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Some Thoughts on Graduate Study

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In my experience, the dissertation will make or break your graduate study. As you begin to come to grips with the dissertation, you may find your program leading up to it failed to impart key skills, requisite in making an original contribution to knowledge. It is a familiar pattern, all-too-familiar. A student will move briskly through course work, unaware that he is not risking assertion of his autonomous judgment. His instructors hold back, reluctant to alert him to the costs of his caution, unwilling to incur the rancor and hassle that may result. The outcome can be disastrous. Sporting a respectable grade-point average, accustomed to success in college and even in a "real-world" career, the student strides across the preliminary hurdles, completing all but the dissertation in a happy glow. But the dissertation requires effective self-rule where the personal stakes are high and the challenge both extended and difficult. Starting confidently, the student sets in mind a date for marching to commencement before the admiring gaze of family and friends, and then suddenly encounters reality — alone, struggling to gather a mass of data and to shape a formless text, he finds himself to be, as one observer recently put it, "clueless in academe."[1] You should start, the sooner the better, to avoid this plight by cultivating the skills you will need to develop and complete a good dissertation.

Most superficially, you need some formal skills and methods as a researcher, but construing your need in this simplistic way is one of the root causes of the problem. A good researcher does not have methods in the sense that she might have a nice suit to wear on special occasions. A researcher does not have methods; she uses them, makes them, adapts them, even invents them. A researcher seeks to answer questions and solve problems, and she does so by designing methods of inquiry she judges will serve as effective means to achieve her particular intellectual purposes. It is not the methods that produce the results; it is the researcher who produces both the methods and the results, and then explains the why and the wherefore of it all in the write-up of her work. By explaining how and why your methods suit the particulars of your inquiry, you take the first step in asserting responsibility for your work. This assertion of your full responsibility is the essential act in making your dissertation an original contribution to knowledge. As a self-directing, independent researcher, you must take full, autonomous responsibility for what you do and account for your decisions convincingly to a community of academic peers. Unfortunately, little of your formal preparation will have prepared you well for the independent exercise of this responsibility; and much may have been positively disabling.

From the earliest grades on, the educational system perpetrates an elaborate evasion of the most difficult task, which is to let each student assert autonomy as a responsible, self-governing agent in intellectual work. We pay lip service to the importance of cultivating your skills of independent inquiry and self-expression, but in practice we concentrate on preparing you for success or failure on your next prospective test. All those quizzes, tests, papers, grades, and certificates are so many external badges marking your movement through the system. As such they are important, but over time they can wreak harm, for all those extrinsic measures can induce in you crippling habits of other-direction. Year after year, external authorities measure your success or failure. Over time, your success as a student really attests, not to your answerable independence, but to your knack for psyching out the system and its teachers, divining what they expect of you, and getting the right stuff ready for effective display at the impending, high-stake moment. We all went through these drills and have become proficient at the game. Through it all, the basic skills — judging for yourself what is true and valuable in response to an open question, what will be sound and effective in answering it, and becoming able to convey those judgments compellingly to others — all-too-often go undeveloped.

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[1] Gerald Graff. Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

In our educational framework of chronic other-direction, authoritative judgments about what is true and valuable, sound and effective, vest in sources independent of your sphere of control. You have gotten to where you are largely by continually bringing yourself into conformity with them. This pedagogical evasion perpetuates your academic minority, for habitual conformity to external authorities does not prepare you to step forward as a responsible, self-sufficient authority on matters of substantial complexity within a critical community of peers. Yet your graduate study culminates in a requirement that you do precisely that. Through the dissertation, you must demonstrate that you have become an autonomous expert in your field, not the mere novice docile to the authority of others. Chronic pursuit of external measures in education will have poorly prepared you to develop, and freely exercise, the requisite academic judgment. All-too-often, a student discovers this lack of preparation only on starting the dissertation, for unlike quizzes, tests, papers, grades, and certificates, the dissertation is not, as a work to accomplish, an external badge rewarding the power to conform. With a dissertation, your task is not to ask, in plaintive voice, eager for the course of least resistance, “Is this acceptable?” Your task is to say within a community of peers, “Accept this”; and to be ready to meet their queries and objections with reasoned replies. Through the dissertation, you must demonstrate your capacity for sustained, complex, autonomous work, authoritative in stature. That is what “making an original contribution to knowledge” entails.

