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Voices of the Pedagon

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is one teacher's exploration of her own practice and of the pedagogical space in a college environment. It looks at the teacher's struggle to become a better practitioner by coming to a different understanding of the topography and fellow travelers within the *Pedagon* (Smith, 1994, p.i). This exploration allows her to dialogue with other educators on important issues such as 'the self that teaches', the self and others, subject centered classrooms, and play within the *Pedagon*. It also looks at both the boundaries and boundlessness of pedagogical space. For the explorer, this thesis brings about the affirmation of not only the importance of being cognizant of the polyvocality within the pedagogical space, but also of being open to the 'other'. To do this, a practitioner needs to actively engage within the *Pedagon* on an ongoing basis. It is then, that a practitioner is able to successfully grapple with issues that abound pedagogical space; issues such as fear, isolation, power and authority.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1 – THE QUEST

'Who are you?' Said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I-I hardly know, sir, just at present-at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'

'What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar sternly. "Explain yourself!'

'I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir,' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'

'I don't see,' said the Caterpillar.

'I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly,' Alice replied very politely, 'for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.'

'It isn't,' said the Caterpillar.

'Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet,' said Alice; 'but when you have to turn into a chrysalis – you will some day, you know – and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?'

'Not a bit' said the Caterpillar.

'Well, perhaps your feelings may be different,' said Alice; 'all I know is, it would feel very queer to me.'

'You!' said the Caterpillar contemptuously. 'Who are you?'

Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation... (Carrol, 1865/1992, p.55)

Who am I?

My name is Shaheen, and I come from many worlds. I am from the

East and I am of the West. I am a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, a

friend, and a teacher. These are all labels for me. These labels have roles that I play out, but ever so often, I find myself asking, "who am I?" Ever so often, this question sets me out on a quest – a quest to come to a different understanding, a different consciousness.

I have been an adult educator for fourteen years. Teaching fascinates me. I am in awe of it. It is a standing joke in our family that I have been playing at being a teacher since I was six years old. My grandfather's house had a soft board that was six feet long. I recall many a hot afternoon, when I disturbed my aunts and woke them up from their naps as I 'taught' my siblings and cousins 'algebra'.

In 1985, I started teaching evening classes in English as a Second Language at a private learning centre. This was my first venture into adult education. In trying to cope with the space I was in, the teaching materials and my students, I came to a belief, that if I were a better teacher, if I knew the technique, I could then become the magician teacher that I wanted to be. So, in 1986, I went back to university to become an 'expert' in adult education.

My struggle to be a good teacher has been a thirteen-year-old quest. At the university, some teachers just drew the other students and me in, and they made the subject matter interesting. They did more than that; they initiated us to the world around us. And then, there were the other teachers in whose classes, I felt invisible, anxious, and lost. Since then, I have been

struggling to know the secret of the 'great teacher'. I have worked hard to understand the subject matter that I teach. I have made sure that I am prepared before I go to class. I have talked to colleagues, read books, spoken to teachers, but to no avail. I am still left with questions. What is it to be a good teacher? Who is the self that teaches? Are there such entities as a born teacher or a magician teacher? If so, how can one become one?

Setting on a Quest

More than anything else, I want to feel competent as a teacher in class. I would like to be able to handle 'any and all curves' that the students and teaching throws at me. How can I do that? Palmer writes: "...technique is what teachers use until the real teacher arrives ...(1998, p. 5) He suggests that the book "*The courage to teach: exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*" is about helping that inner teacher to show up. As I was perusing it, I came across this quote by Florida Scott-Maxwell. She asserts: "You need only claim the events of your life to make yourself yours. When you truly possess all you have been and done...you are fierce with reality." (Palmer, 1998, p. 29)

If there weren't any magical techniques, that meant I would have to go to my own practice, the events of my own life to get answers. I would have to become fierce with my own reality. I decided I would use my practice to understand this self that teaches, to explore the phenomena of pedagogical

space, and to understand the roles of the students and teachers in that space.

Guides on the Journey

As I struggled with this idea, I met up with David Smith. When I mentioned this idea to him, he thought it was a sound idea. He put force to the idea by saying:

> But if, as Paul Ricoeur (1985) has done, we extrapolate the notion of text to mean the text of life, life as it presents itself to us, then we are in a position to gain insight into the teaching relationship in new ways. (Smith, 1994, p. 72)

As I was embarking on this quest, I also met another educator[1] who introduced me to other thinkers like Dilthey, Husserl, Heidegger, Greene, Arendt, and Gadamer to name a few. He counseled: "interpretive pedagogy tries to show the way the specificities of our lives, while in many instances unique to each person, are also participant in the full texture of human life as a whole." (Jardine, 1994, p.4)[2] He encouraged me to go on this quest by saying:

> There are kin of yours out there in the world that you haven't met yet and who know family tales – tales of your family, tales of your family resemblances, tales of what winds and binds your words out into the flesh of the Earth. (Jardine, 1994, p.11)

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[1] Jardine, D. (1999). EDER 659.09: Foundational Thinkers Class, University of Calgary, Winter, 1999.

[2] Jardine, D. (1994) cites David Smith (1988). Children and the gods of war in Journal of Educational Thought 22(2A),11

Then he gave me the boon of taking these thinkers as my guides.

As we set out, Gadamer, one of my guides gave me my first guideline.

He instructed that:

> The hermeneutical consciousness culminates not in
> methodological sureness of itself, but in the same readiness for
> experiences that distinguishes the experienced man from the
> man captivated by dogma. (1998, p. 362) Questions always
> bring out the undetermined possibilities of a thing... To
> understand the questionableness of something is already to be
> questioning... (1998, p. 375)

The Land called *Pedagon*

> The Bagginses had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for
> time out of mind, and people considered them very respectable,
> not only because most of them were rich, but also because
> they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected: you
> could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without
> the bother of asking him. This is a story of how a Baggins had
> an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things
> altogether unexpected. He may have lost the neighbours'
> respect but he gained – well, you will see whether he gained
> anything in the end. (Tolkien, 1937, p. 10)

Pedagon may be defined as the cultural space in which "issues surrounding pedagogy are contested, enacted and inhabited." (Smith, 1994, p. ii) *Pedagon* is a newly-coined word by David Smith. It elides two words, *pedagogy* and *agon*. *Pedagogy* stems from the Greek word *Paidagogia*. The word *Paida* means child. *Agens* meant to set in motion, to lead, to conduct, to guide. Thus, *pedagogue* in earlier times was a 'slave who escorted boys from home to school and back again'. *Pedagogy* connoted to mean 'attendance on children, education, cultures'. Today, it means the

science of teaching. Smith explains that initially *agon* was a Greek word for a gathering or an assembly especially of public games. Later, *agon* meant "contest" or "struggle" as in the term agony. For Smith it is a: "struggle or contestion over something of great importance, such as the condition of one's soul." (1994, p.i) Smith uses the word *Pedagon* to define "the cultural space in which issues surrounding pedagogy are contested, enacted and inhabited." (1994, p. ii) Like, Smith, I have come to understand the *Pedagon* as a gathering place where pilgrims of learning can come to an understanding of learning and teaching. It is a place where I have and still continue to wrestle with myself to acquire a sense of self as a teacher. The *Pedagon* is a place whose inhabitants help shape what it looks like or is at any one time. It is the place where I find the tools and materials to better shape and cultivate the teacher within.

Point of Departure

This thesis is an exploratory journey to and within the *Pedagon*. For me, the *Pedagon* is a land of vast topography. It has intriguing and sometimes frightening landmarks such as the Self and the Other, Community, Subject-centered Education, and Play. These landmarks are sometimes bound and sometimes opened by integrity, authority, fear, isolation, power, loss and reclaiming. I have an urge to explore these in order to know and understand what constitutes this pedagogical space. Is it

the physical space in an institution or the physical space in the classroom? For example, who gets to define what this space is? Is this space controversial and adversarial? Can it be supportive? I wonder who has the real authority and the power in this space. Is it the students, the teachers, or the institutions? Is there a relationship between the authority of the teacher and the authority of the discipline, and the authority of the student? Is there such a thing as Parker Palmer's concept of a community of truth? How can one define play? Can there be play in a place such as the Pedagon? If so, who are the essential players? Who is the play for and by? Can one say that there is a play of and by the students, the teachers and the institutions? What happens when this space is violated? What happens when any play in the Pedagon is disrupted? What difference does this understanding make to me as a teacher? How would this help me understand the self that teaches?

I am told that this journey is not going to be an easy one. As a teacher, I may be called to extend myself in ways that I have never done before. Travelling through this space can be fraught with danger. For this reason, I have been granted the boon to call upon experienced and wise educators to warn me of the prospective pitfalls and provide me with the necessary counsel to guide me on this journey.

CHAPTER 2 - THE OPENING

> What comes through the hole (porta) has its source
> beyond the wall and cannot easily be detached from
> the gap (chaos) of its entry. Opportunities are not
> plain, clean gifts; they trail dark and chaotic
> attachments to their unknown backgrounds, luring us
> further. One insight leads to another; one invention
> suggests another variation – more and more seems to
> press through the hole, and more and more we find
> ourselves drawn out into a chaos of possibilities.
> (Jardine cites Hillman in *Speaking with a Boneless
> Tongue*, 1994, p. 42)

In the Beginning

I was invited to teach at Mount Royal College (MRC) in the fall of

1996. It was a much-desired call. It was desired for many reasons.

I had just finished a six-month contract teaching English as a Second

Language (ESL) to refugees and new immigrants from different parts of the

world. These individuals had been professionals in their countries, yet

teaching them a second language was difficult and full of unanticipated and

unforeseen challenges and dangers.

I had taught in a non-profit organization and had tried hard to adjust in

an institution and a program where nothing was expected of students except

to attend class. Since this was a government-sponsored program,

attendance was important. Not attending regularly meant the students could

not get their monthly allowances from sponsoring government bodies.

Sometimes, it had seemed to me that the group of students was more

interested in attending in order to collect the allowance and talk to one another in their own languages than to try to acquire another language. The institution seemed to function more like a coffee club with child minding arrangements. I came to a crossroad in my career after a particular incident.

The program I was teaching was the Language Instruction for New Immigrants (LINC). Each semester was twelve weeks long. The objective of this program was to provide newly arrived immigrants with survival skills necessary to cope in a new language, culture, and country. The curriculum was modular in nature. It was designed to facilitate continuous intakes of students. The reasoning behind this design was that it allowed for entry and exit of students into the program with minimum disruption. Each module was self-contained and dealt with specific survival themes such as: "Hello and Goodbye", "The Telephone", "Family", "Transportation", "Housing", "The Body", "Weather", "Work".

During my second week of teaching the class, I started the "family unit". To facilitate the learning of this unit, I decided to use authentic materials, as I had done so many times before. I, therefore invited the class to bring family photographs to class the next day.

One of the students did not come to class the following day. Students in this program had problems and many reasons for being away; a child could be sick, they could have appointments with doctors or counselors. Although, they had one afternoon off in a week, and finished classes at

2:30pm, many students preferred to make appointments during class time. Therefore, I did not think much of the absenteeism.

At the end of that day, I was called in to the administrator's office. I was accused of having run the student out of the class, and because of the manner in which I had treated her in class, she had become very ill and would no longer attend the program.

I was perplexed, petrified and shattered when I heard these words. I reviewed the previous day in my mind. Had I been rude to her? Had I insulted her? Perhaps, I had spoken too forcefully? Had I not paid attention to what she was saying or asking? Had I ignored her? The answer to all these questions was 'no!' While I knew that many of my students were refugees and had been in Canada for anywhere up to two years, I did not know this particular woman very well. She had been away the first two days I had started teaching. I had not had a chance to connect with her yet.

During the meeting with the administrator, I found out that she had lost her family in Bosnia.

By asking the class to bring family pictures, I had traumatized her. I felt guilty and full of recriminations for not having checked out each student's background, for just assuming that these students were like any other students. Nevertheless, the following question niggled at the back of my mind: "How well should a teacher know the personal background of each of her students?". I felt that the administrator's accusation was unjust and

unwarranted. When I had started this assignment, I had not been told of any special student cases or culture groups about which I needed to be more sensitive than usual.

