

Untitled

Glenn Deefholts

Jerry was a great teacher and mentor. As a friend he was kind, considerate, deeply caring—and the most generous of emailers!

I first met him in his office in 1989. When I told him I was disillusioned with a particular philosophy professor, he said, “We get a lot of refugees from philosophy.” In ‘92 I took my first course with him. In ‘95 he supervised my first master’s thesis. At the defence, when it was his turn to speak, he said, “Well, we’ve known each other a while, Glenn. What question should I ask you that I haven’t already?” In 2015, I invited him to the defence of my second master’s thesis. He came and of course asked a thoughtful question.

Each of his courses was like a book: each class was a chapter and his lectures presented his argument, which was an invitation to contemplation and dialogue. He had an unusual capacity for seeing the big picture—for instance, high-level sociological analysis—and for noticing the subtle detail, informed by his intimate knowledge of and feeling for literature and psychoanalysis. No subject was too large or too small.

Perhaps two other quick anecdotes will capture some of his spirit. Back to that class in ‘92. We were on a break and a strong humanities student, who was considering a career in medicine, was complaining about her chemistry class. She said she couldn’t see the point of chemistry. Jerry was handing out one of his charts. He replied quickly, smiling, “what about . . . toothpaste?”

He had an embracing sense of humour. He would say, “Mmmhmm . . . Mmmhmm,” and nod rapidly when he was encouraging you in articulating a new idea. He would inhale deeply and

tilt his head back when you asked a tough question. I felt heard with him. He was one of the most understanding people I've known.

A last anecdote: a friend of mine was taking Jerry's Freud course in '95. In the second week of the term, I asked her how the class was. "Good," she said. "I'm learning to speak Zaslovian."

I cherished his natural interdisciplinarity and extraordinarily connective intelligence. I appreciated his empathic curiosity, supportiveness, and questions about how I was doing. I was inspired by his love of the arts and his commitment to critiquing society towards utopia.

I'm very grateful for him and for our friendship.

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