stalin (1878-1953) who was a notorious leader of the Soviet Union. Between 1934 and 1939 he led a massive purge of the party, government, military, and intelligentsia. Millions of so-called "enemies of the Soviet people" were imprisoned, exiled or executed (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>77</sup> Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) led the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964, when he was removed from power. Khrushchev was criticized for erratic policies (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>78</sup> The Cold War ended in 1988. The former Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

<sup>79</sup> Ronald Reagan was the 40<sup>th</sup> U.S. President, serving as President from 1981 to 1989.

<sup>80</sup> See this link for the full story: <http://www.institutionalinvestor.com/Article/1020662/How-Harvard-lost-Russia.html#.VTaVsiFViko>.



or 2001.<sup>81</sup> Putin was strongly supported because of the 90s—where the Russians had soured on radically free markets. They had billionaires who had gotten there in ways that were not appropriate. So, there's some context. Now, fast forward fifteen years. We have now vilified Putin. And, George is willing to say Putin may not be a very nice man. He is not threatening world peace. That is a complete fabrication. So, we're telling stories. George knows that our government had a lot to do with the overthrow of the president of Ukraine, who from what George could put together was corrupt.<sup>82</sup> But, the overthrown president was elected. He was elected. He had the support of mainly the Russian Ukrainians more than the Ukrainian Ukrainians. But, we helped to fund a revolution that overthrew the Ukrainian president. He fled to Russia. George often thinks he was a good man. But, now George is getting into real politics, so to speak. George didn't say this president was great, but he was elected. So, as far as George knows, you are supposed to impeach—or vote him out. Instead, we are in the business of overthrowing right now. Our government is now in the business “of defining democracy as what it likes.” That's how George is reading it. Now, for that reason, George has gotten involved in a number of different groups that are sympathetic with what he just said. What's really interesting is that this is not just a left/right thing any longer. There are some people, who are *Republicans*, who are pretty much in agreement with most of what George said. If there's any disagreement, it's in Putin's character or where he'll lead the world. But, some of these conservatives—an ambassador to the Soviet Union under Ronald Reagan—are strongly upset by what our government is doing. Having said that, George realizes that parts of what Russia stands for today are things that American social liberals just like that will say is—Putin is terrible. He is not nice to gay people. And that is an example to George of how social liberalism is being used. At least, this is George's hypothesis—as a tool to get the Westerners who are social liberals to come aboard—Westerners who are billionaires. (laughs) So, George is going over there because he is saying that we have civil liberties for gay people. Of course, we should. George does not want to go into this to defend himself. He has never had an ounce of anything within him that says we should hate. It's nuts. But, we are now using the gay movement, George feels, to find a way to dismiss other countries. Now, under the Soviet Union, homosexuality was illegal. They were treating their gay folks less than we were treating ours. Okay, it is still worse there. But, we deliberately chose something to point fingers—to change American opinion towards Russia. George saw this when he began talking to people, and the first thing they know is something that was made visible—Putin as a bare-chested person on a horse trying to show he's a macho man. The latest is Putin having disappeared for a week. This is the public—This is how George feels. After all, to

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<sup>81</sup> Vladimir Putin became Russian president in 1999 when Boris Yeltsin resigned.

<sup>82</sup> Dr. George is referencing here the Ukrainian Revolution of 2014, where then Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was ousted (Wikipedia, 2015).

think about it, who disappears for a week? Usually dictators—George believes—What’s his name? The one behind the 9/11 events—disappears. In other words, it is a way of delegitimizing the fact that Russia is a democracy. *It maybe a democracy that’s endangered.* But, don’t tell George that it’s a dictatorship—or at least that it’s a non-democracy. It has the support of a majority of its people.

