

Reading Journal for *A Rhetoric of Responsibility*, Diane Davis

A ponderous tome for sure, but there are a number of places I think I can react. One of the things that makes this text so difficult is the intentional use of ideas from other fields of study to make this argument about rhetoric. From physics, we have the unpredictable swerve of atoms to explain how humans are naturally biased to be with other humans. Seems fine. What is harder to grasp is when the author uses limit to explain being both inside and outside, or neither inside nor outside. It seems the definition of limit is the one we would find in calculus, for example, the limit of the sequence $1/n$ is 0. A sequence that approaches the number 0, but never reaches it, so it is 0, but it is not 0. To help us understand the argument, this example of people on a train is most helpful, but I still want more. It closes with a suggestion for the importance of this study. Without “preoriginary obligation,” (without being-for?) the world would have no generosity, no compassion, no pardon, no proximity. I think if Davis were writing it this week, she would have added no mercy. So with this final claim, I am very interested in Davis’s thesis. To me, it does sound like a Quintilian argument – this study is important for our civic success. But what is the argument? What is the thesis? This text was difficult.