Realistically, you, not your program, need to take the primary responsibility for developing your capacities as an autonomous scholar. If you do not, it is unlikely to happen, for program requirements cannot do the job. Courses and teachers can help in limited ways, but the burden lies on you to initiate, drive, and sustain the process. The burden lies with you, not because your program is weak or your teachers are shirking their duties, but because only you can do it, given the nature of the problem. What is at issue is your taking responsibility for the autonomous formation and free expression of your ideas. It would be absurd to hold others responsible for this responsibility, for *your* responsibility. Thus you need to be wary of too much help. Reliance on an overly prescriptive how-to book may perpetuate your problem, even aggravate it, not solve it. To know what to do, it is much more important to be widely read in your field than to follow religiously its leading methods manual. Manuals can be useful for getting a sense for standard operating procedures, but if you choose to follow their recommendations, that will not relieve you of responsibility for knowing and explaining precisely why you judge these standard operating procedures to be the best of possible procedures for answering the particular questions you pose. To inform your judgment, you need to see clearly how your field, your community of peers, comprises diverse researchers who address a spectrum of challenging questions with a multiplicity of methods, with results ranging from the masterful to the incompetent. Then you may be able to situate yourself with confidence among the most astute of them.

It comes down to a question, one both demanding and invigorating: What do you need to do to take responsibility for the formation and expression of your ideas, opinions, and actions? In a most fundamental sense, taking this responsibility requires nothing but a state of mind that you must put yourself in. "I am an autonomous scholar who takes responsibility for my ideas within the community of my peers." It is easy to formulate such a conviction, as it is easy for the heavy smoker to say to himself, "I am a person who does not smoke." It is a somewhat different matter for the heavy smoker to embody the intent, to become that person who does not smoke; so too for the responsive student to become the responsible scholar.

To become the self-sufficient scholar, you need to ask yourself what you need to know in order to take responsibility for your ideas in the community of your peers. If you ask this question, you can learn a lot from others, particularly your teachers, provided you pursue what they can teach in the proper frame of mind. One often speaks of graduate study as an apprenticeship, and this description is fitting in a deep sense, for apprentices stand, not outside the guild, but inside it. Thus in your graduate study, which is your apprenticeship, your instructors are part of your community of peers. As such, they share with you the problem of self-direction as you share it with them. Your sponsor, your committee, and the members of your defense all personify your community of peers. Your work will evoke their responses in the form of praise, criticism, and calls for clarification, amplification, and revision, as they see fit. It is then up to you to decide how best to make use of the particulars of those responses, whether considered or off-the-cuff. The responses are what they give; the work is what you make. When you assert your autonomy, your professors become your peers, transforming the way you learn, less *from* them and more *with* them. Like you, they too struggle to take responsibility for their ideas in the community of their peers. As you will find, so do they: taking that responsibility and asserting your independence entails continuous struggle, one not solved once, well and for good, but a recurrent effort inherent in aspiring to achieve autonomy— the person who does not smoke can light up at any moment.

In the continuing effort to make intellectual autonomy real, we face two types of difficulty. One consists in the lure of displacement, to which we are constantly susceptible in ways large and small, using it to shift the burden of responsibility onto agents external to ourselves. To live by the great injunction — *Sapere aude!* — we need to resist displacing our intellectual initiative into mechanisms that seem to operate independent of our control — whether they be simple mechanisms like vogue words and jargon, to more complex ones like convention and circumstance, out to the great impersonal processes such as markets, publicity, and public power. The second type of difficulty consists in our real limitations relative to the demands of the task, especially in the deficiencies of our communicative skills, which in myriad ways can enclose each scholar in a snug, solipsistic cocoon. To be responsible for our ideas within a community of peers, we need to make our thoughts fully clear, first to ourselves and then to others, even though the putative peers, sometimes distracted and inattentive, may resist responding to our expansive efforts. You need to make a deficient response be as informative as the fulsome. Without response, responsibility will weaken and disappear, and thus we learn that part of our responsibility is to speak with sufficient cogency and power to command a requisite response.

