I know, “rap” has a much more interesting musical connotation at present, but I am using the word in the 1960s sense, to refer to a serious but informal conversation. As someone who accepted humbly and earnestly the invitation to direct our Masters program in Psychology, it is important to me to try to accompany prospective and present students through their journeys in a way that is more or less worthy of our journeying. So I have written this series of raps, seriously informal conversations, on various program-related topics:

1. What to do, now that I’m admitted?

2. What is mentorship, and how does it matter?

3. What are the ethics of academic involvement?

4. What about academic climate and conflict?

5. Diversity: Not just affirmation, but celebration!

Please click on each to take a look at my perspectives, which are not necessarily program policy or even necessarily shared by my colleagues, but reflect my experience, my best gifts, and my considerable investment in helping you get the most from your experience here. I hope my words will be provocative and comforting and helpful to you.
1. What to do, now that I’m admitted?

Dear students, dear brave companions of the road,

Know that we are grateful to have you here. Know that you are on the brink of the process of becoming part of a community, bound together in other- and sister- and brotherhood. Bound.

I thought it might be helpful to prepare these “What to do, now that I’m admitted?” suggestions. Check some of them out with your student colleagues, okay?

I hope that they are gifts to you.

Know, please, that I consider it a deep and abiding privilege to try to be one who accompanies you in your work of learning and unfolding. I look forward to our work.

1. Be in touch with each other. I apologize for not verifying this with each of you individually, but I have checked with many of you and each has indicated that it would be a gift to have one another’s e-mails. So I’m including them in the address line for your facility in welcoming each other, in nurturing your collaborative transition here.

2. Review the Graduate School website for lots of helpful information on registration, financial aid, and getting ready to come here. Most of you have already been in touch with folks from the Grad School to apply, of course, but I encourage you to continue to consult the helpful materials they have compiled.

3. The College of Social Sciences (of which the Department of Psychology is a part) has prepared a thorough and helpful Graduate Studies Handbook. There is a lot of relevant information there that you will want to consult now and throughout your academic journey. The folks at the College of Social Science have also compiled a comprehensive set of links, here (click on “Graduate Student Links and Forms,” okay?). They are very helpful. And of course this Master’s Program website a more thorough, accessible, and helpful repository.

4. Find a comfortable and affordable place to live. Most of our students live in Carrollton or nearby, and many also commute from Atlanta or other more distant areas. A wide variety of housing options is available. You probably know about internet compilations such as this and
5. Consider applying for a Graduate Assistantship, using this portal. As you can see, we have many internal (departmental) assistantships available for our MA students who meet the requirements (being registered at the time of application, a 3.5 undergraduate GPA, and compatibility of background and interests). Our students also tend to have good luck finding assistantships around campus. Check the appended file for some of which I’ve been notified recently, okay?

6. Those of you who are joining us from out of state will also want to get with me regarding filling out a waiver of this portion of your tuition. Please see and review the attached form, okay?

7. Get registered for some classes as soon as possible, but don’t worry if you are not able to build the schedule you would prefer, just yet.
   a) Remember that for both the thesis and non-thesis option there are only 36 required total credit hours, and remember that we only have two required courses for the Master’s program (PSYC 6000 Introduction to Humanistic Psychology, and PSYC 6021 Psychology as Human Science). Probably only one of these courses will be taught each semester, but there will be plenty of opportunities to take these courses later on, and neither course is a prerequisite for any others in the MA program.
   b) So almost all of your coursework here is electives (at the 5000, 6000, and 7000 level)! So as you settle in and put your plan of studies together in future semesters, do so in conjunction with a faculty member mentor. I’ll be in touch shortly with an e-mail letting you know of a faculty member who has agreed to serve in this role with you. You may want to change mentors later (that happens), but for now it will be helpful to at least have a start.
   c) As you think about which courses you may want to take, try to glean what you can from the course titles and from the description of courses in the Graduate Catalog.
   d) Feel free to e-mail departmental faculty teaching courses to ask for a syllabus, or to ask for more information. We welcome these sorts of curiosities and mostly cannot answer on each others’ behalf (so ask the faculty member teaching, okay?)
   e) Remember that you are allowed to apply to your MA in Psychology up to six hours of graduate coursework in departments other than psychology (in Anthropology, in Sociology, in Political Science, in Counseling, for example). Lots of our students do this to broaden their interdisciplinary exposure.
   f) Many of our present graduate students register for more classes then they will keep, so lots of seats tend to open up in the first week or so. There is an override permission form for students to fill out, but my sense is that most grad students just e-mail the professor directly, or just attend classes the first few days and wait for a seat to open. It’s a process, right?

