

*Please take a few minutes to read this as intentionally as possible.*

Sorry. I'd like to make a presentation faux pas right off the bat.

I'm going to give you a reading assignment. I'm an English teacher after all...

I'm as guilty as anyone when it comes to an assigned reading. If I "have to" read something in preparation to teach a lesson, I read it one way. If, on the other hand, I've chosen to read a book for pleasure or edification, then I read it differently and in different situations or contexts, and for different purposes. Our particular situation when we read seems to affect our intentionality toward the text.

You've experienced the difference between reading an assigned text and one of your choosing, right?

You're on vacation, say, and have chosen a book that you expect to give you passive pleasure— that expectation shapes the mental approaches you use when interacting with the text, right? You bring no pen with you with which to annotate; you expect no new knowledge or wisdom; you give yourself over to the story in a different manner. And the text confirms your expectations. You probably don't dwell on the characters outside of your immediate interaction with them in the text, for example; instead, you become immediately engrossed in the conceived world of the book and float through the narrative in a dreamy, passive sense. That's the point of reading a book like that in that situation, right?

Or maybe you're at a conference as a gifted educator, expecting to come away from each session with a kernel of an idea to build on, a practical strategy to use in your own school, pen at the ready? Does that govern your intentionality toward the text?

What governs that intentionality? Can you will yourself to read a text differently than you assume you should, given your situation? You're in a presentation with certain expectations for behavior, learning,

style of presentation. Does that limit your openness? If so, is that limitation absolute? If so, then in what manner is it absolute? Have you not the volition, will power, to see it otherwise?

Yes? Then what do you call the thing doing the willing? Consciousness? A soul? From where does it come? Natural processes? God? If natural processes, what are the obligations that follow? How can you even conceive of obligations? What is the point of self-awareness, if it's a byproduct of natural processes? What is point of volition if there's some extra-natural generative principal, force, or god?

No, you can't see it as a matter of volition to change your openness to an assigned reading at a convention for gifted educators and advocates? Why not? What are the ramifications for being able to see it as a "no"? What are the things called that govern your intentions? Conventions? If so, then what does that mean in terms of your identity? For how, in this particular situation, of being a person in a presentation having to read this self-indulgent, awkward essay, or whatever he's calling it, for that must be what you categorize it as according to the conventions that govern this sort of affair, you're supposed to receive this reading? How can you even conceive of an "I," if you can't will yourself to be open to a reading? Then how can you do...anything?

No matter the presuppositions that prime your intentionality, never mind the consequences of those beliefs, your intentionality seems to be based on presuppositions.

So... now what? Do you go back through some chain of reasoning to seek to discover what is true? What is proper? How can you conceive of a way to evaluate progress in growth, if so? And why does it bother you, if it does, that you can't? Or even if you can? How can you define "bother," for that requires that you posit a self, and you just went through that! Can you conceive of a way to justify anything? Can you even justify the reasoning that's led you to conclude that you can't justify anything? Yet here you are trying to justify something, even if it's about nothing...

So you'll just...do or be what, in relation to this reading?