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## The Personal Is Panoramic: On Surviving the Disciplining of the Discipline

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I am reasonably certain that the first time I encountered the phrase ‘the personal is political’ was in Cynthia Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* (1990). It was the Fall semester of 1991 and I was taking Michael G. Schechter’s undergraduate introductory International Relations course as a sophomore at Michigan State University; the book was relatively new then, and I did not realize at the time how distinctive it was that Schechter assigned it, or indeed any feminist scholarship, for an introductory IR course in the United States. I found Enloe’s analysis fascinating, and a very refreshing change from the power-politics-versus-economic-interdependence debates that had taken up the earlier part of the semester. By looking for international relations in unusual places, Enloe presented things about the world that were completely novel insights to me—nothing in my previous classes or my broader reading in history and politics had really highlighted (or even *mentioned*) diplomats’ wives, sex workers, or domestic servants as part of the subject-matter of international studies. So as a matter of *theory*, which is to say, as a matter of *scientific ontology*, I was on board with the phrase: the ‘personal’ realm was just as much a site of (international) politics writ large as were other realms. I could also get behind the phrase as a *political* proclamation: instead of being cordoned off and separated from the broader realm of political and social relations, the ‘personal’ ought to be treated as a site of public contestation, shaped by and shaping the broader context(s) within which it was embedded. Discriminatory hiring or wage-paying practices were an appropriate object of public scrutiny, and not part of some privileged realm of objectively ‘private’ and constitutively separate interactions governed by natural laws impervious to human modification.

But I was still somewhat uncomfortable with the phrase, for reasons that it took me many years to put my finger on. The phrase seemed to universalize ‘politics’ as something always present everywhere, and to

rule out the very idea of a space or a form of activity that was not consumed by political concerns. Politics, the political dimension of things, struck me as concerned with campaigning, constituent relations, and compromises—the resolution of controversy through the crafting of deals and through out-and-out contests of electoral strength. That's what I had seen on display as an intern for a member of Congress, and that's what I saw in the decided absence of a robust space exploration program or an effective global campaign to eliminate hunger: because no one would benefit from such a program in the immediate term, no one supported it. Politics to my mind was and is the sort of thing that *gets in the way* of evaluating claims and proposals on their intellectual merits; to approach something 'politically' is thus to be principally concerned with who benefits from it, and to strategize the formation of a coalition in support of the claim or proposal. Effectiveness, not validity or clarity, is the name of the game. 'The personal is political' in *this* sense of politics? No thank you.

When I first read Foucault, and found there the notion of the ubiquity of power that I had first encountered in Nietzsche's 'will to power', it didn't bother me in quite the same way. Perhaps this was because the Nietzschean formulation emphasized assertive agency rather than 'politics'. But I suspect it was also because what Nietzsche and Foucault both did was to disclose the ways that apparently power-free zones where pure reason or pure aesthetics were able to hold sway were *themselves* consequences of, and held in place by, the subtle operations of assertive power. To my mind that did not mean that such zones were somehow illegitimate or false; to the contrary, they were rare and precious, fragile achievements that needed to be celebrated and defended rather than unmasked and demolished (which is why, despite a profound respect for Foucault's analyses, I usually returned to Nietzsche and his *redemptive* account of social arrangements as contributing to the free play of power despite their own overt intentions). 'The human being would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will...' (Nietzsche 1999, p. 412) struck me as a better way of approaching the same insight than the claim that the personal was political.

What I was grasping at, to use a formulation that I would never have used at the time but am perfectly comfortable using now, was dissatisfaction with the *methodological* aspect of the phrase, or at least, the methodological implications some drew from the phrase. If 'the personal is political', then arguably it follows that the myriad of issues involved in scholarly research—the formulation of research questions and puzzles, issues of research design, and disputes about the status of evidence and whether that evidence warranted specific conclusions or not—are all essentially 'political' issues, and have to be in some sense reduced to their functional role in creating coalitions and defeating opponents. Notions like 'validity' and 'consistency', traditional hallmarks of thinking about the quality and value of research, would not play as much of a role, at least not in their usual senses. Indeed, thinking *itself* as an activity seemed threatened with collapse into the sociology of knowledge and the continuation of politics 'by other means', and that worried me immensely because what I wanted to do

with the rest of my life was to become an academic and think about things. If I wanted to be political, I would go into politics, or take political stances as appropriate—but the condition of possibility for doing so was the existence of some other space, some precious and fragile zone at least provisionally *separate from* politics, so I would have some capacity to be some way *other than* politically, some mode of knowing that would operate under the sign of deliberation rather than the imperatives of holding together a coalition. The personal might be political, but did that necessarily mean that all thinking, all *knowing*, was political too?