8. Wait to buy your books until you have attended class, usually, and until you have received a syllabus. Most faculty members are aware that students buy books on-line, or even rent some, and they will have some recommendations for you.
9. Most faculty members will use to varying extents our **on-line learning platform**, called **CourseDen**. You'll be able to sign up using your my.westga.edu ID and user name, and usually course materials are available there the first day classes begin.

10. **Jump.** In my view, classes are something we do to occupy our time and put us in relationship so that the more important work of learning and uncovering of vocation can occur. And be aware that graduate school, particular here at the UWG Psychology Department, may be very different in important ways from the typical undergraduate educational experience (see [here](#) and [here](#), and my “Director’s Raps” of course). Just watch that process as it happens in you, okay?

11. I'll be in touch with you regarding an **early-semester orientation.** But mostly, you already know what you need to know, and just let yourself be on the look-out for suitable companions in text and in relationship.

Welcome. Well, come. Well?

MK
2. Mentorship: What it is, and Why it Matters

“Tell me, where are you going, my brave companion of the road?” - Nanci Griffith

Once upon a time, the story goes, there was a king, a warrior, Odysseus, who was called to do his work miles and years away from home. He entrusted his wife, his household, and most of all his only son Telemachus to a beloved friend, whose diligent tending and overseeing and fierce loyal companionship bestowed this legacy of involvement with his very name. His name was Mentor, and this is a little rap about your journey toward and with mentorship in graduate school.

Just watch, please, how any of these perspectives of mine might dance with yours? I'll enumerate them for clarity, and maybe so we might talk about them at some point in our shared journeys.

1. In graduate school as in life as in road trips, the journey depends on the companion. We're not merely striving for a new, kind, clear relationship so that we might begin to work: the relationship is the work. Know, here at the outset, that from my perspective all of the curriculum, all of the content and paper-writing and course requirements, is nothing more and nothing less than a helpful and insistent ushering of us into the space of collaboration. That is a sacred blistering space, indeed.

2. Be careful who you enlist and allow as your companions. Although you will be assigned helpfully at the outset of your journey to an advisor, and although you will have teachers and supervisors, yours is the work of discernment and courage and caution. Let your work
with theory (about wellness, about health, about relationality) flow into your work with its application, in lived relationship.

3. **Mentorship is to be established, not assumed.** Telemachus (remember him?) was a babe in arms when his father vanished across the ocean. In the waves and troughs of that mystery, the work of Mentor was to set sail with Telemachus toward a gradual awakening to not only the true nature of the mysterious heroic absent father, but ultimately to accompany an awakening to the heroic presence of Telemachus to himself. (You may read more about that process [here](#) if you are so inclined...it’s interesting!). In the ebbs and flows and tides of relationship, you and your Mentor will turn the abstraction of the curriculum into the immediacy of relationship. And...

4. **Mentorship is a process, not an event.** As you experience a deep heroic mysterious connection with a teacher or two, as the arc of your journey bends with theirs, you may have a conversation and punctuation of that relationship: “I need a mentor. Would you be willing to serve with me in that role?” On the other hand, you may never ask, or have to. You may find yourself almost gracefully, and certainly mysteriously, finding yourself accompanied, and speaking that companionship in action (doing several classes, or writing a thesis or a paper together) rather than word. As other relationships, mentorship moves. Be suspicious of stasis, of resolution. “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.”

5. **Perhaps the greatest gift of mentorship is not similarity, but complimentarity.** You may have the idea that mentorship involves a stamping out of self in the image of the other, a pouring of identity into the mold of the other. But no, not from my perspective. The greatest gift to a teacher is not creation of smaller versions of themself. The greatest gift, it turns out, is to be co-participants in an unveiling of mystery, of reconnoitering jointly the terrain of being so as to sit and stand and dwell in it differently. When asked if he fancied himself a Guru, the teacher and mystic and (yes) Mentor Deepak Chopra invited the interviewer to spell the word. “G, U, R, U.” “Exactly,” replied the teacher. Read it out loud and it will make sense.

