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HELPING A LAWYER TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO THINK LIKE AN ARCHITECT

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Professor Radin unquestionably influenced legal academia through her ideas, arguments, and scholarship. With that said, my tribute is decidedly personal. To me, Professor Radin was the mentor and role model that I sorely needed when I was figuring out what being a legal academic could mean for me.

I entered law school as an older-and-wiser student after a decade of studying, practicing, and teaching architecture. My 1L year was a challenging, memorable, and immersive experience, but it left me rather directionless. Or, perhaps more accurately, it left me with too many intriguing directions in which I could go. Professor Radin was on leave that year, so I did not have the opportunity to meet her until, near the end of the academic year, she advertised a position for a teaching and research assistant. Knowing that she had a reputation as an incisive scholar, and that she would be teaching a number of courses related to intellectual property, I applied. After a lengthy interview, Professor Radin offered me the position. I confess that I did not recognize the interview as a pivotal moment at the time. However, looking back on it now, it is clear to me that the interview marked the beginning of a relationship that would help me to find direction for many years to come.

Many of my fondest memories of Professor Radin are from her work as a teacher. I remember the light bulbs that lit up in my head as she first introduced basic concepts to me in a clear and accessible manner. What were the implications of patent damages that allowed the metering of the use of an invention, and what implications followed from the distinction between consent and assent in internet transactions? The content was not revolutionary, but its presentation hooked me.

I am still affected today by discussions about more challenging issues that were left open ended. In the context of open source or proprietary software, is it possible to create rights that “run with a digital chattel” through contract alone or is an underlying property right needed to achieve this end? Some of these discussions have proven to be oddly prescient. I

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distinctly remember a debate over the patentability of internet-based business methods in a class on the legal issues raised by internet commerce (which, we must remember, were still nascent issues back in the day). Starting from the proposition that we might hesitate to propertize interpersonal relationships themselves, we queried whether the propertization of the software that enabled those same or similar interpersonal relationships in a digital environment might become problematic if the digital environment were ever to become the default environment for human socialization. I believe this discussion presaged a powerful explanation for not only what the Supreme Court has done in its recent cases establishing the patent ineligibility of many computer-implemented business methods, but also why the Court has done it.¹

Beyond her specific teaching moments, Professor Radin provided a critical influence that helped to shape the nature of the scholarship that I write today. To be clear, I do not write about personhood or incomplete commodification in property and contract law—topics that were, at the time, the principal focus of Professor Radin’s scholarship. A good mentor does not look to fabricate clones, but rather helps others to find their own voices—and Professor Radin did just that. My debt to her is more on the level of a conceptual approach.

As I worked with Professor Radin, one of the most important lessons that I internalized was the value of a creative turn that allows us to see what is at stake in the law in a new light and thereby understand the reasons to pursue particular routes going forward more clearly. I learned to appreciate scholarship that does not simply respond to well-known arguments on their own terms, but that cuts against the grain by introducing an alternative, competing conceptual framework. When I draw on semiotics to explain otherwise inexplicable aspects of the printed matter doctrine,² or the philosophy of language to explain the mechanics of how patent claims encompass later-developed technology,³ it is my enjoyment of a creative turn—one allows us to see things differently—that motivates me.

Professor Radin encouraged me to embrace in my scholarship what I enjoyed about my past as an architect, even as I left my professional career as an architect behind. In my opinion, much of the most interesting architecture today results from working within constraints—be they spatial, legal, or

1. See *Alice Corp. v. CLS Bank Int’l*, 134 S.Ct. 2347 (2014); see also *Bilski v. Kappos*, 561 U.S. 593 (2010).

2. See Kevin Emerson Collins, *Semiotics 101: Taking the Printed Matter Doctrine Seriously*, 85 IND. L. J. 1379 (2010).

3. See Kevin Emerson Collins, *The Reach of Literal Claim Scope into After-Arising Technology: On Thing Construction and the Meaning of Meaning*, 41 CONN. L. REV. 493, 536–53 (2008). In this instance, my intellectual debt to Professor Radin is more specific than it usually is, as Professor Radin has herself mined the philosophy of language for insights into the nature of peripheral patent claims. Margaret Jane Radin, *The Linguistic Turn in Patent Law* (2005) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with author).

budgetary—and employing a creative move to turn those constraints into the forces that motivate original design.⁴ As a legal scholar, I similarly enjoy engaging with what I see as the constraints of contemporary intellectual property law—the messy doctrinal oddities that we cannot imagine being any different, but that we often hide or sweep under the rug to keep the dominant conceptual frameworks for explaining the law clean. I like to upend those frameworks, using the previously ignored oddities to structure a different explanation for what the law is doing. That is, I like to “think like an architect” when I write about the law. Clearly, I was not in a position to articulate my brand of legal scholarship when I worked with Professor Radin during my years as a law student or even my early years in the academy. However, I vividly remember upon our first meeting how Professor Radin confidently expressed her intuition that my architectural training gave me a skill set that would serve me well as a legal scholar if I chose to pursue an academic career. It was not until years later that I came to my own understanding of what this meant, but I am grateful for her willingness to share it and insist on it in that interview and repeatedly thereafter.

I made the decision to go to law school in part because I decided against pursuing a career as an academic in architecture. Yet, after working with Professor Radin, I came to believe that I could find the engagement and fulfillment as a legal academic that I have in fact found. For this, I owe her a great debt, as I would not be where I am today without her guidance.

4. Cf. Joseph Fishman, *Creating Around Copyright*, 128 HARV. L. REV. 1333 (2015) (arguing that creativity flourishes not under complete freedom but rather under a moderate amount of restriction).