Coming up with an answer I could live with took a number of years, and a number of professional experiences that seemingly have nothing to do with this issue, at least at first glance. ‘Methodology’ for many people suggests something abstract and detached by design, an exercise in thinking about thinking, and in my experience most people—even most academics—would rather *do* than *contemplate doing*. But I would insist instead on the profound connections between methodology and *vocation*, which I would define as a basic orientation in and towards the world; hence methodological questions are, in important ways, questions about basic ways of worlding, and about the conditions of possibility for producing knowledge of varied kinds. Those conditions of possibility are, in turn, something quite other than conclusions of speculative logic, but arise more profoundly from *who we are* as knowers. Methodology is thus a *personal* matter, but not necessarily a political one inasmuch as methodological commitments don’t necessarily need to be about interests and benefits. Some methodological commitments are, but some are not—*mine* are not. Instead, I would venture, for me, at any rate, the personal is not so much political as *panoramic*, affording what Wittgenstein (1953, sec. 10) would call a ‘clear view’. So I don’t especially *care* if anyone finds that my commitments serve to advance their interests, and I deeply resent the charge that I hold my commitments because of the benefits that I garner by holding them (and even more deeply resent the charge that I am doing so ‘unconsciously’, lying to myself about my base motivations by papering them over with noble-sounding intentions). The *only thing* I care about in my scholarship is gaining a clear view, *knowing*, which is neither what the discipline privileges nor what the universalizing of ‘politics’ privileges.

Allow me to illustrate. I want to tell you a story, an *autobiographical* story, about how I became the kind of academic I am now. Autobiography performs a weird temporal inversion, since it is written from the vantage-point of the person one is *after* the events described have taken place. Now, in retrospect, my trajectory appears to me to be a steady erosion of **something**, but I doubt I would have characterized it that way at the time. I find myself in the place that Augustine was in when he wrote his *Confessions*:

Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely

created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you, they had no existence at all. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. (Augustine 1992, p. 201)

After his conversion to Christianity, Augustine understands his earlier involvement with worldly things very differently than he did at the time. He also understands everything that happened before his conversion as leading up to his conversion, directed by a divine hand that he simply did not acknowledge before. Having become someone else, he can no longer see his own past any differently than as a prologue to who he now is.

I have a similarly difficult time seeing my own trajectory as anything other than teleologically *ordained*, even though I know how contingent it all was. When speaking and thinking as a social scientist I am mercilessly critical of teleological explanations, but this is not a piece of social science. In Augustine's sense, it is more of a confession.

### I. 'Professor'

My nickname among my classmates, as far back as I can remember, was always 'Professor'. In elementary school I was the kid who knew everything and would never shut up about it, and I never seemed to forget anything I'd read. Teachers usually had no idea what to do with me, and either I was their favorite or they let me go off in the corner of the classroom and work by myself, usually with math textbooks many years ahead of my grade level. Kids came to ask me all sorts of obscure questions, trying to stump me; unless the topic were sports, a subject in which I had absolutely no interest, I generally had the answer immediately to hand. The things I was most interested in were math and physics, particularly astrophysics; when I grew up I wanted to be Carl Sagan, whose popular-science television series *Cosmos* I watched religiously. Sagan was my idea of a professor: a guy who knew lots of stuff, including stuff he had discovered himself, and told people about it in an authoritative way.

The other thing I wanted to be when I grew up was a Jedi Knight. The original *Star Wars* was the first film I ever remember seeing, and right from that first viewing my only interest was in Luke Skywalker's quest to become a Jedi, to learn how to use the Force to guide his actions and stand against evil. For an unathletic kid, the swordplay of lightsaber battles was transmuted into verbal sparring, and *arguing* as a kind of combat sport. Having a lot of facts at my disposal made me pretty good in a verbal fight, whether formal structured debate or more informal exchanges, and once I got to college I quickly discovered that those skills were rewarded in the classroom rather than being resisted and resented (which was often the way my grade school and high school teachers would react when I corrected them). Academia for me, then: a combination of argument, knowing stuff, and being an authority on things. I never wanted to leave.