Oh, and the end of the story? After two dozen or so years of mystery and absence, Odysseus comes again to his son. Eyes full of inherited idealization and ears brimming with stories of superhuman mythical exploits, Telemachus was blind to the ordinary wonder standing before him. “You’re not that guy! I’ve heard about him....” And then, dear Odysseus: “It is I, Odysseus. No other Odysseus than I will ever come back to you. But here I am, and I am as you see me.”

What a gift that will be, to know of your extraordinary, ordinary wonder, glimpsed in the burnished kind clear mirror of your Mentor. Blessings all over you in that journey.
3. The Ethics of Involvement

In this little rap, I would like to speak about a different kind of ethic: the ethic of involvement. And I would like to do so from a particular ethical position, that of benevolent parentalism. Some of us, children of power rather than love, sometimes confound tending and control, and are apt to assume paternalism where there is parentalism. So The ethic of paternalism concerns our relationship primarily with power, deriving as it does from the word for father. The paternal ethic is to effect an efficient outcome in the other, to bring law and compulsion and power, to get people to do something. In contrast, a parental ethic is benevolently permissive and nurturant. It is inherently relational rather than instrumental. Parental ethic seeks to effect a presence and a tending rather than a productivity or performance.

I have another rap on the ethics of our classroom gathering, but this rap addresses specifically the ethics of our presence. I like to hope that these words may correspond to, or be faithful to, an ethic of benevolent parentalism. Rather than telling you what to do, for example, or scolding you into compliance, as would a stern father, I hope to shepherd and tend you with these words as would a good parent. The focus is involvement, and I would like to sparkle three or four facets.

And I need to confess at the outset of this little rap that my own perspective on the ethic of involvement, and my own way of living in “ought,” is undoubtedly skewed and outlying. I have missed exactly two classes since 1984, and taught more than one or two when it was exactly what I would have preferred not to do (feverish, or retching, or wretched). But I did. And as a practicing psychologist, I have written by now thousands of psychological evaluations which in humility and gratitude I claim and cherish as not only meeting but far exceeding the standards of my profession, even as they didn’t quite reach the standard of the marketplace in terms of what I charge. I have never been late with a psychological report. To my knowledge, I have never been negligent of a therapy hour no matter how distracted or infirm or burdened solitarily I was.

I take my responsibility and what I owe to society, to my classroom companions, to the discipline of psychology, and ultimately to myself, very seriously. First, is our involvement and allegiance, what we owe to ourselves in this graduate project. Again, as people who have worked hard in the world to individuate and separate, we tend to resist certain words, especially words that trigger or
awaken the old paternal ethic. But, I would like to invite you to hear the word “ought” not as pertaining to the law, but rather as pertaining to its etymological root in the word “owe.” The question here isn’t, “What do I have to do,” but instead, “What do I owe a being, here?”

I would like you to consider carefully what you owe the endowment of trust and moratorium that society is bestowing on us here in this place of ideas and abstraction and irrelevance.

I would like to invite you to consider carefully what you owe the discipline of psychology. I would like you to consider carefully what you owe ultimately yourself as a student. I would like to invite you, as would a good parent, to exorcise the ghosts of compulsory education, and at the times when you find yourself in this master's program asking what you have to do, asking yourself instead, “What do I owe?” I can almost promise you that as you do so, you will have a very different experience. You will take fewer “personal days,” I bet.

A second little bit of benevolently parental involvement, of shepherding, has to do with the ethic of our involvement with others. I like to think that there is a sense in which we are obligated to do justice to those who have preceded us, and as Isaac Newton to stand on their shoulders so that we might see the perspectives our sisters and brothers toiled so hard to suggest and bestow as gifts. It also seems to me that we may dishonor and even perhaps profane these gifts if we do not take them up with intention and respect. I am haunted by the experience of my Civil War brothers, massed and marching into gun emplacements and in many case the certainty of death’s door. The story goes that they pinned their names to the back of their ruddy uniforms so that their bodies could be identified. And as we read their journals with an eye toward motive, and bring humble tentative curiosity to why they would do such a thing, we don’t see fervent patriotics or allegiance to slavery or state’s rights. Instead, each says, “I didn’t run because the man next to me didn’t run.” I think about that a lot: I owe it to my sisters and brothers to be here, in part because they are here. I’m going to pin my name to the back of my shirt and march straight into the mouth of uncertainty and humility and collaboration. I owe it to them, to you, not to run.