The 'warrior'[3] within me came forth. Why warrior? Warrior is a derivative of the word 'war'. Etymologically, this word can be traced back to *werre* (Middle English and late Old English), which in turn is from Old Northern French. It may have originated from the Old High German word *werra* which means 'confusion, strife, quarrel'. 'War' may be traced back to the Middle High German *werren* and *vererren*, and the German word *verwirren* connotes 'to confuse', 'to perplex'. The old Slavic words *vrⱭchq* and *vrⱭšti*, which mean 'to thrash' can be added to the list of connotations.

As I reflected upon the question: "why warrior?" I realized that I felt a warrior in more than one way. I was both struggling and fighting against a thrashing. I was thrashing (struggling) against what I perceived to be an unfair situation. I was also *war-ing* (fighting) both to protect and defend myself from what seemed an unjust thrashing which took the form of the accusation.

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[3] Pearson, C., (1994). The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. Pp. 76- 90. The warrior archetype is one that informs individuals' demands to change their environments to suit their own needs and to conform to their values. Warriors tend to be tough-minded and realistic in order to change the world by slaying dragons. Warriors either change themselves, or get rid or transform the community around them. The lesson that needs to be learned in this archetype is to face fear.

I felt confused about the situation. I needed to understand my position's mandate. Was I a teacher, or was I supposed to be a psychologist and a social worker? Was I supposed to be all three? Did my mandate require of me to connect immediately with each and every student in the class?

Other questions also poured forth out of this confusion. Should I have used the authentic materials I used? Had I set myself up by asking them to bring their family pictures? In addition, by asking them to bring in their pictures, had I created, or presumed, or demanded a certain intimacy? Had I required myself to be all three (a teacher, psychologist, and a social worker) by creating an intimacy for which I or they or we were not prepared?

I was now faced with two dilemmas. One, what were my role and responsibilities towards my students and towards the teaching profession? Two, perhaps a more important one, how was I now to address the issues in the classroom?

Neither my previous experience as a coordinator of English as a Second Language programs nor my background in adult education had prepared me for anything like this. I felt incompetent and a failure as a teacher. My sense of self as a teacher plummeted. I wish I had had Smith's counsel then. He cautions:

> It is premature to rest with a simple acceptance of polyphony of curricular and pedagogic voices in teaching today or within the culture generally. This is because pure acceptance of

difference without a consideration of meaning and implication of
that difference for all concerned only intensifies the isolation of
individuals in their difference. (1994, Pp. 71-72)

Obviously, I had fallen into the very trap against which Smith warns us. I had

simply accepted the cultural backgrounds of my students at a surface level,

without reflecting upon what this meant or entailed in terms of pedagogy. By

requesting my students to bring in the family pictures, I had meant to rupture

the walls of isolation. I meant to acknowledge them as individuals in their

own right rather than mere names or people who filled up the room called

Level I. Unfortunately, I ended up doing exactly the opposite of what I had

intended to do. I ended up making the individuals feel more isolated.

Smith claims that voices that were once subterranean or offstage to

the main stream society have a need and therefore, demand to be heard. He

explains how these voices can be heard. He writes:

...well, these voices not only demand to be heard, but for the
very possibility of being heard to exist, there has to be a kind of
deep facing of implications of what really hearing another
person or group means to the way one lives, or better, to the
way we live together. (1994, p.25)

While I had accepted the "polyphony" within the culture in general

terms, I had not meditated on our differences, nor had I considered what

made us different. Not only had I not taken into consideration the

implications of how different we were, and what this meant to the way we

would be in the classroom, but I did not acknowledge the fact that the had

their own understanding or awareness of their and our differences. Thus, they, too had something to say about what was happening in our classroom.

In the Grip of Fear and Isolation

I was so afraid to teach. I spent the next six months walking on eggshells. I was afraid of making the wrong choices. I was afraid of losing my job. I was afraid that my students hated me, but most of all, I was afraid that I wasn't an effective teacher. I was teaching adults who had managed to survive horrors one can only imagine - years in a refugee camp, loss of loved ones in front of their very eyes, separation from their children and spouses, persecution and constant fear for their lives. My fears and sense of my own inadequacy were perhaps blinding me to the fears that were facing my students. While coming to Canada may have meant an opportunity to begin a new life, for many, it meant loss of everything, their identities, sense of selves and becoming nonentities. Instead of being open and fecund, the pedagogical space was getting choked and constricted by fear.

I had to deal with many paradoxes during this time. While students in this program were adults, their behaviour sometimes appeared to be child like. They had been professionals in their countries of origin, individuals who had taken charge of their own lives. Those who had been in refugee camps in transit had done anything and everything to survive. Yet, in Canada, these same individuals seemed to have lost all sense of self-direction and control.

They seemed not to want to go for a job interview or another agency without someone holding their hands. They needed to learn the second language, yet they did not want to do any homework or any work outside the class. They expected and wanted to be treated with respect and as adults, yet gave very little respect both to other individuals and the teacher in the classroom. It seemed that they wanted all privileges of being adult students - the freedom to choose what to do, come late, not attend classes, not do their assignments - but they did not want the responsibilities that went with being adult students.

Was I correct in my assessment? Did they not want the independence that the program would offer by way of language training? Was I being judgmental? Did I truly understand their reality? Was it that the program and they themselves did not recognize their need to grieve and adjust to the new environment? Did being in the program exacerbate the situation by placing them in circumstances where they had no choices but to go through the survival mode yet again, albeit a different kind of survival? What could I have done differently? I was assaulted by these questions and could not find an answer. The program administration did not help. It did not allow dialogue with the students, nor did it feel that the immigrant students should be accountable for things that mainstream Canadians would be.

Parker Palmer (1993) notes that marginalized students hide behind the masks of silence and indifference in front of individuals with power as a

means of coping with the rejection of these individuals and the fear that people in and with power do not care about their plights. Palmer believes that the solution is simple. His advice is to make space for the multiplicity of voices, such that, the voices of individuals without the power, the marginalized voices can also be heard with the voices of the individuals in power. However, how does one do this?

Smith may have a solution. He suggests cultivating a constant awareness of consciousness. It is the cognizance of this consciousness that provides one with the understanding, and therefore, with the means to cultivate new ways of paying attention and being. He calls this practice meditation. Etymologically, meditation has to do with thinking over, considering, reflecting, measuring, being mindful of, and heeding. Smith infers that understanding is very important, and a necessary condition for "good relations between the Self and the Other" (1994, P. 48). He writes:

> Meditative stopping makes possible a new kind of stillness in
> which can be heard or recognized, maybe for the first time, all
> of those voices, intuitions, dreams and aspirations... which
> have been suppressed under the dispensations of the dominant
> order. Meditation disrupts the grammar of received
> consciousness to make consciousness available to its wider
> purview, which is the ability to think freely, in a way not
> dependent upon concepts determined by essentialist thinking to
> be necessary tools of thoughts. (Smith, 1994, p. 48)

Taking Stock

Measuring up our situation led me to ask questions. As a teacher, what could I do to open the space? Could I connect with the students? What were they feeling? Were they feeling helpless and powerless? Did they need to have their `presence' made known? Did they need to take control over their own lives? Everything was arranged for them: what school to go - what classes to take, into which government agency to tap. Would getting them involved in the process of learning help?

I called upon all the techniques that I had learned in adult education. I started a dialogue on adult education with the students. Because of this dialogue, we started with the physical space in the classroom. We re-arranged the tables in a boardroom style. We talked about the concept of teams and my position as a team leader. I incorporated chat-time in the class timetable. We had presentations about our home countries. I co-ordinated field trips to the bank, department stores, grocery stores, museums to help them acquire life skills in another language and culture. We tried music, trips to the library, and videos to become acquainted with the dominant culture. However, all this led to very little change in our class environment, and through out this process, I was hounded by one question, "Did the students have any responsibility, or was the creating of such a space entirely my responsibility?"

The State of Orphanhood

I felt disheartened. I felt afraid, "self-negated" and "self annihilated" (Palmer, 1998). I felt a failure. I felt tired and disconnected because I did not feel affirmed by my students. Because I felt disconnected from them, I did not trust them, nor did I feel hopeful towards them. The terrible truth was that I felt very cynical about my students. I found myself disillusioned and spiritually depleted. I found myself in the state of 'orphan-hood'. Pearson defines an orphan as the "disappointed idealist, the disillusioned innocent." (1991, p. 84)

Opening up the pedagogical space had its challenges. Palmer is right in suggesting that one make space for the multiplicity of voices. It is important to ensure that all voices are heard in any space, not just the voices of those in power. However, allowing all voices to be heard sometimes creates a crescendo which may drown the understanding of consciousness. Moreover, once the voices are there, what can one do with them?

Smith asserts that one needs to do more than make space for the voices to be heard. He states that it is not enough to make space for the differences. Rather, one also needs to understand the differences, and to know how is it that I am different from you and in what way am I different. Thus, implicit in this counsel is the recognition that one needs to be

cognizant of the many voices and mindful of what makes them different. He writes:

> ...If I merely accept you in your difference without exploring how you are different and how your difference reflects my difference from you, that is, how knowing you invites self-reflection on my part – without such conversation we merely exist as two solitudes." (1994, p. 72)

In just taking Palmer's advice and not looking closely at what Smith was saying, I fell into the very trap against which Smith was warning. In that particular class, because we did not take the time to have a conversation on how we were different, and what made us different, my students and I existed as two solitudes. Instead, we went for the quick fixes. In my eagerness to accept and to be open to the polyphony of voices within our classroom and the main stream society, I took our differences for granted and at face value.

Gadamer too, has a cautionary note when it comes to meaning making in isolation and without a dialogue. He suggests that meaning making in an arbitrary way is dangerous. He writes:

> In human relations the important thing is, as we have seen, to experience Thou truly as a Thou – i.e., not to overlook his claim but to let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs. Without such openness to one another there is no genuine human bond... Openness to the other then involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so. (1998, p. 361)

Because the heart of human understanding is in relation to the other, it is critical that a teacher be open to the otherness of the text or person. How can a teacher do this? His answer is to be aware of and question the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. Gadamer counsels:

> ... this openness always includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meaning or ourselves in relation to it. Now the fact is that meanings represent a fluid multiplicity of possibilities (in comparison to the agreement presented by a language and a vocabulary), but within this multiplicity of what can be thought ... - not everything is possible; and if a person fails to hear what the other person is really saying, he will not be able to fit what he has misunderstood into the range of his own various expectations of meaning. Thus there is a criterion here also. The hermeneutical becomes of itself a questioning of things... (1998, pp. 268-269)

Gadamer is very clear of the pitfalls that one may fall into (very much like I did) when one does not question things and one's own prejudices. He writes:

> A person who does not admit that he is dominated by prejudices will fail to see what manifests itself by their light. It is like the relation between I and Thou. A person who reflects himself out of the mutuality of such a relation changes this relationship and destroys a moral bond. (1998, p. 360)

I was caught in my own subjectivity when it came to families. I come from a closely-knit family. I come from a culture that is steeped in, and thrives on extended family ties. In Canada, family spelled what television broadcasted it to be... Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners... the joyful side of love,

warmth and unity. It was a romantic notion of family. My subjectivity and lack of consciousness made me oblivious to other experiences of family. I had not considered the fact that for many of the students, who were refugees, family symbolized pain, separation, loss, death, and aloneness. Thus, my epiphany from this painful incident was that: for true interpretation and understanding, a person needs to be *prepared* that the "other" will tell you something, not previously considered, anticipated or defined in a particular way.