George is going to Russia now, and he managed to get himself invited to speak to some students at the diplomatic academy.<sup>83</sup> George is going to present the ideas that he talked about here. George clarifies that he is not going to get into international issues, except in private conversation. He’s not going to make accusations. But, George is going to say why he thinks Russia would be well advised to reject the neo-liberalism—the ‘cowboy capitalism’—that it was advised to follow in the 90s. Where is Putin on this? Not, probably where George would like—He may be too caving into serving power. Some say he’s a billionaire. George doesn’t know. He knows that Putin did challenge the other oligarchs. That was a good thing by itself. He said that there were people who have power here that’s unsustainable. But again, George does not want to try to get involved in all those details. What George will be doing while he is there is to try to just present to students why they should treat capitalism cautiously—to realize that it needs to be a mixed economy. That’s how George grew up, where you need a strong government. You need a government. You need enforceable property rights. You need redistribution from the very wealthy to the very unwealthy. You need these things. So, George is going to try to say how we have to be very skeptical about the advice coming from the European Union—which is driven by highly conservative economists.

1:24:28 *Are these students in Moscow?*

Yes.

1:24:29 *Are they economics students? Political science students?*

They are studying to be diplomats, which is very interesting. Now, George does not have a good, firm grasp of everything just yet. George knows the man that he met while he was there. He’s the director of research at the—Don’t ask George how he met this man. Well, ask George how he met him? George was a little concerned. He can be skeptical, and he had a wonderful guide. George was advised to just go there with a single guide—his friend here in the U.S. He went through this formal thing. It was a travel agency. But his guide, she was very nice, and they really got along. And they talked about everything under the sun—things that she didn’t like about her country and things that she did. She

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<sup>83</sup> The Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (est. 1934) is located in Moscow, Russia (Wikipedia, 2015).

introduced George to this man, Oleg Ivanov—Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation at the Diplomatic Academy.<sup>84</sup> So, you talk about a jewel. So, George went. He met Ivanov. George gave Ivanov his books. They've been in touch. George finally said that he'd like to come back if he could come there to speak. Money is not an issue. He didn't think they were going to pay, but they are now. So, they clearly saw George was there to give what he can and to influence the discussion. But again, the person taking care of George is not—right now on this end—She's the administrator for the program in which George is going to be participating. Her English is not too good. And of course, George's Russian is far, far worse than her English. But, it's a little confusing. George is not even sure what times he is meeting whom where. But, it will work itself out. George is sure.

1:26:28 *How long are you going to spend in Russia?*

Two weeks.

1:26:32 *Is anybody else coming from La Salle or from the States?*<sup>85</sup>

No.

1:26:37 *Just you?*

Just George. By the way, there is something to be said there. You know from my economic values. I say—community. Stop individualism. But, George is a very individualistic person in his way. He hopes he is not a 'cowboy capitalist', but (laughs) —There's no money involved. But, he tends to like to do things—but, sometimes he has to do things very independently because no one is really with him. And quite honestly, no one is with George here—at least people George knows directly. There might be one friend George has brought around to his thinking. George has one person his wife introduced him to—the head of Russian studies at Drexel.<sup>86</sup> He is very receptive to most of what George said. He's quite critical. He was raised, George thinks, in Russia. So, George has met people who are with him. He should not imply that he—Everyone George is reading. They are very top thinkers. They're with him, but he doesn't know them personally. But, he is going there alone. But, that's fine.

1:27:48 *Other than Moscow, do you plan to travel and see the countryside, Saint Petersburg,<sup>87</sup> Kiev of Ukraine?<sup>88</sup> Anything?*

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<sup>84</sup> Oleg Ivanov is currently the vice president for research at The Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation ([www.dipacademy.ru](http://www.dipacademy.ru), 2015).

<sup>85</sup> States refers here to the United States of America.

<sup>86</sup> Drexel is Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>87</sup> Saint Petersburg is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in Russia, of approximately 4.9 million people (Wikipedia, 2015).

Again, the person George met from Drexel is going to be in touch with someone who gives some wonderful looks at the countryside and the towns surrounding. George thinks that all he would have the time to do—His time could be best spent if he could see the countryside or non-urban Russia. George was in Leningrad years ago, what is now Saint Petersburg.<sup>89</sup> George was in Kiev years ago, and he'd like to go there—but not now.<sup>90</sup> If George can get someone either to show him or get him to some little towns just to check out things, he would like to do that.