At the same time, there is even a deeper obligation when it comes to our involvement with others in relationship and vocational tending.

As a practicing psychologist, I have written by now thousands of psychological evaluations which I say humbly and greatly uniformly exceed the standards of my profession, and don’t quite reach the standard of the marketplace in terms of what I charge. I have never been late with a psychological report. To my knowledge, I have never been negligent of a therapy hour no matter how distracted or infirm or burdened solitarily I was. I owe it to my companions, to whom I hold myself out as a companion, to be in fact that. Maybe a little story will help clarify my point.

I have a dear friend and colleague who is the chair of another department on campus. As part of his ongoing commitment to teaching, he is looking for ways to help his students bridge what is purely academic to what is necessary in the socio-cultural context in which we find ourselves. In his case, as a teacher of biology and ecological systems, he built this bridge quite tangibly last semester by securing the donation of a dozen or so picnic tables from a local builder supply. He then asked his students, as would a good parent, to paint or otherwise adorn these picnic tables to be placed in public spaces, but to do so in a way that wasn't merely personal.
The only requirement of their esthetic embellishment was that they be able to map it onto some hard won conceptual notion about place or environment or ecosystem or person nonperson interface. Otherwise, they were free to place, or paint, anything they wanted. Of course, the outcome was as would be expected. The tables were not only beautiful and functional, but also reflected the ethic of care and tending on the part of all involved.

Sometimes we students of psychology are rather eager and maybe even heavily handed urgent in our leap from the conceptual to the applied. Humans are not picnic tables. Any notions we have about being therapeutic in the world, let alone doing psychotherapy, demand a similar accountability. They demand that before putting hand to brush, or mouth to ear, that we simmer and stew and nurture in us a process of knowledge, and that we alloy this knowledge with self-awareness so that it might be wisdom. Then and only then in my view can we begin to speak of doing anything in a social context. For this and other reasons, I have been very reluctant to participate in the presumption of adequacy. The variety of human suffering and the ethical imperative to avoid harm and do good are so sounding in me that I would frame it as ethically precarious and vocationally premature to think about a master's degree in anything as equipping you to take on these burdens. Rather what I wish for you from the depths of my heart and the hollows of my hands and the crown of my head is a humble commitment to stewing and simmering and familiarizing yourself in this short two years with psychological theory and ultimately with its implications for life well lived.

I look forward to accompanying you in that beautifully and somewhat less terrifyingly ethical project.

*My impression had been growing through the last four or five years of teaching that I was being used not so much as a teacher but as an object upon which some authority-rebellious students sharpened their teeth and claws, as the bear uses a scratching tree.*  (A. Maslow)
The first principle of ethics is to, “Do no harm.” The second, related principle is to, “Do good.” From these two principles, all related rules and regulations and best practices derive. In graduate study, you should be aware that there are codes of ethics that elaborate these two larger principles, and that these codes may pertain variously to you and your teacher. For example, as a licensed psychologist, I am bound to adhere to the American Psychological Association Code of Ethics. Those who are otherwise licensed are similarly allegiant and obligated to the ethical codes of their professions, but all of us in university settings are tethered helpfully to a code of ethics regarding our teaching and learning work. This is found in the following website. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with this ethical code, and to consult it as you would a compass during your graduate stay to orient professionally to what otherwise would be merely personal. It has been my experience that when we neglect the work that others have done to locate our individual suffering or joy in a common context, our feelings of specialness or persecution or arrogance may surface accordingly, so it is nice to know that others have given these questions considerable work. I would like to emphasize in this rap two specificities among these ethical principles.

The first has to do with confidentiality. Some of you are familiar perhaps with the legal concept of privilege. It implies an ownership of material or experience or process on the part of those possessing it. For example, a patient in a psychotherapy relationship has ownership of the material of that relationship (assuming the patient is of majority age), and as a psychotherapist I cannot give that material away to another without the patient’s consent except under extenuating circumstances that have to do with likelihood of harm to self or others.
The ethical principle of confidentiality is related to privilege, but it is an ethical rather than a legal imperative. Confidentiality demands a collaborative respectfulness for what happens in classrooms, and in written communication with others in our environment. In sending a faculty member a personal email, for example, you should certainly have an expectation of privacy related to confidentiality, and unless you request or unless the faculty member asks for your permission, you ought to expect that that email will not be shared publicly or even privately outside of the ethical container to which it belongs. Similarly, communications from faculty members to you might be treated with respect and confidentiality and not disseminated broadly. Please ask your teacher and other classroom companions about the extent to which your classroom products and processes are protected under the wonderful, and sometimes troublesome umbrella of confidentiality. You may read more about privacy, confidentiality, and privilege here. Give it a look?