Smith purports that an increasing number of individuals feel isolated because they are trapped within their own subjectivity. This is primarily because they are not *prepared* and ready for the other. *To prepare* means to make ready beforehand. How can this be done? He responds to this question:

> In deconstructive terms, our suppressions, lacks and so on are made most transparent in the faces of those most different from us. Others always service initially as a reminder of what we are not. So it is that the fullness of my person requires for its genuine maturity a full openness to others, rather than a strict self-enclosure within, say a predefined identity as "Teacher." Genuine growth in self-understanding is the consequence of an ongoing four fold action: an opening to others; an engagement with others; followed by a form of self-reflection implying self modification; followed in turn by re-engagement. (1994, p.78 emphasis added)

Like Gadamer (1998) Horton and Freire (1990), Smith seems to advocate the need to engage, reflect, dialogue and re-engage with something or someone else to foster self-understanding. For Smith, this

model is the basis for "genuine meeting between people." (1994, p. 78) This genuine meeting between people and the opening to the other can also take place when stories are shared:

> The opening of self to the non-self involves primarily an opening of our stories to each other, an acceptance of how we are always everywhere already living in the midst of stories, involving a surfacing and a sharing of that which constitutes us. This is difficult, but it provides the necessary means by which we can see one another in each other in a deep way – to get beyond pure difference to creative relations and the possibility of true care. (Smith, 1994, p. 79)

While an important part of establishing sound pedagogical space is to be open to the differences of the 'other', Smith especially cautions teachers against getting caught in the trap of their own subjectivity. For Smith, the danger of such subjectivity is that it leads to "loss of capacity for intimacy". Since, a genuine capacity for intimacy is lost, teachers tend to compensate for it by enfolding themselves in "the mannerisms of generosity and care for students in the name, say of good reinforcement psychology...." He continues:

> "Because of a deep incapacity to be affected by the difference of the Other, embodied in one's students, however, this positive manner often has more the air of an affectation and it contains its own pedagogic violence." (Smith, 1994, p. 72)

Unfortunately, I had gotten myself trapped in the very trap against which these educators caution. The pedagogical violence had been done.

The situation at that particular conjuncture was unbearable for me. I was engulfed in a deep sense of Orphanhood. As I write this, I am struck by

the fact that I was not the only person who was engulfed in Orphanhood. My students too, felt like orphans. Each of us had tried to cope with the situation as best, as we could. Pearson expounds on the symptoms of Orphanhood:

> ... the Orphan within, who is a survivor and a bit of cynic, sizes up the situation and sees which of our qualities will have to be sacrificed or go underground to fulfill that new image. ...The Orphan is also the part of us that learns to recognize and thus avoid situations that are likely to hurt us...." (1991, p.33)

My method of dealing with this state was to apply at one of the leading colleges in the city to teach academic English. However, my experience had facilitated a change in consciousness. There was now an awareness that: "Contact, or 'facing' the Other, always means examining the ways I am now inexorably different than I was before contact, and things can never be the same again." (Smith, 1994, p.37)

Genuine Experiences and *Bildung*

For Gadamer, (1998) "genuine experience" leads to *Bildung*. *Bildung* is a Germanic word that equates to the English words "cultivate and form". The definition of 'cultivate' in The Oxford English Dictionary is 'to till – to take care of – to refine – to culture – to promote the growth of oneself to the advancement or development. To form is to mould, fashion, or shape in a certain way. In modern language, we use both cultivation and formation to mean to "shape, develop, mould by discipline or education".

Gadamer asserts that when a person has a negative experience, it acts as a wake-up call. The person is claimed by it. If she is not dogmatic, it allows her to *open to the other* - to *thou*, which in turn allows her to understand herself – *I*. This process enables a person to become experienced, cultivated or better at her profession. For me, the experience I had just had was a wake up call of which I was not fully cognizant. All I was aware of was the importance of understanding pedagogical space and my need for control over it. Although, I was not fully cognizant of the journey I was embarking upon, with the call from MRC, the process of *bildung* had begun for me. Gadamer writes:

> "Now, Bildung is intimately associated with the idea of culture
> and designates primarily the properly human way of developing
> one's natural talents and capacities"...(1998, p. 10) Hence
> Bildung, as rising to the universal is a task for man. (p. 12)
> Practical Bildung is seen in one's fulfilling one's profession
> wholly, in all aspects... to make one's profession wholly one's
> concern. Then it is no longer a limitation. (p. 13)

This is precisely what Bildung was for me – a beginning of a process of shaping and cultivating the educator or teacher within me.

CHAPTER 3 - IDENTITY AND INTEGRITY

Only once have I been mute.
It was when a man asked me,
"Who are you?" (Gibran, 1926, p.2)

The Self that Teaches

I believe that a teacher plays a critical role in cultivating and establishing pedagogical space. However, the following question posed by Parker Palmer intrigued me to an extent that I felt the need to explore it in more depth. He asks and advocates the following:

Who is the self that teaches?

By addressing it (the question) openly and honestly, alone and together, we can serve our students more faithfully, enhance our well being, make common cause with colleagues, and help education bring more light and life to the world. (Palmer, 1998, p. 7)

If we follow Palmer, good teaching is not so much about technique as it is about self-knowledge - knowledge that comes from understanding and knowing one's identity and integrity. Palmer believes that the lives of teachers are intersections between their public and private lives (Palmer, 1998, p. 17). For this reason, he believes that when we teach, "we teach who we are". Identity, he states involves knowledge of a teacher's genetic make-up, family and cultural background. Integrity, on the other hand, involves understanding and integration of all these connections and

experiences, both synergistic and the painful, to make us whole as people and professionals. It would seem that identity and integrity have as much to do with brilliant and magical teaching, as they have to do with our shadow sides, our fears, complexes, wounds and despair.

Palmer suggests that when a teacher is centered in her identity and knows what promotes integrity within her, she is better able to deal with the subject matter and her students' lives. Smith (1994), Gadamer (1998), and Palmer (1998) all believe that self-understanding comes through understanding something other than the self. Nevertheless, Palmer, (1998) while acknowledging the grace of great things, emphasizes the importance of a teacher to know the self in order to distinguish and articulate the difference between *the other and I*. Then, she can honour both, the self and the other. Now, we have an image of the self – and the troubles with the self and the troubles with identity, integrity and subjectivity from Smith, Gadamer and Palmer, (of course, some have more affinity with each other than with others,) but now what?

What is this self they are talking about? Who am I as a teacher? What is my identity? What is it based upon? What are my belief and value systems? Have I integrated these and my synergistic and painful experiences of my life into my teaching? What has been the impact of my previous (what I secretly called `disastrous') experiences on me as a

teacher? Do these experiences somehow impact my teaching, and in turn, my students?

I needed to have a strong sense of self, an integrated self, so that I could traverse the sometimes slippery and treacherous terrain within the Pedagon.

When I was first offered the contract to teach academic English at Mount Royal College, I felt I had arrived. Arrived to what you ask? The response that comes to mind is success, freedom, and reaffirmation. This contract was of critical importance to my sense of self. I could get away from a period where it seemed I had failed as a teacher. It was like being given a fresh start. I could begin all over again, and I would be the best teacher that ever could be. The call from MRC was a call of freedom - freedom because I could re-create, re-form, and re-shape myself as a teacher again. I felt I no longer would have to deal with my failures and wounds. I felt re-affirmed because the job offer symbolized acceptance and success. It seemed to re-affirm me as a teacher because my credentials as a teacher had been accepted by a well-known institution. I would teach English language and literature to individuals who had studied English before, but wanted to be proficient in it to go to universities or colleges in North America.

Why was it so important for me to be teaching academics at a college rather than teaching a second language to newcomers? As I meditate upon this question, I realize that my reasons were two folds. First, it meant getting

away, to some extent, from the infamy of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). Somehow, teachers of ESL are not considered academics. They are slotted as being more the "touchy-feely" kind of individuals. They are not very often accepted as professionals. Therefore, there is less prestige in being an ESL teacher. Further more, I would no longer be teaching students in marginalized programs and dealing with individuals who were in the program for reasons other than learning. It meant teaching adults who were coming to an institution out of their own volition. This meant I thought at that time, I would no longer have to face situations where I could fail. Second, the program at the college was more sophisticated than the previous institution at which I had worked. The faculty worked in teams, the administration seemed to be helpful, and resources were in place. Finally, I could truly put into practice the adult education principles that I had learned. All these outward trappings spelled success for me.

First impressions of the land called Pedagon

> GOLBASTO MOMAREN EVLAME GURDILO SHEFIN MULLY
> ULLY GUE, most Might Emperor of Lilliput, Delight and Terror
> of the Universe,.... His most sublime Majesty proposeth to the
> Man-Mountain, lately arrived at our Celestial Dominions, the
> following Articles, which by a Solemn Oath, he shall be obliged
> to perform. (Swift, 1726 Greenberg, ed., 1973, p.25)

I was handed the curriculum and course objectives on my first day at work two and half-hours before the start of classes. Immediately after, the new teachers had to meet with the other teachers teaching at the same level.

These teachers were to orient us and bring us up to speed with the procedures at the beginning of the new semester. The 'old-timers' took us through the routine. They talked about how they ran the classes for the first three days. The classes, they explained, ran for one and half-hours the first day. During that time, the students were given the course outline and introduced to what was expected from them in this course, and the expectations of the teachers. The following two days students would write tests in reading, writing, and grammar. These tests were written so that the instructors could assess students in their classes for any lateral and vertical moves within the levels. Individuals from the bookstore would come over from the main campus to city campus to sell the books to the students. I was advised to review the curriculum. The thing to do, I was told, was to review the course objectives and remind the students that this was an adult reading and writing class. In addition, I was to place the emphasis on the 'adult' and 'self directed' aspects of the class.

By the end of the meeting, my heart sank into my shoes. Jubilation and elation gave way to anxiety, fear and a feeling of being boxed in by the curriculum. I felt I did not have free will. It seemed to me that neither my identity nor my integrity was being acknowledged here. My sense of self as a teacher was shaken. What was my role going to be in this scenario? How could I bring the integral me with my own beliefs and values into this space; what about my own creativity as a teacher? Where was the room for the

teacher in me to direct the learning in the class? Was I just going to be in service to the curriculum? This was adult education, but where was the room to build a comfort zone for the students and me? Where was the room to build a safe place with the students? Didn't the students need to decide what it was that they wanted to learn? When was I to learn about their expectations, hopes, and needs? There didn't seem to be any room to incorporate student expectations into the curriculum. It did not seem to matter what students wanted to learn. Nevertheless, I was expected to deliver what was penned in the curriculum. Students in all five classes at this level were expected to take the same tests at the same time. Teachers were expected to deliver the material in a timely manner to meet these deadlines.

My doubts and fears began to return, and I was much daunted even before I entered the classroom.

The metropolis in the land of Pedagon

> Lived space (spatiality) is felt space.... Lived space is more
> difficult to put into words since the experience of lived space
> (as lived time, body) is largely pre-verbal; we do not ordinarily
> reflect on it. And yet we know that the space in which we find
> ourselves affects the way we feel.... Walking along in a foreign
> and busy city may render a sense of lostness, strangeness,
> vulnerability, and possibly excitement or stimulation. In
> general, we may say that we become the space we are in.
> (Van Manen, 1990, p. 102)

My classroom was rectangular. It had many windows, was well lit and had modern equipment. It had white boards, a flip chart, and a very modern overhead projector. The walls were bare except for a clock. The desks, however, were set up in rows and screwed to the ground. I would not have the opportunity to set up the classroom in a more democratic arrangement. It did not seem like a livable space. It was efficient, but cold and unfriendly.

As I faced the students, my past fused with my present and all my uncertainties and complexes seem to rise up to haunt me. Jung used the word *Komplex* to define a structure. This 'complex' or structure of energy can be beneficial or harmful to a person. When a person is in the grips of a complex, she cannot see the present for what it is, but is caught by her past and therefore, views the situation through ' the perspectives and dynamics of the past.[4] My past seemed to catch up with me. Suddenly, all my years of teaching, training, and administration fell away, and I was a raw new recruit again. I lost my sense of self, identity and integrity. Since I did not understand my situation in terms of a complex, I did not question myself as to why I felt the way I did. All I understood was how important it was to be accepted by them, to prove to them that I had the credentials to be standing in front of them. As he explains the concept of identity and integrity, Palmer cautions that biggest shadow for many teachers in the classrooms is the

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[4] Hollis, James (Summer, 1998) Complexes as Shadow Government. Jung Center catalog/newsletter [online] Available: http://www.cgjunghouston.org/cgjprof.html [n.p.]

insecurity about their own identity and worth. (Palmer, 1990) When you are not sure of yourself, it seems it is then that you make the greatest effort to prove yourself to the others that you are something or somebody. When you know yourself, you are, and therefore, can be. There is no longer a need for masks or personas.