Temptations to shift responsibility to agents outside oneself operate at many levels. At the broadest level, such shifting is what turns a scholar into an ideologue. In lived experience, it is a subtle shift. Great, original thinkers freely articulate powerful concepts through unusually important, often difficult arguments. It is then all-too-easy for followers to hypostatize the concepts, to reify such ideas — suddenly the market, the class, the state, the nation, the times, even the deity become self-subsisting, active agents, independent forces shaping ideas and events, for which the scholar serves humbly as human mouthpiece. The solution is not to eschew all ideal-types in conscientious reflection on human events. The solution is to make sure that the abstractions serve, encapsulated in your work, with no more power attributed to them than the functional role they play in the set of ideas you put forward for critical consideration by your peers. Abstractions do not justify my views; in justifying and communicating my views, however, I develop and use various abstractions as elements in my intellectual effort, to which they are confined and for which I bear the full responsibility. Ideas and concepts exist in thought; we cannot displace responsibility for our thinking onto the ideas which are its fruit.

Convention and circumstance induce a different kind of displacement of our responsibility onto powers independent of our control. In outward behaviors, the intellectual may lead a life that is entirely consistent with conventional expectations, but she does so as a result of conscious, responsible choices. In academe, convention is less of a danger than the operations of circumstance, however, especially circumstance in the guise of necessary specialization. It is much too easy through specialization to adopt an excessively narrow community of peers and to fall thereby into an enfeebling conspiracy of mutual support. In this way one signs into an academic clique and as long as one stays within the required signs of allegiance, one largely slips the troubling dilemmas of autonomous responsibility. Settling into a peer pocket guarantees an audience with a limited set of foreseeable responses cued to a predictable discourse. As the academic community grows and becomes more internally complicated, as competitive pressures impinging on processes of recruitment, promotion, and tenure become more intense, factionalizing the community of peers becomes increasingly widespread. The temptation to seek refuge in one or another tight gated-community becomes all the stronger. The world of graduate study is filled with academic cliques, and many have become self-perpetuating within the scholarly community. Little will prevent you from seeking one out and joining up by mouthing the required shtick. To make matters worse, if you do not consciously engage an open, complex community of peers, where your ideas are uncomfortably at risk, you may inadvertently settle into one of these peer pockets and never realize that it functions irresponsibly for you as a self-perpetuating faction by providing you and others with a predictable pattern of mutual support.

One level at which you can test the integrity of your relation to the community of peers is at the level of language. When we displace responsibility onto seeming agents outside ourselves, it shows up in our linguistic uses. Take as an example peer factions: they usually have compulsory patterns of usage, adherence to which discriminates between members and non-members, so evident in the linguistic codes of the various parties fighting the canon wars. Are you writing the way you write because you want to sound like a member of one or another in-group, or are the words you are choosing to use the best ones you can find to express precisely the thought you intend to assert? You need to pay close attention to usages that provide ready-made inclusion in groups and association with ideas that you like or hope will give you support. In adopting such usages, you may be slipping into a form of wish-fulfillment in your prose. Your language must communicate your ideas and your reasoning about them, not merely link you to a favored group and associate you with its received ideas.