There are also ethical guidelines for how we manage and address concerns and conflict. For example, during the course of your graduate study you might have a misunderstanding or argument or personal difficulty with one of your graduate student peers. You may feel misunderstood or misjudged or misattributed to by one of your teachers. You may even have concerns about the grades assigned you based on the work you do in your classes. In each of these cases, the ethical principles of respect for one another and for our process applies. And relatedly, a respect for the work we do around the unfolding of our professional and vocational development constitutes a helpful ethical tether.

In addition to these ethical principles there are also (as is common in psychology) theoretical notions that apply to the process by which we might address concerns and do our work together in safety and care. I am fond of a conceptual notion that I will borrow from the systems theorists. It is something called triangulation (image borrowed from https://www.slideshare.net/dperatsakis/family-therapy-basic-concepts-nov-2016):

**Problem Triangulation**

*Conflict avoidance within the dyad may lead to the development of a symptom*

- Triangulation begins as a normative response due to stress or anxiety caused by transition, change or conflict
- The pattern habitualizes, then rigidifies as a preferred transactional pattern for avoiding stress in the dyad
- The IP begins to actively participate in maintaining the role due to primary and secondary gains
- The “problem”, that serves the purpose of refocusing attention onto the IP and away from tension within the dyad, becomes an organizational node around which behaviors repeat, thereby governance some part of the family system’s communication/function
- Over time, this interactional sequence acquires identity, history and functional value (power), much like any role, and we call it a “symptom” or the symptom-bearer “dysfunctional”
- A key component in symptom development is that the evolving pattern of interaction avoids more painful conflict
- This places the IP at risk of remaining the “lightning rod” and accelerating behaviors to maintain the same net effect
- When this occurs it negates the need to achieve a more effective solution (adaptive response) to some other important change and growth is thwarted. The ensuing condition is called “dysfunction”.
People in systems in which they experience a lack of power or access may look to others with whom to collude or build an alliance, as off against a perceived adversary. You probably remember times in high school or even earlier in your college study when a classmate invited you to solve the problem of intimacy by being critical of another classmate or a teacher or an assignment. You may even remember times in your family of origin in which a parent invited you to be persuaded that the other parent was doing something negative or unwanted, and that the two of you could feel close to the extent that you saw this similarly. You may have even heard others invoke what the social psychologists call “hidden constituencies” that sometimes sound like “We’ve been talking, and lots of us think…” Each of these is an attempt to feel powerful and safe by aligning against a third party. The essence of triangulation is such a stable and strong alliance, and is again very common in systems in which people feel powerless or feel a lack of access to power. This MA program, however, is not such a system. It is my hope here that you need not triangulate, and that if you feel another inviting that sort of triangulation (one of your teachers colluding with you that another teacher is misplaced in his or her thinking, or a classmate inviting a soothing of the difficulty of the material by a conspiracy of blaming the text or the teacher), that you will remember this conceptual ally.

When confronted with triangulation, I first try to understand it empathically, and to decode the implicit messages about powerlessness or fear. I am then obligated as a licensed psychologist and as a member of the professoriate to safeguard our process and not to allow myself to participate in this easy collusion. The thing to do when a patient wants to complain to me about a previous therapist, or a student about another teacher, is to honor this experience, and then ask that person where that work needs to be done. It needs to be done in the relationship that gave rise to it to the extent that that relationship permits, and in my experience it almost always does. When I invite students who want to solve the problem of feeling intimate with me by inviting me to see another student or colleague as “bad,” I typically ask what work is there, and then I ask if there is any reason why that work cannot be done with that student or that faculty member. Again, almost always the answer is “No.” On rare occasions in which the imbalance of power or other considerations demand it, I will offer to accompany the student in a discussion with that colleague or teacher, so as not to be triangulated but rather locate the dilemma as a piece of our work together.

Again, it has been my experience that these occasions are very rare, so I invite you in your graduate career not to triangulate. Do the work that needs to be done with the person with whom you need to do that work. When you find yourself inviting others to stand beside you and have a common adversary or enemy, please take advantage of these opportunities in your self-awareness to begin to carry yourself otherwise in the world.

