

POTENTIAL TEACHERS - 1952

Air Force Academy - 1952

Feringer notes

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Lecture - 1

1. Where does teaching occur? And what might be said to be a normal situation? In one way or another teaching occurs everywhere, and most people are teachers. With children the normal situation is within the family at first. In the home, teaching occurs when it is necessary, when some situation requires it. It is the same outside the classroom, in the work place and elsewhere, for instance, learning to ski. In the classroom the timeliness is out of kilter because it is arbitrary.

2. What other barriers are there to classroom teaching? One question is, how much time is there for teaching? The less time, the more general the teaching must be, and it would follow, the less learned. ERH cites the example of the history teacher who was asked, how much time is needed to teach universal history, he replied, "From one minute to ten years." How much time is available?

3. Finally, to whom is the teacher speaking? Outside the classroom teaching occurs individually. In a classroom one must speak to a "mass," to everyone, but no one in particular.

In sum, one could say that the classroom is the least normal (and least effective) situation for teaching. The classroom:

a....is too impersonal.

b....too general.

c....too late or too early. Timing is not geared to need.

4. There are three elements to a possible learning situation that define it:

a. Training may be said to deal with automatic responses whereby the method would be practice. These methods derive from science, mainly physiology.

b. Instruction can be defined as the passing on of information. The methods for instruction would also derive from science and deal with the mind.

c. Both (a,b) above are necessary, but do not speak to the issue of what the student might do outside the classroom, where responses to real-life situations are called for. Real teaching may be said to deal with basic changes in behavior outside the classroom, where personality is changed. Teaching addresses issues of the "soul."

Category (a) above addresses reaction, something mechanical, organic. Category (b) deals with transmission, something memorized. But true teaching addresses the **transformation** of the student, because in real life our goal is always to make things better than they have been, which requires constant thought and action. Knowledge is transformed in the process.

5. All of these three dimensions occur together, but real teaching subsumes the other two and is the most important. Ultimately the student must teach him/herself. The end (goal) of teaching determines its content and methods, of course. Ultimately, it is the spirit, one's attitude toward engaging in life, whereby there arises a need to prepare the student to be a teacher.

6. Teaching embodies the basic experience of the culture, passing on what the community believes is the "truth." It must therefore deal with the past, present, and future times; e.g. what do we need know today, what has been known about this in the past, and what actions need to be taken by us that will enhance our future?

7. The child doesn't live in either the past, present, or future. He/she lives "out of time," without a consciousness of time except for the moment.

Lecture - 2

1. To summarize up to this point, 1) a trainer is a man who can mold a body, 2) an instructor is a man who can mold a mind, 3) a teacher is a man who can change a mind. (p.1)

A teacher is a time-binder, having assessed the needs of today, of his generation, to the point where the next step is prepared for. Education does not mold a person for his own sake, but to prepare him to create a future for himself and the community.

2. Life processes occur in phases. In marriage, for instance, first a casual meeting, then passionate courtship, then commitment (marriage), then establishing a home are all different phases of this process, each different from the next in intensity. In a like way, as all of the important parts of living occur in different phases constantly, TEACHING AND LEARNING

ARE THE SAME. One can never teach the same idea in its different phases, from introduction to practice, in exactly the same way. Just as one could not gauge the whole of marriage experience by learning about courtship only.

3.The first step is mechanical, one involving memory and repetition. This is a preconscious, "sinking in", non-rational step. This seems like "dead weight," nothing instinctive (organic).

4.The second step is organic, getting a feeling for the subject, getting an instinct for it.

5.Another step involves passion, a love of the subject, an intense desire to formulate one's knowledge and practice. And the next step is enthusiasm. Finally, comes learning the structure of its principles, the rational part. This must always be the final step, because only then can one understand the meaning of any of the preceding elements.

6.The sequence of the phases is crucial, as there is a natural rhythm. When one addresses merely a number of "thinking machines," irrespective of the personalities, one taps only one phase of a complex process, and this renders that aspect of the learning incomplete and of little use. One learns to change when one is spoken to on a personal basis. A well-known aphorism about teaching is that learning is greatly enhanced when the teacher cares whether the student learns the subject. This is a personal act.

7.Different methods may be used for each step; certainly no single method will suffice. How, for instance, does one become infected with the teacher's love and enthusiasm of the subject? These come from the soul of the teacher and have nothing to do with logic. The rhythms of learning, the mechanics of beginning information, the organic investment, the love, enthusiasm and finally, the logical order (the theories about its cause/effect aspects) all form a rhythm that can be felt quite naturally. One might call each progressive step a state of "aliveness," from sleep to intense consciousness - Beware of university schools of education which begin with the last step and miss parts along the way. Is it any wonder most of our school teaching is so ineffective, except of course for training in the simplest sense.

POTENTIAL TEACHERS - Review

In POTENTIAL TEACHERS the author raises the question, "What are the barriers to teaching?" Real learning, he asserts, arises from real life, which is specific and personal and where significant learning occurs unpredictably and only "at the right time." The classroom, by contrast, is general and impersonal, and comes either too early or too late (because it must be arbitrarily scheduled). Because it is difficult to surmount these barriers the norm is to forsake teaching for training or instruction. Real teaching blends these approaches in a natural rhythm from one phase to another; "Learning dies by being taught with only one rhythm." These essays help us understand comments he makes throughout other essays in which teaching is only touched upon in passing.

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