Over and above the way slack linguistic usage can lock you into a self-serving peer pocket, problems with writing are a common way in which you can fail to assert full responsibility for your thought, first and foremost to yourself. On close examination, do you really want to stand by what your words mean? If you become a sucker for jargon, imprecision, and vogue usages, you excuse yourself from making yourself clear, first of all to yourself, and you turn responsibility for construing your thought over to your readers. Without constant vigilance, it happens to us all. In the challenge to think and express your thoughts responsibly, language is not only a powerful means through which displacements of your responsibility take hold, it is also a basic set of skills for building the requisite, positive capacities to form and convey difficult ideas responsibly. Unfortunately, our capacities for clear thought and expression are rarely fully adequate relative to the complex challenges inherent in becoming accountable for our ideas.

In your prior encounters with writing instruction, you are likely to have experienced one of the great pedagogical ironies: rarely are the habits of good writing taught for the right reasons. Where we should work to gain control, we are taught instead to be correct. Formal pedagogies tend to simplify difficult skills into matters of right and wrong and substitute the passive goal of being correct for the active state of exerting intelligent control. At its best, nothing in good writing is a matter of correctness and conformity to rule. Correct grammar and diction is a didactic simplification, describing certain uses of language that often work better for certain purposes than other potential uses. Such rules, however, have no probative value and the more fully you take responsibility, the more you need to understand the nuance of usage, not the rules, in order to make use of it, not to follow them. I suspect my experience in high school, a good one, was in substance like that of many others. In English we always got two grades, one for content and one for form. I would consistently cop an A over E. My teachers would exhort me to do better on my grammar and diction, accusing me of sloth and willful nonchalance — they knew I could do better. I would reply that when I had something worth saying I would write it well. But I did not think I could marshal much in my assignments really worth saying. Without a significant intellectual purpose, I lacked good grounds for deciding how best to convey my thought. In effect, I was saying that when I was ready and able to accept responsibility for what I was writing, then I could seriously engage the problem of finding the best way to write it. Until then it was a schoolboy exercise, performed irresponsibly, under compulsion. But your dissertation is not another schoolboy exercise for which you can disavow responsibility, as we have all done so often throughout our writing instruction. With the dissertation, you must take control of your prose; you must say what you mean and mean what you say. When you set about to do so, those persecuting primers — the grammars, dictionaries, usage books, and guides — cease to be harbingers of arbitrary rules and become useful resources, means to help you take responsibility for your thought and your expression of it.

You consult usage books — once Fowler, now Garner — not to be correct, but to become aware. Words do not mean just what we want them to mean. The most fundamental community of peers for your work is the community of shared usages through which educated readers will interpret your thought, according to how you have expressed it. You realize your intellectual autonomy by freely submitting your work to the critical inspection of your peers and to do that effectively you must be able to anticipate and control the way they will understand your thought through your expression of it. You abdicate your responsibility when you use words without a clear sense of what they will mean to others, or fail to mean to them; and you fall short in achieving full autonomy if your command of language is insufficient to fully formulate your thought. Engaged in the autonomous self-expression of original ideas, you need to hone your linguistic powers, which will always be insufficient, but sometimes less insufficient than others.

To help you in this effort, there are useful resources, provided of course that you fulfill the fundamental proviso by taking the trouble to use them, often and well. In his original *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, published in1926, Henry W. Fowler wrote lucid, individualistic explanations of his judgments about what made various uses of words and constructions effective and ineffective.[2] Attending alertly to his reasoning serves as a strong sensitizing agent; you will become a more responsible thinker and more effective writer if you consult his work regularly and ponder the spirit of his recommendations, even where the letter of them may not have stood up against the effects of linguistic change. Subsequent revisions, especially R. W. Burchfield's, have weakened the pedagogic bite of the work while bringing his recommendations into conformity with subsequent expectations.[3] But for current usage there are better resources than the revisions of Fowler. In particular, Bryan A. Garner's *Dictionary of Modern American Usage* may be a companion classic in the making, joining the original Fowler. As Fowler did, Garner asserts his personally reasoned claims about why some usages are more effective than others and thereby draws you into thinking out, as a peer, your own views about effective usage. The work is pedagogically alive, eliciting in you principles that will enable you to think with greater self-awareness and to express your ideas to others with a grounded expectation that they will understand you as you meant to be understood. *The Oxford Dictionary of American Usage and Style* is a very serviceable abridgement; keep it at hand wherever you write.[4]