Navigating interpersonal conflict and tension is one of the projects and purposes of education, after all. The dispensation and memorization of knowledge that occurs in a master’s program could take place much more efficiently and quickly by reading books. It is working through these kinds of interpersonal edges, however, that the essence of education might properly and helpfully accrue. I hope that is your experience here, and that you feel accompanied and encouraged in your efforts to carry yourself ethically and well in the world.
When I consider how we are together as a community, I think about two different metaphorical comparisons.

The first is to a blender in which we are all lumped together in some suitably sturdy container and a not-so-benevolent eager hand presses a button labeled puree or liquify. We emerge pink, homogenous, and like-minded. We deprive ourselves of the rich, savory, wonderful, troublesome, sacredness of our community.

The second image, far more consonant and faithful to my own notions about community, is that of a pot. It is not a melting pot in which we are all reduced to a common non-diverse essence. Rather it is that sort of pot that that is the centerpiece in a favorite and persistent folktale, “Stone Soup.”

In this story the travelers arrived at a village lacking any possessions, money, or anything to eat. They ask visitors for shelter and hospitality but they were turned away. The visitors each pleading poverty and lack. The resourceful travelers decided to manage this problem and promote a communal meal by a beautifully deceptive ruse. They scrounged somewhere an iron pot that they placed ceremoniously in the market square and announced loudly to all within earshot that they were filling it with water and were going to light a fire underneath in the interest of making stone soup. The visitors in their curiosity and eagerness gathered around to witness this display.

It wasn’t long before a traveler remarked to one of the townspeople somewhat apparently offhandedly that as good as stone soup was with the stone that had been placed obviously and with great ceremony at the bottom of the pot, that it was even better with some salt. Too bad nobody had any. However, a furtive village dweller confessed being in possession of this addition to the soup and a handful of salt was cast in along with the stone. As good as stone soup was with stone and some salt it was even better with other spices and vegetables. Too bad we don’t have any, the traveler said.

The process of bemoaning lack in a way that beckoned entrusting presence continued until the metaphor concludes with nothing short of a communal meal. This pot became a container for the various individual features of the travelers as well as the townspeople and became imbued not with their commonality and consensus, or plurality and prejudice, but with the wonderful, troublesome, richness of their individual differences. The story concludes as you probably know with everybody enjoying a beautiful meal in which what was individual could still be detected and
savored or could be taken as a surface for communal curiosity or celebration. Cilantro, and bok choy and episotee and sriracha are all necessary to a soulful and sacred soup.

I have belabored the telling of this parable a bit because...extorted to surrender what is unique and individual and true for you in the interest of being reduced to some amorphous and tasteless “we”. Instead, I hope that the “we” the working alliance of an “us” that transcends in its plurality and variegation the individuals of the “I” is a reliable and trusty entity that emerges dynamically and non statically from the process of our gathering.

So, please feel not merely welcome and accepted but affirmed in your various facets of identity; regardless of identity, of gender, political affiliation, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious or spiritual identification, or any other facets. I hope that above all you feel prized and affirmed.

To affirm diversity is not to merely allow or tolerate it but to say yes to it as not only a necessary but an essentially catalyzing component of our shared work.

I would like to conclude this brief meditation in saying something about that pot. Unlike the blender that demands a surrender and an undoing of individuality and identity in the interest of consensus and coherence, the pot is both a container and a catalyst.

I hope that you feel in your individual and wonderful diverse essence held in something like community. I hope that you might feel that our Master’s program is a more or less adequate container for what you might bring generously and well to our gathering. I hope that you also experience this container as a sort of simmering catalyst that is hinted at in this allegory. I hope your experience our stewing and stirring together as in the interest of refining rather than denying your diversity. I hope that you experience over time a savory emergence of some whole that contains what you bring but does so in a way that calls you out and calls you in towards your best gifts.

Be careful what you throw in that pot and be careful what you take. Be mindful of the tenders of the fire and those who stir or settle capriciously or unknowingly. Our work here is not catalyze more than we contain and certainly not to merely contain without catalyzing. I’m quite sure you will have occasion to discuss with your colleagues and teachers, and I hope some time with me your own notions about the pot, the fire, and what you bring to it. I hope that your dipping of your bowl and cup into that wonderful stew is respectful, grateful and I dare say, sacred.