So the next step would be graduate school, required if I was going to be a professor. (Why graduate school in Political Science rather than in Math or Physics? Because somewhere along the way I had become more fascinated by how people related to one another across national boundaries than in how particles or proofs related to one another. IR in the United States is largely organized as a subfield of Political Science, so the path was clear.) I entered graduate school with what now appears to me as the naive notion that the academic life was practically centered around ideas, and that academics were smart people interested in living the 'life of the mind' and principally concerned with the intellectual work of 'thinking about things', and helping students learn to think for themselves. But I was in for a bit of a shock. The thing they don't tell you about going to get your Ph.D. in the United States is that it is just as much of a professional training program as any other graduate degree, but the profession you're training for is academia—it's not actually an opportunity to sit and think and read and ponder at a leisurely pace until something profound pops out, but more of a crash course in 'how to be an academic'. Ph.D. training at least when and where I went to graduate school was generally socialization into a world of research and professional writing where the incentives are about *publishing*, and publishing in the 'right' places, rather than about knowing. The game is about scoring points against opponents in print; do that enough and you'll get rewarded. Welcome to the combat arena; take up your sword and let's do battle.

The other thing that my Ph.D. program taught me—what I learned from mine, at least—was that your self-worth should depend on your publication record. Materially, employment in a tenure-track academic position depends on publication above all, and the day-to-day commerce of academic life involves 'my latest book/article'. Academic journals have very low circulations and even lower active readerships; academic disciplines have hierarchies on which one has to depend for certification and recommendations for opportunities, including jobs; academic power-players control a lot of important resources. So one has to learn who to make nice with, how to signal affiliations with particular camps, which kind of research is 'hot' and which is 'passe', and so on. The mechanisms of academic life are all about proving yourself to audiences of skeptics, and those skeptics have very sharp swords they can use to cut you down. (We call that 'peer review'.) So academic writing is typically defensive, trying to be as immune to criticism as possible. And lurking not very far beyond the edges of all of this bitterly grim intellectual combat, a shining justification for all of the insanely stringent barriers to have to overcome: only the best, the purest, the most solid claims would survive and be accepted as contributions to knowledge. He who publishes the best work has made the greatest contribution, and the hierarchy of the discipline is ultimately about those contributions over time.

At least, that's what I learned.

## II. Assistant Professor

But what I had learned in graduate school ran smack into the primary expectation of the job I was hired into immediately afterwards: teaching students, who liked to ask questions that weren't just about obscure professional academic debates. The not-so-subtle messages I received in graduate school were about spending as little time as possible on teaching, so that you could have more time for research; the easiest way to not spend a lot of time was to lecture, because that used basically the same skill-set as writing a research article: put forth the facts in as seamless and as well-defended a way as possible, anticipating and defeating opponents and skeptics along the way. Carl Sagan behind a lectern, the sage on the stage.

I had that model in my head when I TA'd my first class in graduate school, and when I taught my first class—US Foreign Policy, a class I have never taught since then—also as a graduate student. I prepared detailed notes, read them to the class, defeated objections, and impressed everyone with my brilliance. Of course they were impressed; it was in their interest to be impressed, and to tell me that they were impressed, since I was grading them. So we had a closed circuit: I gave out information and then heard it repeated on the exam. But I was never satisfied with this, in part because I had never found this style especially useful to me as a learner—I usually disrupted such lectures by trying to combat the lecturer, or I just tuned out and wrote the refutation in my notebook, or pontificated about it to others after class. So continuing that style in my own classrooms felt very disingenuous. Indeed, it felt *political*: here I was, the authority figure, laying down the law, and the students didn't have to be convinced—they could get the desired benefit of a good grade by just going along with whatever I said for the duration of the semester. Strategic calculation, not deliberation; politics, not teaching or learning.

After that first experience teaching my own class, I gravitated toward running seminars, both as an adjunct at other institutions and on my own campus. Indeed, I ignored the advice of many of the faculty in my department and got a job teaching in the Contemporary Civilization program, the original Plato-to-NATO 'Western Civ' course, required of all sophomore students. (I did not get the gig the first year I applied; the second time I applied there were enough slots for Political Science Ph.D. students that I was able to secure one.) The course was taught in seminar style, and over the course of a year we read the traditional 'great works' of European philosophy and analyzed them critically. Unlike a lecture, this felt like *teaching*, and it felt very much unlike politics: here in the classroom was a space in which we could discuss a text and its implications, pull apart arguments and dissect them for evaluation on their merits, and generally put those intellectual-combat skills to work in the service of something that was less about skewering one's opponents and closer to the pursuit of truth.