In addition to using dictionaries of usage, you will find some reflections on diction and style helpful in taking responsibility for your thought and its expression. The fount of the form was *The Complete Plain Words* by Sir Ernest Gowers. Like Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, *The*

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[2] Henry W. Fowler. A Dictionary of Modern English Usage. Oxford Language Classics. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1926. 2002

[3] R. W. Burchfield, ed. The New Fowler's Modern English Usage. 1926. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

[4] Bryan A. Garner. The Oxford Dictionary of American Usage and Style. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Complete Plain Words unfortunately lost much of its power as it has passed through a sequence of revision by others to keep it up to date.[5] Gowers wrote it to provoke British civil servants to improve the quality of their written communications, across the whole gamut of governmental output. Gowers originally exposed the endless ways in which mindless usage could obfuscate thought and weaken its expression. The current edition is gentler on failures of usage, more descriptive of currently common patterns. As an alternative in heightening your sensitivity to the uses of usage, *Simple & Direct: A Rhetoric for Writers* by Jacques Barzun may serve you better.[6]

There are, of course, many other good books to help you as you recognize that you alone are responsible for what you write and how you write it. It is less important to decide which particular resources are the best possible ones than it is to use, fully and well, those particular ones you choose. It is important to take the matter seriously, to recognize it as a matter deserving your earnest, sustained effort. Hence, you should be wary of resources that pare down to the minimum essentials, however wise and elegant the paring down may be. For this reason, I would suggest caution with the venerable Strunk and White, as I suspect that many of those who recommend it with reverence are not themselves working writers. Strunk and White give eminently sensible injunctions in *The Elements of Style*, but they are so direct and so succinct that they will help you follow good usage and avoid bad without strengthening your understanding of why the good is good and the bad is bad.[7] Aim beyond being correct in what you write; aim to have reasons, clear and sound, for expecting what you write to have the effects you intend with the readers you seek.

Another useful work, which may nevertheless be less that what you want for a strong dissertation and your ensuing career of academic publication, is Kate L. Turabian's *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.[8] Turabian provides guidance on the mechanics of manuscript preparation, tightly linked to practices set by the editors of *The Chicago*

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[5] Sir Ernest Gowers. The Complete Plain Words. 1954. Eds. Sidney Greenbaum and Janet Whitcut. Revised ed. Boston: David R. Godine, 1988. Lexicographers, who work their revisions on the great usage pedagogues, such as Burchfeld on Fowler, and Greenbaum and Whitcut on Gowers, tend to report consensus views on good usage from panels of representative writers rather than concentrate on their own reasoning, potentially idiosyncratic, for or against particular constructions. The resulting revisions encourage readers to conform to expert usage whereas the originals drew readers into forming their own convictions. In developing the linguistic foundations for intellectual autonomy, thinking why is more important than knowing what.

[6] Jacques Barzun. Simple & Direct: A Rhetoric for Writers. 1975. 4th ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

[7] The first edition is available freely online — William Strunk. The Elements of Style. Bartleby.Com. 1st ed. Ithaca: W.P. Humphrey, 1918. 1999, http://www.bartleby.com/br/141.html (August 18, 2003). For the current print edition (considerably expanded and updated), see William Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th edition, New York: Macmillan Company, 1999.

[8] Kate L. Turabian. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing Series. 6th ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Manual of Style. You might say that Turabian is the *Chicago Manual* for ordinary people, but the catch is, in taking full responsibility for what you write in your dissertation you cease to be an ordinary person. You might as well use *The Chicago Manual of Style*, itself, for building up a sure command of mechanics, especially as it has recently come out with an important new edition.[9] You should also become familiar with the style manuals specifically oriented to the disciplines most associated with your work, whether it is the American Psychological Association's *Publication Manual*, or the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* by Joseph Gibaldi, or something else.[10] One or another of these will supplement, but not supplant, the *Chicago Manual*.