1:28:38 *Was 1979 the last time you were in Russia?*

Well, last year he went for the one week.

1:28:43 *You went for the one week.*

Yeah.

1:28:44 *What did you notice between 1979 and last year in Russia?*

Well, that was remarkable.

1:28:50 *What was the change, going from Brezhnev<sup>91</sup> to Putin?<sup>92</sup> What did you notice?*

Well, in here—Again, George tends to be kind of confident in himself. He doesn't know if he admits when he is wrong often enough as he is. He was certainly wrong in regards to the one currency in Europe. So there, he is trying to show that he can admit when he is wrong. He thinks what he didn't realize is that there are great things about consumer culture. There are very good things. There is also disgusting stuff. There is too much commercialization. But, Russia, with its commercialization, has a side to it that is much nicer than it was under the Soviet Union. This is probably no news to many people. There are lots of restaurants—lots of restaurants. There were fast food restaurants serving Russian food. It was delicious. But, when he'd been there under the Soviet Union, it was awful. When George was there in '79—"Oh, my God!" So, where does this all lead? George thinks that they have more rise—They have more

<sup>88</sup> Kiev is the capital city of Ukraine. The population is approximately 2.8 million people (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>89</sup> Saint Petersburg was called Leningrad during a large part of the Soviet Union period of Russia, from 1924 to 1991. Leningrad was changed back to Saint Petersburg with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> See note eighty-eight above for information on Kiev, Ukraine.

<sup>91</sup> Leonid Brezhnev (1906-1982) was the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union, holding this position from 1964 to his death in 1982 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>92</sup> Vladimir Putin (b. 1952) is the current president of Russia, as of 2015 (Wikipedia, 2015).

inequality occurring there—more than they used to. They have some of the blessings of the free market and some of the pathologies. One very odd thing George noticed, he was able to—because his Russian is very limited—but, he could read all these commercial things and understand them. This is because commercial things are so simple by their nature. So, George was proud that he was able to read all these things in Russian to see what they were saying. That was quite a change. At the Kremlin,<sup>93</sup> they've made that into—It's not Disneyland. But, they're still keeping the integrity of a social institution separate from commercial interests. But, it's beautifully redone. In fact, George saw the restoration of a destroyed building that George thought had just been left there from the time it was destroyed. It was masterful. George also noticed the arts. He's always loved the Russian culture. He went to their modern art museum.<sup>94</sup> It was like nothing he'd ever seen. George means he shouldn't be surprised—20<sup>th</sup> century art. George noticed that their—on their T.V.—It's a lot like ours—a lot of MTV type stuff.<sup>95</sup> And, contrary to the view, George did not see any great puritanical styles there. Maybe, there are in the small towns. George doesn't know. They had very good commercial art. In the T.V. where you see all these things flying by—high tech—it was very much influenced by the early abstract art tradition. So, some are trying to make fun of Russia as a backward place. *“What are they talking about?”* When you talk about Moscow, there was some banality. George remembers in the hotels, there was one little place to eat that had really ugly stuff. George means—He was pretty impressed by all that. That was due to the fall of communism.

1:31:54 *You mentioned a love of classical music, and I was wondering in your upcoming trip to Russia if you plan to take in the symphony, the ballet, the opera while you're in Moscow.*

Believe it or not. George has not even thought about that. “Thank you for reminding me right now because I sure should.” When he was there in '79, he went to the Bolshoi.<sup>96</sup>

1:32:12 *Describe.*

It was so much fun because there I was on a tour, and they had the Russian ballet troupe performing in—The music in the background was in English, and of all things, a ridiculous thing—(singing) “Oh, the head bone's connected to the

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<sup>93</sup> The Moscow Kremlin is a complex that is the official residence of the president of the Russian Federation (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>94</sup> The Moscow Museum of Modern Art (<http://www.mmoma.ru/en/about/>, 2015)

