So I was able to send off the first draft of my thesis to my Committee Chair, and we've slowly been working our way through each chapter. It's daunting to sit in a room with a really smart person in your field and have them give you constructive criticism. It's intimidating and scary, and that's amplified when you look at all the changes you have to make.

First drafts are supposed to have mistakes, and I have a lot of them. When you're writing, it's hard to see the thesis as one, complete idea - there are lots of discrete parts to it. How do these chapters fit together? How do sections flow into another? There are some areas where I'm repeating myself from another chapter. There are plenty of sections where I use passive voice. There are other places where I left a note for myself to go back to edit, and promptly forgot. There's a lot going on, and now it's time to streamline that content. So, I'm going through line by line, chapter by chapter - reading it aloud. And of course, I'm stepping away every once in a while to view the thesis as a whole - something that's becoming more exciting with each revision.

As my Chair reminded me, revising doesn't mean starting from square one. It's just
that my strong ideas are hidden under a lot of first draft nerves. It's a lot of work to sort through that, but it's not a complete overhaul. She's trying to help me make this thesis a strong foundation for my academic career, showcasing all my original research and top-notch writing. As stressful and frustrating as it can be to mark-up every page, this is supposed to be a learning experience. The only way to do that is to work hard, accept criticism, and keep moving forward. Even the little things (like formatting or footnotes) seem tedious, but will go far in the long run.

Blog Column:
A Moral Voyage

Source URL (retrieved on 04/08/2016 - 7:45am):
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