

Parker Palmer's *Courage to Teach*

and its Relationship to Horn Pedagogy

Presented by Lin Foulk, Western Michigan University
40th IHS Symposium Pedagogy Sessions • July 24, 2008

Introduction

"I am a teacher at heart, and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy. When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illumined by the lightning-life of the mind—then teaching is the finest work I know.

But at other moments, the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused—and I am so powerless to do anything about it—that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham. Then the enemy is everywhere: in those students from some alien planet, in the subject I thought I knew, and in the personal pathology that keeps me earning my living this way. What a fool I was to imagine that I had mastered this occult art—harder to divine than tea leaves and impossible for mortals to do even passably well!

If you are a teacher who never has bad days, or who has them but does not care, this book is not for you. This book is for teachers who have good days and bad, and whose bad days bring the suffering that comes only from something one loves. It is for teachers who refuse to harden their hearts because they love learners, learning, and the teaching life."(1-2)

Seek Questions, Not Answers

"...the subjects we teach are as large and complex as life, so our knowledge of them is always flawed and partial. No matter how we devote ourselves to reading and research, teaching requires a command of content that always eludes our grasp." (2)

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the *questions themselves*..." (quoting Rilke, 89)

"Truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline." (106)

"Ghandi called his life 'experiments with truth,' and experimenting in the complex field of forces that bear on our lives is how we learn more about our integrity." (17)

Vulnerability—We Teach Who We Are

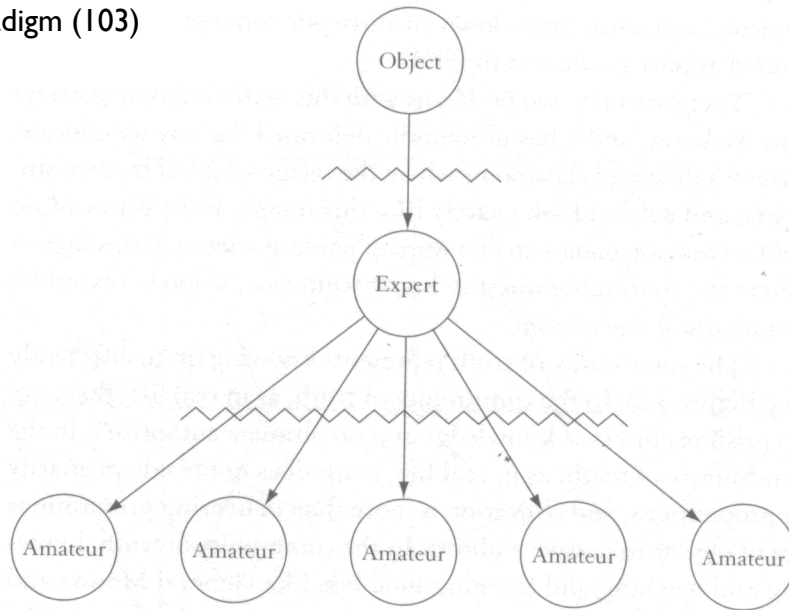
"My ability to connect to my students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood—and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning." (10-11)

"...teaching is a daily exercise in vulnerability. I need not reveal personal secrets to feel naked in front of a class. I need only parse a sentence or work a proof on the board while my students doze off or pass notes. No matter how technical my subject may be, the things I teach are things I care about—and what I care about helps define my selfhood." (17)

"...teaching holds a mirror to the soul." (3)

New Teacher-Student Relationship

Old Paradigm (103)



New Paradigm (105)