Consider, as well, two further resources, not on research methodologies, but on the work you need to exert in the course of carrying good research out. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams have collaborated on *The Craft of Research*, now in its second edition.[11] They write most directly for undergraduate novice researchers, but if you have not previously reflected on what they say, do not think yourself too advanced to profit from their reflections. They are thoughtful students of the rhetoric of research, particularly helpful on two important processes, one involving the posing of questions and their pursuit in ways that lead to fruitful sources, and the other concerning what it takes to develop and present an effective argument in response to your questions and sources. The other resource is *The Modern Researcher* by Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff.[12] The authors are historians and they bring an historical sensibility to their reflections on the tasks of research, but researchers across the full spectrum of social and natural sciences can benefit from close attention to their reasoning about the diverse skills to be employed in effective research.

Resources such as these help us take responsibility for how we form and communicate our thought. They will not tell you how to write your dissertation, or what to write it about, but they will help you build the confidence to decide such matters for yourself, and to address your community of peers, confident that they will find you to be someone who knows your stuff and explains it well. However well you once gain these skills, you will find thereafter that you need to keep them in shape with explicit effort from time to time. They are to the intellectual what conditioning is to the athlete. Mindless modishness creeps into your vocabulary. The natural urge to dispatch the business of committees and the steady lapping of email against the bulwarks of your concentration leads to sloppiness here and an evasion there and soon habitually taut prose develops flab. In my experience, after a period of thinking I am securely in command of my prose, I have had to go back to reflections on sound usage and am appalled at how, unawares, my writing has gone slack.

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[9] University of Chicago, ed. Chicago Manual of Style. 15th ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.

[10] See the American Psychological Association. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 5th ed. Washington: American Psychological Association, 2001, and Joseph Gibaldi. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 6th ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

[11] Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Jospeh M. Williams. The Craft of Research. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. 2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.

[12] Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff. The Modern Researcher. 6th ed. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth, 2003.

A further, important reason to take responsibility for your work on the dissertation will continue to work long after its successful defense. The chronic other-direction besetting so much of the education we give and receive has become all-too-pervasive throughout academic careers themselves. Junior faculty members find themselves counseled, nurtured, and forewarned; they get a great composite of all possible do's and don'ts. Such mentoring is well-meant; but it is the root cause of the atrocious paranoia pervading the junior ranks of academe. It is like the beauty confections of the fashion industry, homogenizing all striking traits into synthetic images to which no real person can comfortably conform. Living beauty embodies particulars, built on each person's distinctive features, and is therefore in the instance utterly unique and in the aggregate infinitely variable. So too with real intellectual work. Academic advice for a young faculty member, whether delivered through books or mentoring by colleagues, naturally tries to cover all the possibilities. This comprehensiveness is its most impractical feature, one which elicits fear, not confidence, for the junior faculty member cannot usefully anticipate every possibility.

You will find a good instance of the problem in New Faculty: A Practical Guide for Academic Beginners by Christopher J. Lucas and John W. Murray, Jr.[13] The book gives lots and lots of good advice, covering all the matters, large and small, that may confront a new faculty member. Unfortunately, it is likely to terrify its intended readers, for very few will be able to attend closely to all its lists of things to consider and to do, with the net result that new faculty members will feel all the more vulnerable, knowing that they are not going to get around to the many, many important things to which they ought to be attending. How many nervous new faculty members will put things in perspective? For each particular person, a significant percentage of the items covered in the guides will not pertain, and even with many of those that do pertain, the new faculty member may find it better to act *ad hoc*, confident in his native good sense, than to anticipate all possibilities with forethought and guide book firmly in hand. You will find The Chicago Guide to Your Academic Career more useful, albeit somewhat less practical.[14] Its authors create a conversation with their readers by responding reflectively to a myriad of questions pertaining to the academic experience. They will help you think through what you want to do and to develop your own strategies for doing it, but even here you may want to choose to ignore matters that in general are surely important but that in your case probably will not be crucial. If you gain confidence in your autonomous judgment through your dissertation, your habits of self-direction will guide you through many of the career decisions you will need to make thereafter.