Getting my Bearings

With trepidation, I began my first 'performance' in front of the class. I introduced myself and invited my students to introduce themselves and tell the group a little bit about themselves. I facilitated the introductions by way of an icebreaker. I asked the students to interview a person sitting next to them and get details about them. They were to write down the information on the small card in front of them. At the end of this exercise, the students introduced their partners to the rest of the class.

The class had fifteen students from different cultures and parts of the world. The students were from South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, former Czechoslovakia, and Mexico. We spent the rest of the class getting to know each other and understanding the course outline and expectations. The next two days were devoted to tests to assess the students' levels in reading, writing and grammar. However, at the end of each of those three days, there wasn't any joy, or exhilaration.

The impersonal and sterile atmosphere of the classroom seemed to have both the students and me in its grip. My class of learners was not familiar with the adult education "lingo", they were not all self-directed and/or self-motivated and not all of them had clearly defined motives/objectives for being in the class. Moreover, all of them came from cultures where education was very much teacher centered. We did not have a common frame of reference on which to base our interaction. All my friendliness, respectfulness, cajoling, joviality could not change the classroom space into a place of learning that I wanted it to be. What was the atmosphere that I wanted in the classroom? I wanted joy, laughter, learning, synergy, and the warmth that exudes from such an environment.

I found myself again in a classroom in which I could feel the constriction of space. Whenever I posed questions to the class in general, my questions were received with silence from the students. There was very little or no voluntary participation in class. The students appeared listless and robotic. I could feel myself losing confidence and the unsettled feeling in the pit of my stomach. I fell in the grips of fear; true learning was not taking place, and I began to question my self as a teacher. The classes seemed to stretch endlessly.

Identity Crisis as a Teacher

At the end of each day, I went through the agony of soul searching. Was I a terrible teacher? Perhaps, teaching was not my vocation? What was I doing wrong? How could I get the students to participate? Was I too hard on them? Should I be forcing them to write paragraphs and essays when they didn't feel they needed to learn to do that? Were they afraid of making mistakes and appearing like fools? This was language learning after all, if they didn't take risks, how would they improve their language skills? Should I turn to my colleagues for an answer? Did I have time to start a dialogue on language learning with them?

I tried to cope with this situation in a number of ways. I turned to my colleagues for advice. How did they conduct their classes? Was it normal for students to be quiet during classes? What did they do when students did not participate? What did they do to generate participation in their classes?

My colleagues' answer was that this was a normal state of affairs. Our students came from a teacher-centered culture. Therefore, a better way to handle this situation was to pose questions to specific individuals in the class or rather, to call out student's name when asking questions. I tried this strategy but felt uncomfortable with this mode of action because I felt I was imposing upon my students. In addition, by doing this, the students were still not participating out of their own volition. My perception was that their

participation was based on their perception of my power as their teacher. I wanted genuine participation. I perceived myself as a facilitator: sensitive, caring, and willing to do anything to make my learners' journeys easier. My sense of integrity was not satisfied with the pseudo participation that stemmed from my authority. For this reason, as a part of the speaking and writing exercises, I introduced activities whereby the students selected characteristics of a good language learner and a good language teacher. We dialogued about these and wrote a short paragraph. However, this had results for the short term, and then we were back to silence.

My intuition prompted the idea of community. I remembered the days when I first started my studies at the university. The university had seemed so vast, and I would have done anything to have had a learning group or a learning partner. While I was not very clear about this concept, I knew that there was a need for the individuals in the class to bond as a group. For this reason, I introduced the idea of community by brainstorming the definition of community with them. What did community mean to them? How would they define it? We came up with the definitions and then tried to come up with the guidelines that the membership within that community would follow. I talked about democracy.

I also tried to start up a dialogue about teacher/student relationships in their country and here in Canada. These techniques seemed to help, but temporarily. In one dialogue, the students explained that in Asian cultures,

students just listen; they do not speak or interact with the teachers. "They listen that is the respectable thing to do." Nevertheless, I did not see or hear respect in their silence. Their masks of silence scared me. I could not connect with them, and therefore, felt disconnected and powerless. The image of myself that they reflected back to me made me feel helpless. Palmer writes that when our fears as teachers mingle and multiply with the fears of our students, teaching and learning become mechanical, manipulative and lifeless (1993). This was exactly what our classes were - mechanical and lifeless.

One class was particularly frustrating. I was exhausted after what seemed like having carried the class on my own. Getting any responses or answers from the students was like pulling teeth. There was very little participation in the class. The classroom felt cold. There wasn't authentic learning taking place. While I had encouraged group work in the form of learning circles and learning partners, and had done all the initial work to facilitate it, individual walls of silence and defiance continued to emanate from the students. Fear was my constant companion and I seemed to be in the grips of major identity and integrity crisis.

Nam-Mo's Story

Nam-Mo was one of the more defiant and challenging students. He was also a comedian; therefore, the class tended to follow his lead. Oh, how

I would have loved him to move to one of the other classes. He was a university student from Korea. He was in his last year and had come to Canada to improve his English. He was very good at grammar and contested each and every point I taught. There were days when I could satisfy his query but then there were days where I could not. I responded by saying I would research that particular point and get back to him. However, this made him more controlling. He came from a culture where the teacher was the supreme authority. I did not fit that bill. There were days when I would be teaching one structure, but he would come up with another structure, an equally valid one, but one that was not in the curriculum. His argument was why had I not included that structure in the lesson plan. Another ploy was to quote his teacher from Korea, or quote from his grammar text, which was in Korean. I couldn't justify because I did not know Korean. This added to my sense of isolation and incompetence. Sometimes, my response would be that I would check the point and bring the answer to the classroom. However, the students who had come from a teacher-centered culture saw this as a weakness on my part. I was supposed to know everything. Soon, I found myself being so careful that I stopped being a teacher. I could feel the other students' trust level in my teaching drop. I realize that in trying to find a middle ground, I was too open to everything they said. I was too readily agreeable. Much later, I found out that many students faulted me for not having a greater control in the class

and for not putting a stop to Nam-Mo's antics. The pedagogical space in our classroom was becoming unbound; this was causing danger all of its own.

Reclaiming the Teacher

Student freedom and teacher authority is a subject about which many educators have a conversation in the Pedagon. Freire believes that an educator, as an intellectual, has the responsibility to take on the mantle of her authority and intervene. She cannot be a mere facilitator. He also advocates that if a teacher does not act and exercise the necessary power in the name of "imposing upon students' freedom', she is abdicating responsibility and not carrying out her duty to teach. He explains:

> ...afraid of assuming authority, I lose authority. Authority is necessary to the educational process as well as necessary to the freedom of students and my own. The teacher is necessary. What is bad, what is not necessary, is authoritarianism, but not authority.

> If I do that, if I fall with this kind of irresponsibility, instead of generating freedom, I generate license, and then I don't accomplish my responsibility of teaching. (Freire, 1990, p. 180)

Authority is a derivative of the word author. An author is someone who originates or gives existence to something. It is a person who gives rise to, or causes an action, event, circumstance, state or condition of things. He who authorizes or instigates, therefore, is one who prompts or moves.[5]

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[5] Klien, E. (1971). *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*. Amsterdam : Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, p. 61

I realized that I was not authoring much in the classroom. In fact, I seemed to be abdicating my responsibility to teach. I was being so careful being careful that I had stopped teaching. Consequently, I was losing the ability to instigate or move. I was losing my authority. All I had was the power given to me by my mandate within the institution. This power had no meaning for me because I seemed to have temporarily misplaced my authoring powers. True power comes from within, not from without. Because I did not have the heart to author my actions, I was entrapped by the curriculum. The curriculum had all the power. The power that the curriculum and the institution gave to me as a teacher sat hollowly on my shoulders, and the students could see through my feeble attempts to hold on to the bogus mantle. I understood that I needed to affirm my authority to myself. I needed to reclaim my sense of identity and my integrity. The only way I could be with integrity was to do what I had been hired to do, which was to teach. I needed to take up the mantle of the teacher. I could no longer wallow in my own subjectivity. Palmer reiterates the fact that authority comes to individuals who "...claim their identity and integrity, remembering their selfhood and their sense of vocation". (1998, p.33)

I spent time reflecting on "How could I develop the authority to teach, the capacity to stand my ground in the midst of the complex forces of both the classroom and my own life?" (Palmer, 1998, p. 32) What were the forces that had brought me to this profession? What were the demons that drove

me? The answer came to me – it was fear, fear of not being competent enough, fear of losing the students' respect, fear of doing dismally during observations, fear of having terrible student evaluations. It seemed that I wanted to be a good teacher but for all the wrong reasons. I wanted to be a good teacher to hold on to my job, to get good evaluations, for recognition. No where could I hear the students and their needs in my thoughts.

What were the forces that seemed to drive the students? The answer was once again fear; fear of failing; fear of coming across as being stupid; fear of not knowing enough language after spending exorbitant amounts of money; fear of letting their parents down. I realized that I could not dwell in, nor could I thrive as one of the 'two solitudes' (Smith, 1994, p. 72). Having reclaimed my identity, I had to find another way of conducting my classes, one that was in harmony with the integral teacher within me.

Integrating Learning and Teaching

I meditated upon the dynamics of our class as an entity. What were the reasons why we did not have a learning community? The students had many things in common. This should have allowed a community to form. They all had a common goal, that to learn English; they had a common meeting place, the college; many of them seemed to have similar problems; many were in a home-stay program; they all came from similar cultural backgrounds. They all came from education systems that were teacher-

centered. Yet, there wasn't any sign of a community forming let alone evolving. I reflected upon my own weaknesses. Had I done enough work to cultivate a community? Were the students interested in the concept of a community? Had I imposed my reality on them? Had I looked at, or considered their experience? Did not Freire and Horton advocate that I needed to start from people's experience? Freire states:

> The more people participate in the process of their own education, the more the people participate in the process of defining what kind of production to produce, and for what and why, the more the people participate in the development of their selves. The more the people become themselves, the better the democracy. (1990, p. 145)

I realized that what I had been trying to facilitate was what Palmer would call the model of civic community (Palmer, 1998). Palmer purports that in the academic world, community building has to be different from what it would be in other settings, for example, the public, civic, political, or the religious arenas. Perhaps the answer lay in what Palmer calls a "community of truth".

Building a Community

What is a community of truth? What are the elements required for making up a community of truth? I needed to explore this because it would take me to the next level of understanding.

Learning, Palmer believes, is a communal act – one within which the relationship between the learner and the subject must be firmly established

not only objectively, but also personally. He advocates building learning communities with and because of the subject being studied. He believes that the relationship between the knower and the known - the student and the subject can then become the "relation of the living person to the world itself." (Palmer, 1993, p. 3) For this reason, he defines community as: "A capacity of relatedness within individuals relatedness not only to people, but also to events in history, to nature, to the world of ideas, and yes to things of spirit." (1993, Pp. 3-4) Thus, Palmer's first criterion for a strong community within academic life is based on relatedness. He advocates for dialogues on those ways of knowing that form an inward capacity for relatedness, for knowing things objectively as an only criterion for learning distances learners form the real world.

This made me more cognizant of my desire to create a space where individuals could be comfortable to dialogue, where genuine learning and teaching could take place. I wanted to change our arid space into a fertile one where there was room to err, learn and grow. I wanted metaphoric warmth in the classroom rather than the coldness that I felt. Freire's concept of 'praxis' (Horton & Freire, 1990) observation, dialogue and action provided me with something concrete to start on the changes I wanted.

Intuition prompted me to believe that the students were feeling isolated; I had observed this to some extent. Experience had also taught me that fear might be one cause for the sense of isolation felt by the students.

What could I do to dispel this? How could I initiate inter-relatedness? My challenge was to start a dialogue that would enable us to act together, to change the environment of the class, which in turn would provide us with a way to deal with our fears and ultimately, with a community that was willing and enthusiastic to learn.

