



THE COURAGE TO TEACH

EXPLORING

THE

INNER LANDSCAPE

OF

A TEACHER'S LIFE

PARKER J.
PALMER

The Courage To Teach, Parker Palmer

On teaching.....

“...GOOD TEACHING CANNOT BE REDUCED TO TECHNIQUE, GOOD TEACHING COMES FROM THE IDENTITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE TEACHER.” (p 10)

On teachers....

“...GOOD TEACHERS SHARE ONE TRAIT: A STRONG SENSE OF PERSONAL IDENTITY INFUSES THEIR WORK.” (p10)

On the proper role of technique....

“... AS WE LEARN MORE ABOUT WHO WE ARE, WE CAN LEARN TECHNIQUES THAT REVEAL RATHER THAN CONCEAL THE PERSONHOOD FROM WHICH GOOD TEACHING COMES.” (P 24)

On attending to the voice of the teacher within....

“... SOLITUDE AND SILENCE, MEDITATIVE READING AND WALKING IN THE WOODS,KEEPING A JOURNAL, FINDING A FRIEND WHO WILL LISTEN... LEARN AS MANY WAYS AS WE CAN OF ‘TALKING TO OURSELVES’ “ ... DO IT NOT ONLY FOR THE SAKE OF OUR WORK BUT FOR THE SAKE OF OUR HEALTH AS WELL.” (P 32)

The Courage To Teach, Parker J. Palmer



On our paradoxical need for community and solitude...

Human beings were made for relationships: without a rich and nourishing network of connections, we wither and die.

At the same time, we were made for solitude. ...the human self remains a mystery of enfolded inwardness that no other person can possibly enter or know. If we fail to embrace our ultimate aloneness and seek meaning only in communion with others, we wither and die.

“Let the person who cannot be alone beware of community. Let [the person] who is not in community beware of being alone.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

On paradox ...

“It is the lens through which we can learn about the selfhood from which good teaching comes.

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On paradox and classroom designs...

1. The space should be bounded and open.
2. ...hospitable and “charged.”
3. ...invite the voice of the individual and the voice of the group.
4. ...honor the “little” stories of the students and the “big” stories of the discipline and tradition.
5. ...support solitude and surround it with the resources of community.
6. ...welcome both silence and speech.

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On images of community.....

The therapeutic, the civic and the marketing models:

...in therapeutic model, intimacy is the highest value.

...in civic model, the norm is not a narrow band of intimate encounters but rather the wide range of relations among strangers that make for a healthy body politic.

...in the marketing model, the institution strengthens relations with customers and becomes more accountable to them.

On the model we seek.....

... ONE THAT CAN EMBRACE, GUIDE, AND REFINE THE CORE MISSION OF EDUCATION—THE MISSION OF KNOWING, TEACHING, AND LEARNING. ... THE HALLMARK OF THE COMMUNITY OF TRUTH IS ITS CLAIM THAT REALITY IS A WEB OF COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND WE CAN KNOW REALITY ONLY BY BEING IN COMMUNITY WITH IT.

The Courage To Teach, Parker J. Palmer

On recognizing that reality is communal ...

The transformation of images of reality---from fragmentation and competition to community and collaboration---has gone on in virtually every academic discipline over the past fifty years. Once we thought of it as “stuff” then as “atomistic” now “nature is understood to be relational, ecological and interdependent.

ONE ANALOGY...IS A HOLOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPH, OF WHICH EVERY PART HAS THREE-DIMENSIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE WHOLE OBJECT PHOTOGRAPHED. IF YOU CUT THE HOLOGRAM INTO SMALL PIECES, YOU CAN UNFOLD THE WHOLE IMPAGE BY ILLUMINATING ANY PIECE OF IT WITH LASER LIGHT.”
David Bohm



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On the hallmark of the community of truth....

...REALITY IS A WEB OF COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS,
AND WE CAN KNOW REALITY ONLY BY BEING IN
COMMUNITY WITH IT.

At its best, the community of truth advances our knowledge through conflict, not competition. Competition is a secretive, zero-sum game played by individuals for private gain; conflict is open and sometimes raucous but always communal, a public encounter in which it is possible for everyone to win by learning and growing.

COMPETITION IS THE ANTITHESIS OF COMMUNITY, AN ACID THAT CAN DISSOLVE THE FABRIC OF RELATIONSHIPS. CONFLICT IS THE DYNAMIC BY WHICH WE TEST IDEAS IN THE OPEN, IN A COMMUNAL EFFORT TO STRETCH EACH OTHER AND MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD.

*...truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter,
conducted with passion and discipline.*



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On the grace of great things...

.... I mean the subjects around which the circle of seekers has always gathered---not the disciplines that study these subjects, not the texts that talk about them, not the theories that explain them, but the things themselves.

Great things.... are the vital nexus of community in education. It is the act of gathering around them and trying to understand them---as the first humans must have gathered around fire—that we become who we are as knowers, teachers, and learners.

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To see the World in a Grain of Sand
And A Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence"

On teaching more with less....

.... every discipline has a gestalt, an internal logic, a patterned way of relating to the great things at its core.

....every discipline has "grains of sand" through which its world can be seen.

....every discipline has an inner logic so profound that every critical piece of it contains the information necessary to reconstruct the whole---if it is illuminated by a laser, a highly organized beam of light. **That laser is the act of teaching.**

On interdependence in a community of truth....

When we are willing to abandon our self-protective professional autonomy and make ourselves as dependent on our students as they are on us, we move closer to the interdependence that the community of truth requires.

On learning in community...

If we want to grow in our practice, we have two primary places to go:

**to the inner ground from which good teaching comes
and**

**to the community of fellow teachers from whom we can
learn more about ourselves and our craft.**

On ways to evaluate teaching.....

**There is only one honest way to evaluate the many varieties of
good teaching with the subtlety required: it is called being
there. We must observe each other, at least occasionally---and
we must spend more time talking to each other about teaching.**

On topics of conversation about teaching....

**We can talk about mentors, and subjects that evoked the
teacher in us... . about the human condition of teachers and
learners ... about the concept of paradox... about classroom
highs and lows ... our own gifts and limits ... the creation of
learning spaces ... about ways of knowing and how they shape
our ways of teaching ... about the identity from which good
teaching comes: critical moments in teaching and learning and
metaphors and images that can enrich our sense of the self
who teaches.**

DIVIDED NO MORE

Four Stages of a Movement

- 1. Isolated individuals make an inward decision to live “divided no more,” finding a center for their lives outside of institutions.**
- 2. These individuals begin to discover one another and form communities of congruence that offer mutual support and opportunities to develop a shared vision.**
- 3. These communities start going public, learning to convert their private concerns into the public issues they are and receiving vital critiques in the process.**
- 4. A system of alternative rewards emerges to sustain the movement’s vision and to put pressure for change on the standard institutional reward system.**

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**It goes on one at a time,
it starts when you care
to act, it starts when you do
it again after they said no,
it starts when you say We
and know who you mean, and each
day you mean one more.**

Marge Piercy, “Low Road”