To achieve autonomy in your academic career, you should not overlook two books from the halcyon days when jobs were plentiful and promotions quick (provided you had the good sense to be white and male). The first is *The Academic Marketplace* by Theodore Caplow and Reece J. McGee.[15] *New Faculty* and *Your Academic Career* are books of etiquette for those who sense that they lack much market power and want to avoid mistakes by meeting all possible expectations as best they can. In contrast, *The Academic Marketplace* has long been loved by scholars who sense they have some market power and want to understand how to make the most effective use of it. The more autonomous your sense of self, the more you will be ready and able to use the mapping of academic hiring practices by Caplow and McGee to further your prospects. The other book, also from the late 1950's, which you should not overlook, is *The House of Intellect* by Jacques Barzun.[16] It will not give advice on practical career matters, but it will get your dander up, one way or another. Barzun wrote as a critical insider about the ways of academe. Contending with his views will sharpen your academic values and intellectual convictions. Barzun, par excellence, is the autonomous critic. Communing with him, whether about career choices or dissertation dilemmas, will strengthen your sense of self and the independent responsibility with which you advance your work.

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[13] Christopher J. Lucas and John W. Murray, Jr. New Faculty: A Practical Guide for Academic Beginners. New York: Palgrave, 2002

[14] John A. Goldsmith, John Komlos, and Penny Schine Gold. The Chicago Guide to Your Academic Career: A Portable Mentor for Scholars from Graduate School through Tenure. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001

Like the dissertation, promotion and tenure turn on the strength of your strengths, not on making sure that everything you do is acceptable according to the prevailing norms of expectation. You must take responsibility for making your work, and the career built around it, reflect the intellectual convictions and academic values that you intend to make your own. To write a good dissertation, you need to assert your responsibility, your intellectual autonomy. It is insufficient to write asking incessantly, "Is this acceptable?" So too, it is hard to manage your career by deciding each step according to the advice and approval of more experienced mentors. They will so load you with prudential considerations that you will have neither the strength nor energy remaining to fulfill those distinctive possibilities that you want to achieve through your career, those unique accomplishments that will make your peers push for your promotion and tenure.

Independence, once asserted, becomes self-reinforcing. Take responsibility for your dissertation — *Here, accept this. I believe it is sound for these reasons, which seem to me compelling. What do you think?" Once you achieve with your dissertation such autonomy among peers, it becomes an easier step to transfer it to your subsequent management of your own career. Whether training transfers may be moot; not so autonomy. Once you assert intellectual self-direction, it is an acquirement, a self-transformation, that will extend to all you do. *Your* career will be more satisfying, and more secure, to the degree that you chart you own course, cultivate your strengths, and bring them to bear in the community of your colleagues and your students. Through your dissertation and all that follows, achieve your autonomy. By doing so, you make your graduate study an apprenticeship in the free exercise of accountable authority.

Goethe described such an intellectual apprenticeship deeply in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, one of the works forming the intellectual climate from which the modern university has emerged. There he concluded Wilhelm's indenture, an indenture you might well make your own, with a challenge you can rise to meet — ". . . The Instruction which the true artist gives us opens the mind; for, where words fail him, deeds speak. The true scholar learns from the known to unfold the unknown, and approaches more and more to being a master."[17]

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[15] Caplow, Theodore, and Reece J. McGee. The Academic Marketplace. 1958. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001.

[16] Barzun, Jacques. The House of Intellect. 1959. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.

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[17] Goethe, J. W. von. *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship.* Vol. XIV. Harvard Classics Shelf of Fiction. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1917; Book VII, Chapter Nine, Paragraph 14. Bartleby.com, 2000. (http://www.bartleby.com/314/709.html, August 19, 2003)