I had an action plan, but my greatest enemy was fear of time. Could I take time out of the busy schedule to facilitate the exercise I had planned? Could I risk falling behind the other classes? Could I perhaps take a short cut? Would the exercise backfire? Nobody had communities in their classes. Was I being foolish? I vacillated between these different fears and reasoned that if the class was in harmony, could we not easily catch up with the other classes? After all, why did we have curriculum, if not to facilitate learning and teaching? Was not learning the priority? What are classes where learning is taking place? Are they filled with activity form one minute to the next? Is there room for discussion on other topics – from the life world?

Parker Palmer's response is yes. In fact, it is crucial that one does not focus on material to be learned at the expense of the learning space. Both, "the stuff that must be learned and the space that learning requires" need to be honoured. (Palmer, 1998, p.121) Greene, too promotes the concept of a curriculum that takes into consideration the fact that students need to be able to name their world. She counsels how this can be done.

Even in small, local spaces in which teaching is done, educators may begin creating the kinds of situation where, at the very least, students will begin telling stories of what they are seeking, what they know and might not yet know, exchanging stories with others grounded in other landscapes, at once bringing something into being that is in-between. (1993, p. 218)

The conversations that ensue weave the 'webs of relationships[6] which enable students not only to name themselves, but the world around them. These conversations enable them "to reach past themselves and to become." (Greene, 1993, p. 220)

I decided to take the plunge. The following day, I sent out a prayer as I entered the class. I asked the students to take out a piece of paper, and draw a picture to articulate their feelings when it came to the reading and writing modules of the course. They could draw a series of pictures, if they wished, however, they could not use letters or words. They had 10 minutes to carry out this task. The class sat in silence and amazement for the first two minutes. This was very different from the usual way in which class began – a perfunctory greeting, a question or two to see how everybody was doing, a quick review of the agenda for the day, and the race to catch up the stuff to be covered would begin. Their amazement was the first indication of

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[6] Greene, M., (1993) cites Arendt in Diversity and Inclusion : Toward a Curriculum for Human Beings Teachers College Record 95 – (2) p. 218

how much I, as a teacher enslaved to and by the curriculum, had been riding them.

Once they realized that I was serious, they set to work. When they had completed the task, I asked them to do some free writing for five minutes. They were to put down anything that came to their mind in regard to our class without worrying about spelling, grammar, syntax etc. I requested them to leave out their names when doing both the assignments to give them the security of being anonymous when articulating their perceptions and feelings. I got some coffee for all of must before we started reviewing the activities we had just completed.

The physical layout of the class was a constraint for me. Tables were screwed down on the floor so that it was impossible to move them around to a different setting. We moved the chairs in a circle around a long and narrow rectangular table. I then began to talk.

I used the pictures and the journals done by the students to start a dialogue on the pedagogical space in our classroom. I shared my fear, apprehension and loneliness with them. I told them how disconnected I felt, and how very much I needed that connection. I then asked their permission to show their pictures and read the feedback they had given aloud in the classroom. The students consented. What I received from the students unnerved me. I had been oblivious to the extent of their isolation and needs. I started out by picking up individual papers and giving my response to what I

saw in the pictures. When I was pained by a picture, I tried to express it with my body language and by miming my response. Students laughed at my reactions to their pictures and this broke the ice. This exercise pierced the teacher/student barrier. Some of the tension in the class was released. We were now ready to look at the written material. I read each sheet and asked questions to the class in general. There were instances where I did not understand what a student was trying to express. I turned to the rest of the class to help me out. By the time we had gone through all the responses, the issues that choked the learning space had been aired, the "unspeakable had been spoken, and a foundation for real conversation had been laid." (Palmer, p.7)[7] What I received from the students unnerved me. This is what they had to say:

"Sometimes I'm so confused when I think about what I am doing in Canada. I had a goal to do something in Canada before I came here but it was a very different class program."

"We come from different countries. We don't know each other yet. But we are in the same situation that we have to study English. At first I can't understand my classmates words, but now I can guess. We have different personalities. Sometimes this makes trouble for us. We have to make an

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[7] Palmer, P. Good Teaching : A Matter of Living the Mystery - [online] Available: http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/events/afc99/articles/goodteaching.html

effort to solve the problem. I don't know exactly what the problem is, but I know we have to solve the problem."

"I am very uncomfortable in this class. I want to say many things, but I couldn't. I want more friendly class atmosphere."

"This class is very helpful but the class is so serious. Sometimes, I want that the class feels more free and soft"

"I am learning but it is too intensive. I don't have time to assimilate what I am learning and almost everything a week or 2 days later. I decided to stay home on weekends and go over everything I learned starting at the first week."

"Our class is sometimes bored. So I want a time which can change bored situation. In addition, your teaching style is too quiet. I want active teaching. The most important thing is that our classmates need time to unite as one because we come from many countries. We are not friendly with each other. I would like to make change to be close to each other."

"Our class is always quite. I think our classmates study hard, and they are kind people. I want to make a lot of friends in class but it is very difficult because they have other friends, so after class, they go back right away."

"I want to take place a party in this class."

"Sometimes I feel tired and I need to slow down. Classmates are nice but we need more communication without study. I want to study for myself, but now I don't have enough time to study. On weekday, I wish less our

homework. Sometimes I feel very hard to follow this class because some are hard to understand or I can understand, but I don't know how to say. It makes me nervous and feel down."

"I can't make a long sentence. I have problem about some grammar. My vocabulary is not rich and idiom too. After my placement test, MRC decided my level. But sometime I though my level must be 3???! I need to study grammar more but I don't have enough time because I always spend time for homework. That's why I am afraid."

"My life now is like a wheel, a running river, /trash basket standing over there. / When the sun arise, unchangedly coming my life./I no longer like such a life."

"I think the classmates of this class are saprate into two groups Taiwan, Japan, Korea, etc. After school, there is no connection between the classmates, so I am very bored in this class. If there is more connection between student, the atmosphere of the class will be improved, student will not shy to speak. Indeed, the atmosphere affect he mood of learning, student will glad to go to school when they have lots of friends in school."
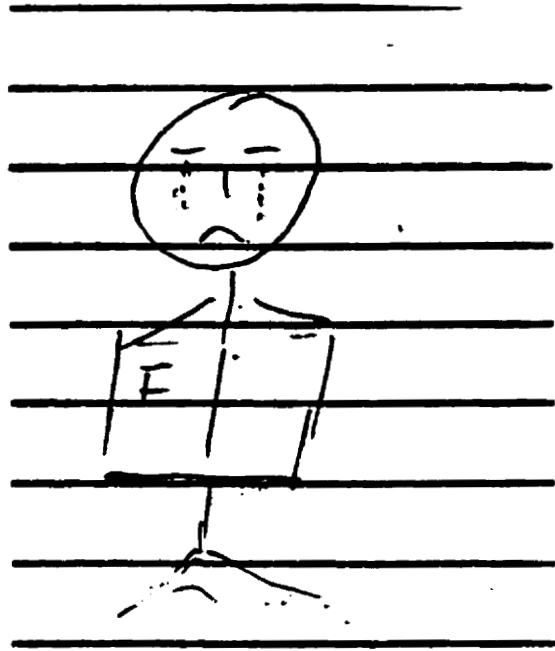
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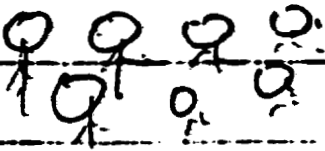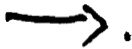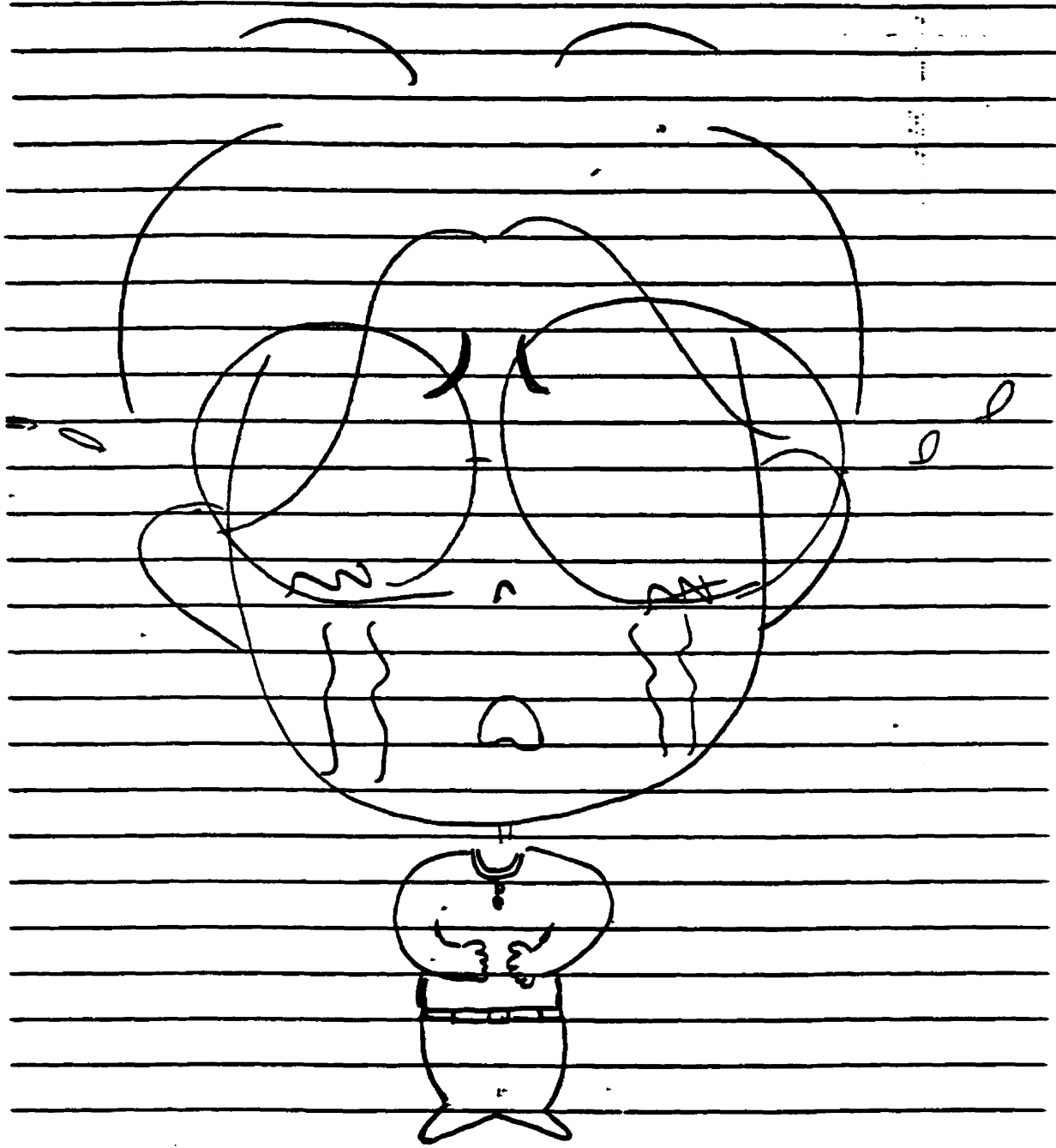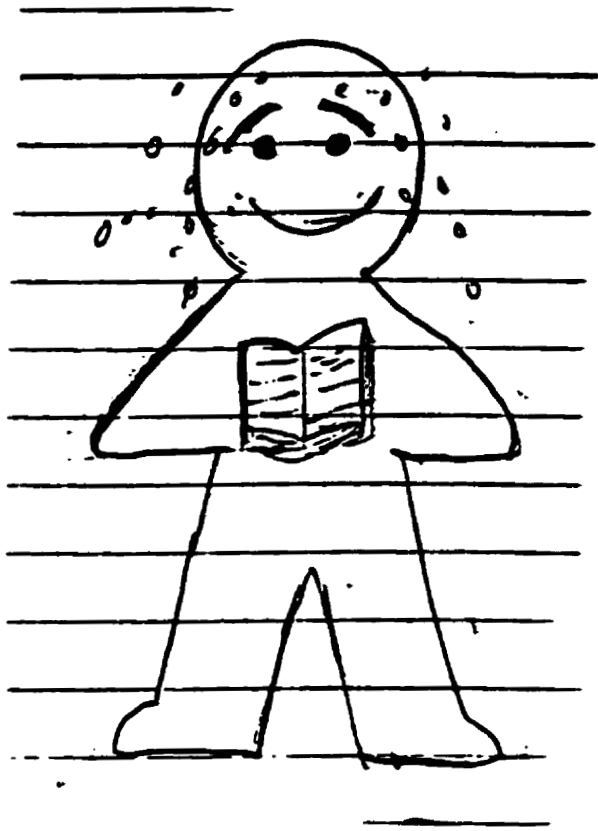
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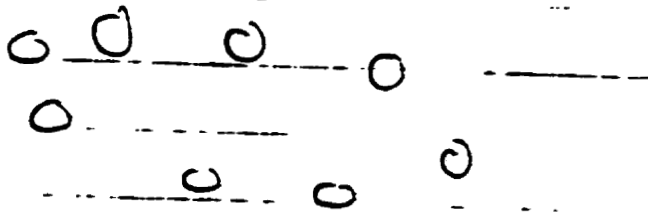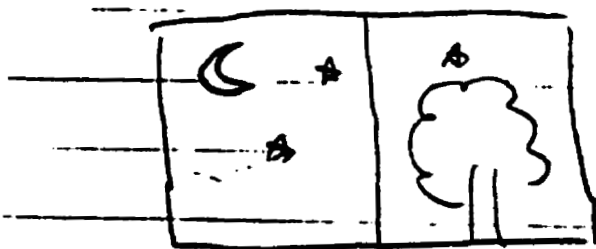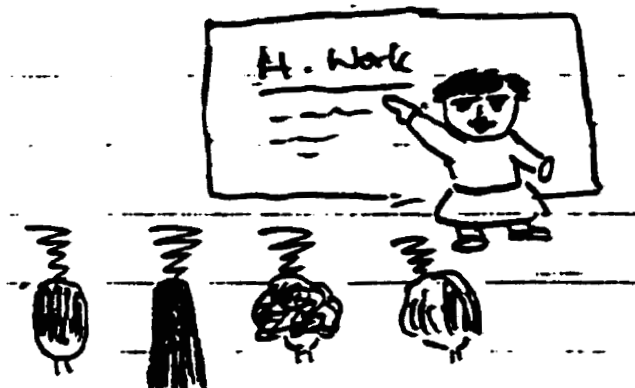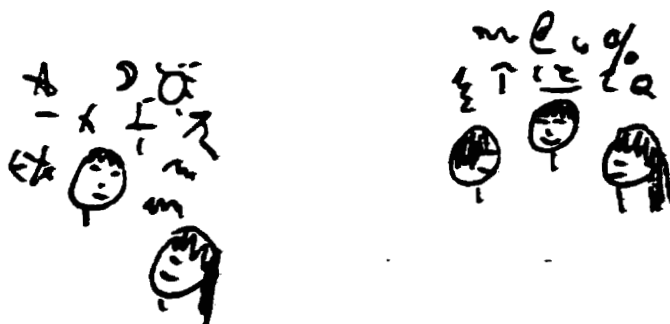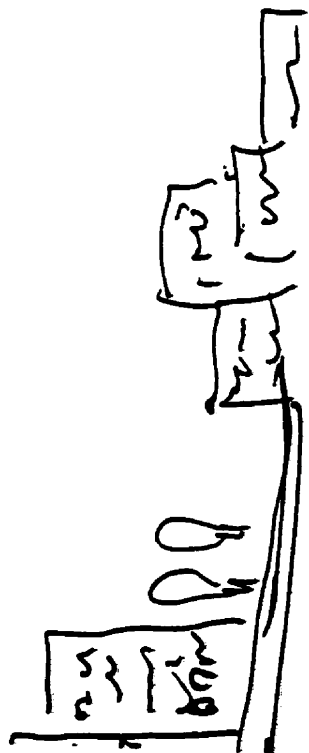
I had been oblivious of the extent of their isolation and needs. By initiating the exercise, which was more authentic than any bonding exercises I had facilitated in the class, I started the first steps to a community of truth. I only began to understand our reality as a community when I shared my vulnerability and reality with the rest of the group. It was only by being in commune with the group that I was able to know the reality. Virginia Griffin remarks that any sort of negative emotions can block learning. These need to be acknowledged before learning can proceed. She cites McFadyen:

