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# LOVE AS A PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING

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## Love as a Philosophy of Teaching

Freedom involves mutual honesty. Honesty practiced breeds trust. Trust leads to good thoughts, positive action, and personal responsibility; justice follows willingly. Love abides where justice flows freely. But, if we ever lose compassion then we forfeit the right to be truly free.

Paul Perez-Jimenez 2007

### **INTRODUCTION:**

This adage has been years in the making, and it stands as a witness to my ever commitment to never stop learning, but its birth is attributed to the year I began my educational career. It is important to note that the adage speaks to the ideas about learning goals and assessments, teaching methods and pedagogical priorities. However, the road to academia began at a stuffy old Catholic University with a pursuit of philosophy and theology and a priestly vocation that seemed to elude me. I had previously received a high school diploma from CCMS (Corpus Christi Minor Seminary), a Catholic Jesuit High School, that fostered narratives and friendship in lieu of service and spirituality. I then spent two more years at Holy Trinity Seminary in Irving, Texas which was a decadent Diocesan seminary although many of my professors were Cistercian monks. While there, I concluded that, for me, philosophy was a hopeless labor in belly button gazing and coupled with theology it was also a masochistic indulgence in self-flagellation; an egoistic introversion that could only lead to the fundamental degradation that would ultimately point to a lost contact with reality. I based this concept on the premise what I was taught about philosophy, theology, and my vocation, as a search for a general understanding of value and reality brought about through praying, thinking, and speculating about life, instead of experiencing it. I found it oppressive. Consequently, I rebelled by leaving both the seminary and the university, demoralized and determined to seek altruistic answers by participating in life and in real work, to basically seek freedom.

The experience shaped my theory about living and learning, which I now believe are one in the same. It has become a motivational factor for teaching. I believe that the best method for learning is by experiencing through interaction and discourse with others, after years of research I have come to understand this as cognitive social theory with cooperative learning style. Few of us live alone on an island; most of us live in a community where we must interact with others. We experience, reason, and make rational decisions individually but, we cannot fully live as human beings unless we relate, communicate, and connect (both figuratively and literally) with others. Furthermore, memories that make up these experiences center around a shared interaction or accomplishment that is what gives memories their importance, for a downfall or a triumph are meaningless unless they are witnessed by others. Ever tripped and looked around to see if anyone saw you? The old adage that we learn from remembering our mistakes is only partially true; in reality, we learn from our experiences as well as other people's reaction to mistakes and triumphs. Ages ago as a teenager, I came across a stained-glass ornament that I gave to an old friend. On it was an adage that I now know is attributed to William Blake, "I sought my soul, but my soul I could not see. I sought my God, but my God eluded me. I sought a friend and I found all three." This friendship or social context is referred in my original adage as the *mutual honesty* experience.

### **LEARNING GOAL**

Twenty-five years plus of experiencing life has led me to trust a loving, beautiful wife, learning from four beautiful daughters. They trusted me enough to endure the hardest year of our lives in order to break from a fastidious career in international management that demanded twelve to sixteen hours from me daily. I had become an absent father and had to forego a business career in order to also fulfill my lifelong dream of having a true vocation as a

teacher. A natural progression led me to seek Masters degrees in English Rhetoric, Composition and Literature thus fulfilling and rounding out my calling, or so I thought. Since then I have been both a high school language arts teacher and college instructor for ten gut-wrenching but fulfilling years. I constantly preach to not only my daughters but to all my students that they must always strive towards good thoughts, positive action and personal responsibility and life will take care of you. These beliefs have become underlying priorities and goals in my classroom. When you lean towards belief in the other person's positive intent, 9.9 of the times both of you will benefit.

### **TEACHING METHODS**

Paulo Freire had a similar idea about true freedom that declares, “Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects that must be saved from a burning building.” This lack of relationship has manifested itself as an apathy that is now at the heart of society and convincing its participants to justify treating each other inhumanely. As teachers and instructors, it is our duty, for we deal with malleable minds entrusted to us, to do what is best through our online pedagogical strategies, curriculum, lessons, and any interaction especially in this dark time where we have been lead to believe that money trumps all decency. My goal is to infuse all aspects of online learning with definitive social and cooperative skills.

### **STUDENT LEARNING**

However, I still adhere to the belief that this era of Education has the potential of becoming the most promising, innovative, and comprehensive in history just by merely having both our teachers and students become deliberate, earnest co-participants in their liberation or learning process. And, although online assessments are important, I believe that student

understanding is more important and it is tied into this liberation process. Nonetheless, as a doctoral student, I am well aware of the strengths as well as the many shortcomings of the status quo and it has fueled my interest and fanned my desire to expand and prove my theories that empathy sows compassion, justice, and love.