<sup>95</sup> MTV refers to Music Television, which is a video music and reality show cable station that began in 1981 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>96</sup> The Bolshoi Theatre is a historic theatre in Moscow, which holds performances of ballet and opera. It opened in 1825 (Wikipedia, 2015).

back bone. The backbone's connected to the—<sup>97</sup> The Russians weren't hearing the words of course. They were hearing something in English. It conjured up something American cultural to them. It was very funny. That George remembers well. George went to the Hermitage Museum<sup>98</sup> in '79 in what was then Leningrad.<sup>99</sup> That was an incredible museum naturally. There, George learned a capitalist lesson. That was that it was free. Economists like to say that nothing is really free. It means you're not paying anything. In some cases, that's true. You're going to get too many people. Like, that's why we have traffic jams because it's free. That is George's regular economics speaking now. So, George realized that there are so many of us here. He really couldn't look at the art. You feel that you don't really have a chance to look at the art with so many people. George figured that, yeah, they should charge a price here. That's how George feels about parking in Center City, too.<sup>100</sup> They should raise the rates on the meters. George realizes that people without any money would not like that, but George would not deny that there are some cultural issues here, too. But, George did see that they were not allocating a scarce resource that we like to say in economics—namely, space in the Hermitage very efficiently. So, that was interesting.<sup>101</sup> George heard a singer—an opera singer—a male—who reminded George of Brezhnev.<sup>102</sup> He was so proud. He was wearing the medals of the Soviet Union, but he had a remarkable voice. It was at a recital he went to. And George was just getting into opera then. He really liked that. Again, George will probably do something when he goes there now.

1:34:23 *Have there been any memorable opera performances that you have been to in your life? I am just curious.*

George loves 19<sup>th</sup> century opera. Probably, his favorites are the early 19<sup>th</sup> century—late 18<sup>th</sup>—Mozart's fabulous<sup>103</sup>—and Rossini<sup>104</sup>—bel canto<sup>105</sup>—Donizetti,<sup>106</sup> Bellini,<sup>107</sup> Verdi.<sup>108</sup> Later 20<sup>th</sup> century—in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Maybe,

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<sup>97</sup> Dr. George is referencing here the well-known spiritual song called 'Dem Bones' (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>98</sup> The State Hermitage Museum is a museum of art and culture in Saint Petersburg, Russia. It is one of the largest and oldest museums in the world, founded in 1764 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>99</sup> Leningrad is now Saint Petersburg, Russia.

<sup>100</sup> Center City Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

<sup>101</sup> Dr. George is referencing here the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg. See note ninety-eight.

<sup>102</sup> Leonid Brezhnev (1906-1982) is referenced here. See note ninety-one.

<sup>103</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) wrote twenty-two operas in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century classical style (Wikipedia, 2015). Two of his most famous operas include *Die Zauberfloete* and *Don Giovanni*.

<sup>104</sup> Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) wrote thirty-nine operas in the early Romantic style (Wikipedia, 2015). He is most famous for his opera *The Barber of Seville*.

<sup>105</sup> 'Bel canto' is in the Italian language and means 'beautiful singing'. It refers to a singing style of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>106</sup> Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) wrote close to seventy operas. He was a leading composer of the 'bel canto' style in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>107</sup> Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835) was an opera composer praised for his long-flowing melodies (Wikipedia, 2015).

George feels he is a closet Romantic.<sup>109</sup> He is not what you call a romantic person, but he just finds them so beautiful. He finds the music just incredibly wonderful to listen to.

1:35:09 *Have you been to any opera performances 'live'?*

This year—George and his wife had tickets for a number of years. This year, George did not go to the opera. *La Boheme* was just one of the greatest.<sup>110</sup> He knows that one pretty well. And, George has seen many over the years. In fact, George has got an interesting story.