> "Once emotions are experienced, acknowledged and named they should be accepted. If we accept them for what they are, without judging them or being judged by them, we are free to move to take steps to change, or change the situation." (1988, p. 3)

The pictures and writings of the students were instrumental in starting a dialogue on how students felt in and outside the classroom. The activities made me understand that the students were feeling isolated and disconnected. The workload was overwhelming. My race to cover everything in the curriculum had not allowed time for bonding or getting used to a different model of education and culture. In addition, it became clear while individuals were together in class, during coffee break and outside class, they had absolutely no contact with each other. Yet, they had a need for such a contact. Most of them had been in Canada for a week or two before the start of the term. What we had here again were 'two solitudes' living in their own corners. How could I as a teacher get these two solitudes

to "...border, protect, and salute one another?" (Rilke, 1993, p.35) My epiphany at this point was the recognition that for a community to develop, one needs more than participants; one needs human connection and commitment. This human connection allows for participation. Without human contact and connection, there is no community. Participation in the sense of physical attendance isn't enough to form a community. Participants need to partake (physically, emotionally, and spiritually) and commit to this relationship of a community. True participation, therefore, falls out of having relationships. It is "...an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace, the flowing of personal identity and integrity into the world of relationships." (Palmer, 1998, p.90)

Our conversation that afternoon reflected and affirmed many other things to us as a group. We learned that we were not alone in this isolation; everybody was not as well settled as it appeared and more important of all, the pain of loneliness was shared and recognized. As a teacher, I learned in very practical terms the importance of meeting the "soft" needs of the students. I also learned the importance of meeting my own "soft" needs. As long as I ignored the soft needs in our classroom space, I was unable to integrate my past and present experiences, which in turn impacted my identity as a practitioner. Freire is very specific in his counsel when it comes

to education. He states:

"I think that we have to create in ourselves, through critical
analysis of our practice, some qualities, some virtues as
educators. One of them, for example, is the quality of
becoming more and more open to feel the feelings of others, to
become so sensitive that we can guess what the group or one
person is thinking at that moment." (Horton and Freire, 1990, p.
158)

At the end of the session, I asked the group to think about how we
could cross this divide of isolation. I had talked about learning partners and
learning circles in the first two classes. It is easy to articulate these
concepts, but how does one facilitate these concepts to students who have
never operated in this particular model of education?

Together, we dialogued on how we could make time to connect and
still meet the curriculum demands. One of the class members was having a
birthday that Friday. We decided we would take half an hour of the class
time and half an hour of the break time to have a party in class. The
atmosphere in the class seemed to change the next day. Students seemed
to be friendlier towards each other. More and more, people sat together
during coffee breaks.

Despite the time constraints in terms of what had to be covered in the
curriculum, I set aside time each week so that the class could connect and so
that every body's voice could be heard. Now, we had more dialogues about
adult education and communities. We also talked about risk taking in
responding to questions or sharing ideas, and how it became less of a risk

when one is among one's community. A certain level of trust was now being established between each one of us within the group. The beginning of a "web of relationships" was beginning to take shape.

It was time to broach the subject of voluntary participation. I indicated my understanding that in their countries students just listened and did not speak with or talk to the teacher. They listened. I, therefore, worked actively at reminding them that the prefix *di* in the word *dialogue* stood for two or between. Communication and relationships needed at least two people to take place and had to be about something or someone. How could we have dialogues? I introduced them to the educator who said:

> To conduct a dialogue requires first of all that the partners do not talk at cross purposes. To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented. (Gadamer, 1998, p. 367)

Like Gadamer (1998) and Greene (1993), Paulo Freire (1990) advocates that in order to go beyond people's knowledge, one needs to start with people's knowledge. Anytime during this process, if one loses the connection between their knowledge and where the community needs and wants to go, the community and the education process breaks down. I found this very true for my group of students. While I was trying to make meaning of their reality, they too were trying to understand mine. They too, were trying to come to terms with the reality of a teacher who had her own fears, doubts and moments of isolation in juxtaposition with/to the ideal image of

the teacher that they carried in their minds. In turn, the whole community was trying to make meaning of the world around us.

Jardine (1992) states that making meaning of the world around us is in itself educative. He reinforces the understanding that there is a connection between interpretive work and pedagogy. Interpretation has to do with finding meaning in the midst of the already 'known' and familiar while pedagogy has to do with "re-generation of understanding in the young, who live here with us in midst of an already familiar world" (1992, p. 52). For this reason, pedagogy is not just one of the themes of interpretive work, rather that interpretive work is pedagogic at its heart. (1992, p.52) As a teacher, the more I recognized this connection, the better learners we became. I could now facilitate this understanding to my students.

Education could now become more than mere book worming. The group became energized. Students began to articulate what they wanted, where they had difficulties; some even helped with grammar points, and others were open to do some facilitation in class.

Mid-semester provided me with yet another opportunity for re-collecting lessons that had been overlooked or misplaced on this journey. When posing questions, I was again greeted with silence. Silence is also a learning space. I reminded myself that sometimes, silence is one way of bringing this message across; sometimes, it meant consent or agreement. Was this the case? The answer was no. Nor was the silence one of

students in reflection. Participation was again dropping off. I was re-minded of many things. I was reminded of Greene's cautioning: "There are ways of speaking and telling that construct silences, create "others," invent gradations of social difference necessary for the identification of certain kinds of norms." (1993, p. 216). I was reminded that students have their own agendas. I had to re-mind myself that marginalized students hide behind the masks of silence and indifference in front of individuals with power as a means of coping with the rejection and fear of these individuals. I had to re-mind myself of Smith's advice. I was not to accept individuals in their differences without understanding how the *thou* in each of them was different from the *I* in me.

I needed to re-evaluate my way of being with them based on all these reminders. Like Palmer, Horton provided the insight as to why students sometimes do not answer questions, and I suspect that was the case in our community. He suggests that students are sometimes frightened because they do not see themselves as being intellectuals. Working "impatiently patient" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 161), I stood up on a chair and said that every time I was greeted with silence without a cause, I would stand up on the chair and that was our signal to each other that it took two parties to communicate. This was received with laughter but the dialogue resumed. I had leveled the playing field.

After that, I stood on my chair a few times during the semester. I have realized that in providing my students with the time and place to share their perceptions, I had found myself feeling more secure. In initiating an establishment of a community, integrity could stand within and amongst all the important players within the pedagogical space - the teacher, the students, and the subject.

Building a community in the classroom had many advantages. Not only did the students' morale improve but also their learning. They had high scores. Their journals were a reward in themselves. A student shared how another student had been helping her in writing. Another shared how when she did not get along with her host family, a student invited her to share her apartment. When one student was away, another bought him the novel that was required for their novel study group.

A Community of Truth

Our classroom space had more and more moments of joy that come from learning that is synergistic and interconnected.

However, questions remained. Was this a community of truth? What was the distinction between a community and a community of truth? Understanding that came from this process is that while human connection and relationships are of importance in establishing a community, a community of truth extends farther to interaction with "nonhuman forms of

beings that are important and powerful as the human and sometimes more so." (Palmer, 1998, p. 106-107) A community of truth therefore, is a community that is not just held together by personal feelings and thought, but is one that is also held together by what Rilke calls "the grace of great things." (Palmer, 1993, p. 35) Great things are subjects around which the community is gathered and because of which, it is cemented together. It is the 'thing' around which conversations, dialogue, and framings take place.

Framing...

frame....

going forward....

forward from ....

to further

It is within this circle that the subject reveals a glimpse of itself to the learners. It is within this circle that the learners and the teacher come to pay respect to, learn, know, and understand the subject with integrity.