After graduate school I was hired at, and continue to work in, a place that was predominantly a policy school in Washington D.C. This was dislocating for a theorist with historical interests, and for someone who didn't feel at all comfortable pontificating about contemporary issues. I'd read Max Weber before moving to D.C., but after starting *this* job, the opposition Weber drew between the vocation for science and the vocation for politics resonated even more strongly. I found myself fighting to keep my classroom a non-partisan space, because the currents of partisanship run strong in a city like this, and students come to study here precisely because they want to get involved in politics. Against that tendency I found myself inspired by Weber's strong admonition about the proper role of the classroom:

...politics has no place in the lecture room as far as the lecturer is concerned. Least of all if his [sic] subject is the academic study of politics. For opinions on issues of practical politics and the academic analysis of political institutions and party policies are two very different things. If you speak about democracy at a public meeting there is no need to make a secret of your personal point of view. On the contrary, you have to take one side or the other explicitly; that is your damned duty. The words you use are not tools of academic analysis, but a way of winning others over to your political point of view. They are not plowshares to loose the solid soil of contemplative thought, but swords to be used against your opponents: weapons, in short. In a lecture room it would be an outrage to make use of language in this way (Weber 2004, p. 20).

The kind of arguments I was interested in having were not the partisan-political kind, but the sparer logical variety, where the goal was not about winning people over, but about constructing the tightest case one could, and poking holes in other opposing cases. In the classroom I didn't want to have to *campaign* for my students' hearts and minds; I wanted us all to engage in a collective process of contention and deliberation in which we weighed arguments and sifted them.

All of this conspired to push me away from the lecture model altogether. After my first year or two I simply stopped lecturing in the classroom; I podcast lectures, or better, I podcast short reading notes that set up the text(s) we'd discuss in class. *Everything* became an interactive seminar. I stopped coming into the classroom intent on demonstrating to my students that I was the person who knew the most. Instead I started to think of my job as being about helping students encounter texts and ideas, and creating the kind of space that Parker Palmer called a 'hospitable' classroom:

The classroom where truth is central will be a place where every stranger and every strange utterance is met with welcome. This may suggest a classroom lacking essential rigor, a place in which questions of true and false, right and wrong, are subordinated to making sure that everyone 'has a nice day'. But that would be a false understanding of hospitality. Hospitality is not an end in itself. It is offered for the sake of what it can allow, permit, encourage, and yield. A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning

painless but to make the painful things possible, things without which no learning can occur—things like exposing ignorance, testing tentative hypotheses, challenging false or partial information, and mutual criticism of thought. Each of these is essential to obedience to truth. But none of them can happen in an atmosphere where people feel threatened and judged. (Palmer 1993, p. 74)

I started doing more experimental things in and with class, too: extended simulations that lasted a whole semester, workshops, ‘fishbowl’ conversations among a subset of the students, observed by the rest of the class, so people could practice both speaking and listening. I stopped worrying about making sure that students ‘knew the material’—who cared if these undergraduates could correctly identify the sides in debates between academic IR theorists?—and started worrying more about whether students were developing their intellectual capacities in creative ways: a de-emphasizing of facts, and progressively more emphasis on skills and judgment. My classrooms got progressively more engaging, and my teaching more and more fulfilling—and my student evaluations became increasingly bimodal, with a large number of overall positive ratings counterbalanced by a persistent but vocal minority of students complaining that I wasn’t ‘teaching them anything’ because they had nothing to take notes on and no way to demonstrate that they’d internalized those notes. Since my institution, like many others, looks at *averages* when it comes to student evaluations, my numbers were never stellar across the board, but the feedback I had from those students who vocally expressed their appreciation for my teaching styles—together with my own sense that this was what I was *supposed to be doing* as a professor in the classroom—confirmed my trajectory even as some administrators suggested that I scale back what I was doing so as to achieve better averages.