George's first time in Olney Hall was in January of '79.<sup>111</sup> Now in January of '79, George was for the first time teaching a course—just a single course on Saturday mornings—in Olney Hall—The Principles of Economics. George came here, and there was an opera—the last opera ever performed here. It was performed in the Rodden Theater.<sup>112</sup> It was *Don Giovanni*.<sup>113</sup> It was incredible. George can still picture it. He can tell you where he sat in the Rodden Theater. Then, George picked up his key. That was his first time here, and then, he went into Olney Hall for the first time. What's also bizarre is that the next day, George taught his first class at La Salle. The reason this is also an interesting story—George's last day teaching the same class at La Salle, George went to an opera that night. He thinks it was *Don Giovanni*, but he's not sure.<sup>114</sup> So, he had this nice symmetry. He likes symmetry. That's with an 's', not with a 'c'. That's a little joke there. So, George saw an opera the night before his first time going into Olney Hall, when he was teaching ECON 201.<sup>115</sup> The last class he ever taught is ECON 201—he went and saw the same opera that night—this time downtown.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) was a Romantic style composer who wrote such landmark operas as *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, and *Aida* (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>109</sup> The Romantic style of Western music predominated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is most notable for its delayed resolutions and cadences, as well as an appeal to nature and raw emotion.

<sup>110</sup> *La Boheme* is a Romantic opera by Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924). The opera premiered in 1896 in Turin, Italy (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>111</sup> Olney Hall is an academic building on the campus of La Salle University. The building is used primarily for the humanities.

<sup>112</sup> The Rodden Theater is located in the Student Union of La Salle University.

<sup>113</sup> *Don Giovanni* is an opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). The opera is famous for its penultimate scene in the last act, where the character of the Commendatore confronts the character of Don Giovanni, confronting him for his immoral lifestyle. The opera premiered in Prague in 1787 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>114</sup> Talking to Dr. George after the session, we confirmed that this opera was *Don Giovanni*, which played at Philadelphia's Academy of Music from April 25 to May 4, 2014 ([www.operaphila.org](http://www.operaphila.org), 2015).

<sup>115</sup> ECON 201 is a La Salle economics course entitled Introductory Microeconomics: Business Firm and Market Analysis ([www.lasalle.edu](http://www.lasalle.edu), 2015).

<sup>116</sup> Downtown refers here to Center City Philadelphia.

1:37:13 *At the Academy?*<sup>117</sup>

Yeah.

1:37:14 *Was it last year?*

Yeah. It probably wasn't *Don Giovanni*.<sup>118</sup> George wonders how he could have forgotten, but it was an opera. And, it was—

1:37:24 *Don Giovanni was playing last spring.*

Yeah, that was it then. Okay, so, George saw the same—He says if he uses the saying that something is symbolic, he is proud to be one who is almost hyper-conservative when it comes to preservation. That's why George likes Philadelphia. George is very happy that he was teaching the same course in 2014 that he was teaching in 1979. He taught a lot better after those thirty-five years. Now, this doesn't mean he couldn't teach other things. We all want to grow during our lives, but George can't take it when people can only imagine change. Again, that is the problem of capitalism. Again, paradoxically, we think you are liberal when you want to change all the time—well, not necessarily. "I want to change our attitudes toward change." That's different. So if George can change the attitudes towards change then we won't like change as much. That's not the change that he just made, no. (laughs)

1:38:24 *So, I have one final question for the session today. Is there anything else you'd like to discuss for the record?*

No, George feels that he has said it all. He has really enjoyed doing this. Again, he says he is very fortunate to have been at La Salle all these years. And, he is not just saying that. It is really very true. Thanks for what you've done here. (speaking to the interviewer) This means a lot for me, too.

1:38:54 *Thank you. These have been fantastic sessions. Thank you so much.*

Sure. Great.

1:38:59 *End of Session Two and End of Interview*

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<sup>117</sup> The Academy of Music is a historic opera and concert hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It opened in 1857 (Wikipedia, 2015).

<sup>118</sup> See note one hundred and fourteen for clarification.