We had reached a stage in our relationship where silence sometimes meant dissent, strife, and conflict, but Palmer reminded us that at the heart of every community, there is conflict. This is healthy and creative, for it helps members to check, correct, and enlarge individual knowledge about the subject and themselves by drawing upon the group knowledge. It makes learners better at recognizing the different realities and more cognizant of their and the subject's otherness. Palmer states:

> As we gather around the subject in the community of truth, it is not only we who correct each other's attempts at knowing, rejecting blurry observations and false interpretations. The subject itself corrects us, resisting our false framings with the strength of its own identify, refusing to be reduced to our self-certain ways of naming its otherness. (1998, p.106)

A community of truth, therefore, is one where our personal agendas can and are taken over by the reality of great things or the grace of great things.

This also showed itself in our community. A majority of the students in the class were from Japan and Korea. I did not understand the animosity between the students of these two countries until one day when we were within the circle in the community of truth. The conflict between these students became an invitation for us to start a conversation by paring and probing. We had to work on sharing our experiences and feelings, about the Korean/Japanese war and the colonization and enslavement of Koreans by the Japanese. Our discussion showed us that there wasn't 'your truth' or 'my truth'. The truth was not contained within any one of us; rather the truth was that of the transcendent third thing. It showed itself when we conversed about it; it showed us the many layers, possibilities and openings within it. The truth was within the things about which the conversation was taking place.

That weekend one of the Korean students wrote in her journal about how she hated Japanese and how all Koreans hated Japanese because of what they had done to their country and people. However, she had

concluded that one could not penalize all Japanese. The history was there between the two countries, but now there was also history between two individuals. She felt that she had to accept the other person based on his own merit. She wrote about her amazement at realizing that she did like her Japanese classmates as individuals. Her journal reflected a higher understanding of community. The student ended the journal by speaking about the brotherhood of Man. She quoted the words of the protagonist from "Up the Cliff", a short story by David MacDonald done in the literature reading class, to make her point.

I was reminded of Maxine Greene's counsel about making space for personal stories and her personal insight:

> There can only be a conversation drawing in voices kept inaudible over the generations, a dialogue involving more and more living persons. There can only be – there ought to be – a wider and deeper sharing of beliefs, an enhanced capacity to articulate them, to justify them, to persuade other as the hetroglossic conversation moves on, never reaching a final conclusion, always incomplete, but richer and more densely woven, even as it moves through time. (1993, p. 213)

Hannah Arendt's "webs of relationships" (1958, p. 182), Greene's "this in-between" (Greene, 1993, p.218) and Palmer's community of truth are all one and the same thing. It is a space where there are moments that "persons begin to recognize each other and, in the experience of recognition feel the need to take responsibility for one another. (Greene, 1993, p. 218)

Thus, our community did become the community of truth because the space became a place where we talked, and learned from each other. By discoursing about events, and subjects, we connected and re-connected until we corrected our biases and prejudices about the nature of great things and came to an understanding. It is as Gadamer says:

> "To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were." (1998, p.379)

Individuals in that class metamorphosed to beings with other levels of understanding.

Concluding Remarks

I started out this chapter with the question: "Who is the self that teaches?" I have come to understand that it is a person who understands the inter-relatedness of all beings and things. In addition, it is a person who has the courage to face her fears and author her own actions while ensuring that the subject is always at the center. As soon as she moves herself or her students to the center, the truth is distorted. Because our space was bound by our subject, as a class we not only learned the English language and literature, but we also found space for ourselves in which we could mediate our differences and come to an understanding about the world in which we lived.

While this has been a long process, at the end of one stage of the journey, I have a stronger sense of self and a clearer understanding of a teacher's responsibilities. I have a better understanding of my needs, values and beliefs as a good teacher does. Most important of all, this exploration has confirmed for me that a teacher has to constantly gather the courage to teach. It is important to find the courage to bring in the inner convictions. Palmer calls it the courage to teach from one's inner landscape and the landscape of the world. It is the courage to partake with the students, in exploring, discovering and co-creating places in which we can live out our lives.

As long as I spent time trying to be careful, I could not teach. As long as I let the curriculum become the authority, I could not author my own actions as a teacher. As long as I was engulfed in fear and barricaded behind my own wall of subjective isolation, I could not hear, feel, or know anybody else's fear and isolation. This in turn did not foster any caring or learning. Once I understood the inter-connectedness of the teacher, students, and our subject, I could author my actions in a way such that we were not only able to meet the curriculum objectives, but were also able to promote critical thinking and cultural diversity. In addition, a community in the classroom allowed not only the students, but also the teacher to take risks with impunity. I no longer had to be the expert all the time. Mary Beth Rogers in *Cold Anger* has an explanation for this phenomenon. She writes:

"A significant amount of time and energy in the IAF national training programs is devoted to inciting the first revolution - the internal one that comes with an awareness of self and self worth. And flowing naturally from that is the focus on individual relationship building. People who have a strong sense of self can afford to take the risks involved in relationship building." (1990, p. 61)

By the end of the semester, both the students and I had learned valuable lessons. They learned and will keep on learning that the truth lies within the subject and that a true learner is one who tries to interpret it with the understanding that no framing is final.

As a teacher, I need to be vigilant about my identity and the integration of all my experiences. I am also coming to the understanding that the concept of Bildung in itself cannot and should not be my goal, for

> ...it cannot as such be sought, except in the reflective thematic of the educator. Bildung is not achieved in the manner of a technical construction, but grows out of an inner process of formation and cultivation, and therefore constantly remains in a state of continual Bildung. (Gadamer, 1998, p. 11)

CHAPTER 4 - PEDAGOGICAL SPIELRAUM

> Rather play itself is a transformation of such a kind that
> the identity of the player does not continue to exist for
> anybody. Everybody asks instead what is supposed to
> be represented, what is "meant." The players (or
> playwright) no longer exist, only what they are playing.
> (Gadamer, 1998, p. 112)

> The being of all play is always self-realization, sheer
> fulfillment, energeia which has its telos within itself.
> The world of the work of art in which play expresses
> itself fully in the unity of its course, is in fact a wholly
> transformed world. In and through it everyone
> recognizes that that is how things are. (Gadamer,
> 1998, p. 113)

Play

It was in the middle of the fall semester when the *chella*[8] went to see

the *Guru*[9]. By and by, a conversation was started about teaching and the

sense of self of a teacher within the pedagogical space. There was some

talk about the need to have a clear sense of identity and integrity[10]. The

complaint of the Learner was that she had a clear sense of her identity and

integrity outside the class but seemed to lose all sense of self when she was

in the classroom, yet she did not think she was a bad teacher. In fact, the

moments when she was outside her self seemed to be her best teaching

moments. She was hoping that the Guru would help her understand.

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[8] Hindi word meaning student, disciple, follower

[9] Hindi or Sanskrit word meaning teacher, spiritual leader, expert

[10] Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (1996) p.p. 17-18

Chella:	I do not recognize myself in the person who stands in front of that class.
Guru:	Who is the person that teaches in the class, *balak*[11]?
Chella:	The person who teaches in that classroom is not the same person as the one who is sitting here. She has no sense of self, at least not the same sense as the person sitting here in front of you. I am not making sense. What I am trying to say is... the person who stands in front of the community in the class is different.
Guru:	How is she different? Who is she? What is she? Who is the person who is standing in front of that community?
Chella:	She just is. There is no you or I. There is synergy – sometimes there is magic. There is no *Self.* In being a part of that community, discovering things, learning, creating, knowing, there are new insights. There is a sense of *eureka!* I no longer am I.
Guru:	(smiles) *Balak,* you are at play then. That is the time, when you are most productive...that is the time, *balak* when the teacher in you wakes up ...that is the time, the teacher and the learner in you are the most alive. That is the time when you are in true union. What is happening is that the whole learning community is in communion with known – the subject being studied.

To clarify the point, the Guru cited Kabir, a 15th Century Poet and

Sage:

When I was

Enwrapped

In myself,

O Beloved

Your face

Was hidden

From me!

Now that I see you

I am

no more I (Kumar, 1984, I.2 p. 80)

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[11] Hindi word meaning child or student

The Learner tried to make the connections. She understood some of what the poem was trying to say. She was familiar with David Smith and how he shows absence in presence and presence in absence. Smith states: "full presence also implies full absence, that is to say, everything I understand myself to be now must also include everything that I am *not*, everything I have denied or neglected in order to be the present me." (1994 p. 73) Did this mean that when the ego of her person was absent, that the teacher became present? She understood the possibility that as long as she was caught in her own subjectivity, she was could not see the other. Was this tied to the meaning of the poem? Did Smith also not talk about the form of "*trace*" [12] which was residual in one's practice? What was the residual trace in her practice? She was perplexed. What did the Guru mean? Was the Guru suggesting that it is only by losing one's own subjectivity that one sees the other? How could one be at play when one is performing such a serious task as teaching? If she wasn't the one who was teaching, if 'herself' was not the self who was standing in front of that learning community, who was? How can one be in union or have a communion when one was playing? The more she thought about it, the more she recognized the need to converse about this state of being.

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[12] Smith, D. G. (1994). Pedagon: Meditations on pedagogy and culture. (Bragg Creek, AB: Makayo Press, p. 74. The concept of 'trace' is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

What is Play?

Huizinga defines play as a voluntary activity that is carried out within "... certain limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by feeling of tension, joy, and the consciousness that it is "different" from "ordinary life." (Huizinga, 1955, p. 28) The word *play* comes from Old English – *plegian*. It means "to exercise, busy oneself, play, applaud." It is probably related to the Middle Dutch word *playen*, which means "to rejoice, be glad", and to the old English word *pleoh* which means, "to expose to danger, risk."[13] One unquestioningly accepts all these connotations as being inherent in play. Literally, being at play involves busying oneself. When one is at play, one is happy, relaxed, and joyful. One needs to take both calculated and uncalculated risks in any game or play. The word 'play' is also used metaphorically. It is used to show movement and certain dance or pattern. Thus, one sees the play of gears, the play of light, the play of waves, the play of words. In each case, there is movement implied. Gadamer notes that in each case, "play is the to-and-fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end". (1998, p.102)

"*Spielen*" is a German verb meaning to play - to gamble, to play with. Initially the word '*spiel*' connoted to "dance" (Gadamer, 1988, p.103) In

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[13] Ernest Klein, *Klein's Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Amsterdam : Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1971) 568

modern German, *Spiel* is a noun meaning a match, an activity, a game. She understood why people tend to say, "you know the spiel". It connoted "you know the pattern (the to-and-fro movement) dance – you know what needs to be done." As she studied the etymology of the word *play*, she looked at its metaphoric usage, and she caught a brief glimpse of what the Guru might have meant.

Play has a to-and-fro movement, which renews itself in constant repetition. It is the movement that is important to play, not the person who is at play, nor what is at play. (Gadamer, 1998, p. 103) Hence, she recognized the notion that implicit in the derivations of play is the seriousness of work, the thrill and fear of risk taking and the joy and lightness of heart.

Further exploration provided better understanding. In his Foreword to Huizinga's *homo ludens*, Leyden suggests that in addition to the designations of *Homo sapiens:* Man the Wise and *Homo faber:* Man the Maker, we should also have *Homo ludens:* Man the Player in our nomenclature. Huizinga believes that this should be so because play is not just a biological phenomenon. In fact, human culture is based and has evolved on the very foundation. According to Huizinga, Culture arises in the form of play, that it is played from the very beginning". (1955, p. 46)

He adds:

> "Social life is embued with supra-biological forms, in the shape
> of play, which enhance its value. It is through this playing that
> society expresses its interpretation of life and the world. By this

we do not mean that play turns into culture, rather that in its
earliest phases culture has the play-character, that it proceeds
in the shape and the mood of play. (1955, p. 46)

Was the Learner correct in understanding that play seemed to be an

inherent part of Humankind? It seemed to be a given – something that *is*,

and *taken* for granted. It is something humans do without giving a conscious

thought. Play seems to have always been a part of Humankind. Huizinga in

homo ludens clearly shows how cultures have evolved all over the world on

the foundation of play. In fact, play has given order to their societies and

cultures. Did this mean that Humankind has always been in the midst of

play?

The Learner obviously seemed to have forgotten about the concept of

play. She needed to embark on an adventure that would allow her to recover

this concept - recognize the play about which the Guru had been talking.