At the same time, though, the successes I was finding in the classroom were not replicated in the professional publication sphere. No top-ranked IR journal in the United States would publish my articles, which were generally summarily reviewed before being rejected, and in order to build a case for tenure I needed some such certification by established outlets. I had more luck with British journals, and was fortunate to have at least a couple of local senior colleagues who were willing to make the case during the rank and tenure process that those journals ‘counted’ just the same. But the thing I really needed was a book contract, and every press I approached passed on the book derived from my dissertation: a book about ‘Western Civilization’ and the reconstruction of postwar Germany, a book that didn’t test any hypotheses, compare any cases, or aim to achieve any general findings, and was rather unapologetic about this methodological stance. After being turned down by about ten presses, a chance meeting at the 2004 Montreal ISA led to a conversation with an editor who was willing to break ranks, and the University of Michigan, of all the unlikely places, published the book just in time for me to get tenure. After that point the book basically vanished without a trace, selling all of several hundred copies to libraries, and I never have been able to

publish any article-length versions of the argument in any IR or Political Science journals.

Is tenure professional success? Perhaps. But my *expectations* were for so much more. I wanted engagement with the arguments I was making, I wanted to participate in discussions about the issues I was working on, I wanted my professional peers to *take me seriously*. Most of them did not. Instead of a field of free argument, what I found was a series of professional cliques and networks that I could not penetrate, loosely organized around the big three 'isms' of realism, liberalism, and constructivism—and then dissident Marxists who seemed to speak an entirely different language. Despite having gone to a top-ranked graduate program, I had not obtained the official certification and seal of approval from the IR folks there; my committee chair was Ira Katznelson, more of a historian and political theorist, because he was a lot more supportive of my project and my approach than anyone else in the department. I thus had no introduction into the IR circles that seemed to shape the discussions, and came at things from outside of those networks. Despite getting tenure, despite having stable employment, despite my classroom teaching going amazingly well, I *felt* like an outsider and something of a disappointing failure. There were scholarly conversations going on that I thought I should have been a part of, but aside from graduate school colleagues and a few isolated others, no one seemed to be taking my thinking seriously.

### III. Eucatastrophe

JRR Tolkien, in his lecture 'On Fairy-Stories', points out that in fantastic narratives there is always 'the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn' that produces an unexpectedly joyous outcome' (Tolkien 1947, p. 22). The story I am telling is certainly a fantastic one, and it too has its moment of eucatastrophe. That moment came with the first thing I wrote after having sent my first book manuscript off to the publisher, a handbook chapter that Charles Tilly asked me to write. (Chuck had been an external reader on my dissertation committee, and had given me trenchant comments about the argument I was making, but he was never someone who knew me, or my work, well enough to have served as a patron or a recommender.) He had given me a title for the chapter—'The Present As History'—and little more than that. Facing a blank canvas, I found that I no longer wanted to write the way that I had been trained to write in graduate school, and the fact that this was a handbook chapter instead of an article for a peer-reviewed journal meant that I did not have to play *that* game. So I wrote something closer to the way I actually talked, and I drew on sources that I found engaging instead of the sources (I thought) I was 'supposed' to draw on. The result was a little essay on the cultural politics of eventing that, although buried in a handbook and thus not often read, helped me think through some issues about time and meaning that had been bothering me for a while.

This was a revelation: I could actually just write about *what I needed to write about*, and think about what I needed to think about. It's not that I hadn't *tried* to write pop singles for 'mainstream' radio, articles with clear contributions to ongoing debates, engaging other people's ongoing concerns and interests in a way that would forge a coalition of which I could be a leading member. I was just completely unsuccessful at it. I would start off with a targeted criticism of some published piece of IR scholarship, and by the time I was up to about the tenth page of the draft, I would be dragging in questions about ontology and the overall purpose of social science. *Those* concerns seemed a lot more pressing to me, but there wasn't any way to write about them in the context of an article that was supposed to review the existing literature, produce some novel evidence that helped adjudicate some debate in that literature, and conclude with suggestions for future research. So within a couple of years (and against the advice of those senior colleagues who suggested that I continue working on postwar Germany or early Cold War U.S. foreign policy, so that I could develop some real 'expertise' in those areas) I had returned to a perennial concern of mine from graduate school—that we in IR didn't really understand the philosophy of science on which we were drawing to justify our research practices, and that as a result we were unnecessarily narrowing the domain of what 'counted' as appropriately *scientific* scholarship to the neopositivist variant of science—and published an article on that theme (again, not in a 'mainstream' U.S. journal). And that led to the contract for *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, a book that I would not have been *capable* of writing before then, because that book required a voice, a perspective, a point of view, and until that handbook chapter I wasn't able to write authentically enough.

Blogging was also important. Being on the initial staff of *The Duck Of Minerva* gave me a different outlet to engage in scholarly thinking, worrying even less about the publication game than I was doing when writing things for publication in edited volumes or other forums. I am a terrible blogger; I write essays rather than short pithy interventions, thinking out loud on the page instead of just delivering the punchline as forcefully as possible. But doing so reinforced the lesson I had learned with the handbook chapter: if I wrote the way I wanted to, the resulting product would be better, in that it would *sound* better to my ears and I would be happier with it. A more niche audience, perhaps, quirky songs without a lot of radio play, but garnering a small number of appreciative listeners.

What I quickly found, once I had begun to recover my own authentic concerns and voice, was that my dissatisfaction with 'the discipline' was, in important ways, dissatisfaction with the *politics* within the discipline. I don't mean the partisan-political stances overtly or covertly taken by IR scholars—surveys like TRIP show that we're predominantly a left-liberal bunch with a left-radical contingent and a handful of conservatives. I mean the repeated experiences I have had wherein someone older (and 'wiser') takes me aside and suggests that I tone down my criticism of some scholarly position because it's not a politically savvy move to, for example, point out the theoretical

inconsistency of mainstream Anglophone constructivist accounts that both celebrate agency and trace the impact of 'ideas' that are not themselves susceptible to creative reconstruction, since after all those accounts make it possible for us to talk about movements for social justice instead of just focusing on sovereign states and their material capabilities, and isn't that progress? Because that's how you thrive in this profession: by acting strategically, by being politically savvy in choosing your targets and your allies, by engaging in instrumental self-promotion to 'get your name out there' so that people cite your work and take it seriously. I wanted nothing to do with that game—I wanted, and to be honest I *still* want, people to take my ideas seriously *on their merits*, as intellectual contributions, and not apply a political calculus to their evaluation. I don't *want* there to be politics of this calculating, coalitional sort interfering with the real business of scholarship, which is to collectively deliberate about important issues not necessarily to achieve consensus, but to improve the clarity of our divergent expressions and articulations.

In other words, the scholarly realm ought to look like the kind of space I strive to produce in my classrooms. It's nice to be published and it's nice to be read and cited, but because the more I put teaching at the centre of how I understand my academic vocation, the less I find myself concerned about the 'impact' my writings make. Ironically this lets me write more authentically, which perhaps leads to more people reading and citing my work, but if I were to focus on that result I am pretty sure I would fall apart. After all, some of the things I have written have gotten some readership, but I have not and probably never will have an article in any of the 'top' IR journals, and probably will never be hired by a 'top' department looking to bolster its research credentials above all, because I will never be able to compile the record of research publications that are required to make me a viable candidate for any such position. The Brahmins of the discipline will go on holding their conversations among themselves even about issues where I feel that I have something useful to contribute, and they are never going to invite me to participate. Returning to the standards I was socialized into in graduate school would lead to evaluating myself as a failure as an academic, and I am not interested in going back there.

Instead, in an odd way, I strive to be *grateful* for that failure. I am convinced that there is a very plausible counterfactual universe in which I continued on the path I was set on in and by graduate school, and never became a committed teacher. That did not happen because that pathway was blocked by circumstance and happenstance, and perhaps—I can't help but read it this way—because of some destiny or fate that revealed itself through that hardship. In retrospect, it looks obvious that I would become the kind of teacher I am. I wanted to be a Jedi Knight and have ended up a teacher of Jedi, training people in the art of argument (including the habit of mind involved in closely reading arguments). I wanted to be someone who knew a lot, and although I do think I know a few things, that pales in importance when compared to the most important thing I do, which is to *let learn* as Martin Heidegger put it:

Why is teaching more difficult than learning? Not because the teacher must have a larger store of information, and have it always ready. Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn. The real teacher, in fact, lets nothing else be learned than—learning. His [sic] conduct, therefore, often produces the impression that we properly learn nothing from him [sic], if by 'learning' we now suddenly understand merely the procurement of useful information ... if the relation between the teacher and the taught is genuine, therefore, there is never a place in it for the authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official. It is still an exalted matter, then, to become a teacher—which is something else entirely than becoming a famous professor. (Heidegger 1976, p. 15)

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