"Recognition" - some sort of shock of illumination whereby what is

recognized seems, somehow familiar, but one needs to lose the ordinary

attachment to the appearance in order to gain greater insight into truth. She

was too attached to the ordinary connotation of play.

However, Gadamer proposes that in order to gain that insight, first,

one has to lose oneself. Yes, she was lost and confused when it came to

play. How could she go about finding herself? Gadamer suggests

embarking on an adventure. He writes:

> An adventure is by no means just an episode... An adventure,
> however, interrupts the customary course of events, but is
> positively and significantly related to the context which it
> interrupts... It (an adventure) is exceptional and thus remains
> related to the return of the everyday, into which the adventure
> cannot be taken. Thus, the adventure is "undergone," like a
> test or trial from which one emerges enriched and more mature.
> (1998, p. 69)

As she reflected on this concept, she recognized that she had already

embarked on this adventure when she went to see the Guru. She also

realized that her adventure was also a play about play. This impelled her

into further exploration of play. How would one define play? What are some

of the characteristics of play?

Certain characteristics are inherent in play. (Huizinga, 1955; Carse

1986; Gadamer, 1998) First, play is an activity that is carried out of one's

own volition. It has an element of freedom to it. In fact, it is all consuming.

What is at play enraptures, captures, and spellbinds both the player and the

spectator. Gadamer points out the fact that "the primacy of play over the

consciousness of the player is fundamentally acknowledged" (1988, p. 104)

because "the structure of play absorbs the player into itself, and thus frees

him from the burden of taking the initiative which constitutes the actual strain

of existence." (1988, p. 105) This was familiar; one needs to lose oneself in

order to find oneself. Usually, one is not aware when one is lost, because

one is already embroiled in what is at play. Since there isn't consciousness

of what is at play, one follows the lead of what is at play. In fact, one can only come to an understanding by following and being part of what is at play.

The second characteristic of play is that it is something out of the ordinary; in the sense that it takes the player out of the real world into a "temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own." (Huizinga, 1955, p.8)

The third characteristic of play is that one cannot play by oneself. Since play is the move and countermove, the to-and-fro movement between the player and somebody or something else, one needs someone or something else with which to play. Although play in our culture is generally accepted as something that is not serious, it is the earnestness of the player entering the realm of play that "turns play to seriousness and seriousness to play." (Huizinga, 1955, p.8) Gadamer elaborates on this. He says: "It is true that the contestant does not consider himself to be playing. But through the contest arises the tense to-and-fro movement from which the victor emerges, and thus the whole (play) becomes a game." (Brackets added) (1998, p. 105)

The fourth characteristic of play is that it is enclosed within a certain space and time. According to Huizinga, play contains "its own course and meaning". (1955, p.9) He further elaborates this concept:

> All play moves and has its being with a playground marked off
> beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately as a matter
> of course....Just as there is no formal difference between play
> and ritual, so the "consecrated spot" cannot be formerly
> distinguished from the playground. The arena, ...the magic

circle, ...the stage... etc., are all in form and function
playgrounds, ...All are temporary world within the ordinary
world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart. Inside the
play-ground an absolute and peculiar order reigns. (1955, p.
10)

Each playground and players in it are ordered and bound by the rules and
regulations of the "movement of the game from within than by what it/'they
come up against – i.e. the boundaries of the open space – limiting movement
from within." (Gadamer, 1998, p. 107) The to-and-fro movement of the game
creates play, which in turn creates a certain order. In fact, Huizinga insists
that it is order. Because play creates order, it brings limited perfection into
an imperfect world.

Suddenly, the concept of play fell into place, bringing with it new and
wonderful possibilities and openings for learning. The Learner began to
explore these possibilities. What had been happening in the class was that
she had been captivated or spellbound by what she was teaching. However,
the question that remained was does one recognize when one is at play?
And if one recognizes one is at play, does this recognition put one out of the
play? She had more questions that needed to be answered. What about the
students, were they also at play? Were they too captivated by what was
happening in the classroom? Did that mean that it was the subject and the
material that had both the students and the teacher enthralled?

In her exploration of the concept of play, she turned to Gadamer
again. Like Huizinga (1955), Gadamer believes that all play means

something. Play exists in a world that is determined by the seriousness of its purposes. The players are not the only ones who are serious about the play, the play also contains its own seriousness. It is when we are playing in earnest that all the "purposive relations that determine active and caring existence become suspended" (Gadamer, 1996, p. 102). What is at play claims one. If it does not, one is not seriously at play. One does not pour meaning into play. Rather its truth claims and elicits something from one, which is in service to that truth. Thus, for Gadamer, "Play fulfills its purpose only when the player loses himself in play" (1998, p. 102)

The Learner understood. The Guru was right. She had been and was at play. Suddenly, it became clear. Any play is limited to presenting itself. The Learner was so busy playing, that the distinction between being and playing was removed. The seriousness of teaching had captured and enraptured her. This experience had changed her. Gadamer explains:

> ...play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness
> of those who play... The players are not the subjects of play;
> instead play merely reaches presentation (Darstellung) through
> the players. (1998, pp. 103-104)

She finally understood that play is not to be fathomed as something a person does. Instead, one loses oneself into an activity. The presentation of that activity is to be understood as the play itself. The performing of the tasks of a teacher is the actual teaching. Gadamer states that one can claim to have "presented a task" when one has performed the task successfully. Thus, if

one is seriously at play, one is unaware of being at play. It is, as Gadamer would explain the being of teaching was not in the Learner's consciousness, but the spirit of the subject she was teaching drew her "into its dominion" and filled her "with its spirit". (1998, p. 109) The Learner did not sense or feel her ego, because the spirit of the subject had filled her consciousness. Hence, by performing the task of teaching successfully, she had presented teaching.

Some more learning needed to be recognized on this adventure. She now understood that "all playing is being played," (Gadamer, 1998, p. 106) but what about the role of the audience, the spectators, and in her case, the role of the students in her class? Although, plays (or as now as she understood, all tasks and activities) are presentations, they are not presented for anyone's benefit. They are not presented to or for the benefit of an audience or spectators. Instead, it is the spectators or the audience that complete the play. It is only when the fourth wall[14] is down, and there is openness to the spectators, it achieves its true significance. It was therefore, her students, who were her spectators, who completed her teaching and made it concrete for her. They weren't just spectators. They were also the players. Without them, the play was incomplete. Gadamer provides the key

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[14] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York : Continuum Publishing Company, 1998) pp. 108-109

to this mystery. He writes:

> A complete change takes place when play as such becomes a
> play. It puts the spectator in the place of the player. He - and
> not the player – is the person for and in whom the play is
> played... Basically, the difference between the player and the
> spectator is here superseded. The requirement that the play
> itself be intended in its meaningfulness is the same for both.
> (1998, p. 110)

He continues:

> The presentation of a god in a religious rite, the presentation of
> a myth in a play, are play not only in the sense that the
> participating players are wholly absorbed in the presentational
> play and find in it their heightened self-representation, but also
> in that the players represent a meaningful whole for an
> audience. Thus it is not really the absence of a fourth wall that
> turns the play into a show. Rather, openness toward the
> spectator is part of the closeness of the play. The audience
> only completes what the play as such is... Gadamer, 1998, p.
> 109)

> This point shows the importance of defining play as a process
> that takes place "in between." We have seen that the play does
> not have its being in the player's consciousness or attitude, but
> on the contrary play draws him into its dominion and fills him
> with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that
> surpasses him. This is all the more where the game is itself
> "intended" as such a reality... (Gadamer, 1998, p. 109)

Thus in a classroom, the teacher and the students play both roles –

the role of a spectator and a player. Both these roles and all players (for this

what we can now call them) are in the service of the subject – the known or

what Palmer calls the great thing. The Learner now understood the "in-

between"[15] of which Greene spoke. She could see how whatever was at play
– the understanding gleaned from the subject being studied - had dominated
the spirits of the spectators and the players and had enabled the weaving of
relationships which enabled students not only to name themselves, but the
reality around them. Play had established that order for her and students in
her class. Now, she understood that it is what is at play, the subject that
supersedes both the teacher (player/spectator) and the students
(spectators/players).

The learner turned back to her struggle with "identity and integrity".
She recognized that Palmer was right in saying that identity and integrity are
important to the self that is a teacher. Like Smith and Gadamer, Palmer
contends that while it is important for a teacher to do some self work in
private or solitude, self-knowledge is not something that is gleaned in
isolation. He states:

> My inward and invisible sense of identity become known, even
> to me, only as it manifests itself in encounters with external and
> visible "otherness". (1998, p. 63)

> ... teachers must turn toward students, not away from them,
> saying in effect, "There are great gaps between us. But no
> matter how wide and perilous they may be, I am committed to
> bridging them - not only because you need me to help you on
> your way but also because I need your insight and energy to
> help renew my own life." (1998, p. 49)

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[15] Please refer to - Chapter 2 of this thesis and Maxine Greene, "Diversity and
Inclusion : "Toward a Curriculum for Human Beings" in *Teachers College Record* 95 – 2
(Columbia University, 1993) pp. 218 - 220

What she had learned from her adventure is that to fully understand the self that is the teacher, one needs self-exploration, but more importantly, one needs the other - students who are the audience and spectators, for understanding is always in relation to something. It is the other, who/which provides the understanding and learning, and completes the self that is the teacher. Understanding is a life long process that is achieved communally.

Concluding Remarks

The Learner thus had the epiphany of recognizing the classroom space as a pedagogical spielraum – the pedagogical playground – the activity ground or the ground in which activity takes place. In recognizing the classroom as being a pedagogical spielraum, she was provided with the openings to and possibilities of learning. Part of this learning was the recognition that plays cannot and do not take place in isolation. In order to play, one literally needs another player or something else, with which the player interacts and is given a response of a countermove. The to-and-fro movement opens possibilities for the players. Thus, she was presented with the understanding and the synergy that comes from being a part of a learning community.

I was that Learner. The understanding acquired from all the Gurus provided me with the freedom to acquire the understanding of different issues that perplexed me. Having found a *spielraum*, a space that was

bounded for and by play, I was comfortable; I could now play with issues of space, boundaries, characters, student and teacher rights.

CHAPTER 5 - TRAVERSING THE PEDAGOGICAL SPIELRAUM

> This telltale, generative "gap" between student and
> teacher (this "-") can thus be envisaged as a portal, full
> of opportunity (Hillman 1987), but also full of portend,
> warning: lessons to be learned. It is a gap between the
> worlds and, in its lessons, it is a pedagogic space.
> (Jardine, 1998, 125)

Changes in the Topography

The topography changes in the spielraum each semester, I wonder why this is so? The materials are the same, and the manner I deliver the material remains more or less the same, so why is it that one semester, the delivery of materials is successful and there is a synergy in the classroom? Yet, there are other times, when the same materials, the same methods of delivery fail. What is it that changes the topography, and in turn, the pedagogical space in the spielraum?

A good friend narrated an incident which may provide an inkling as to the reason why this may be the case. She related the story about a music teacher who was retiring. He had taught choral and band music and orchestra for 35 years. And in his speech, he said that someone had asked him how he could teach the same songs year in and year out. His response was because his students had never done it before.[16]

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[16] Gibson, M. (1998) in conversation, November 15th.

I was struck by this story. What was it that made the material new for the teacher every time he presented it? Was it just because his students had not learned those songs before that he could keep on teaching them? Or was it that every time he taught these songs, it was like teaching new material all over again? Was it the way in which he responded to the students? Did the student personalities have an impact on how he felt about the materials he taught? Was it the way in which the students responded to the teacher, to the material that changed the play in the classroom? If that was the case, how do the players (teachers, students, and the subject material) in the spielraum impact its topography?

If interpretation (explanation and exposition) is pedagogical at its heart[17], I have to traverse the pedagogical spielraum with the other players – my students, and re-read the answers to these questions. Inherent in this plan is the assumption that my students and I come together in the pedagogical spielraum because of the subject matter.

Openings and Possibilities

The past semester was particularly memorial for me. Because I had acquired a whole new understanding of play and playgrounds, I was ready to look at the world around me, and particularly the pedagogical playground

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[17] Jardine, D. (1992). The fecundity of the individual case: Considerations of the pedagogic heart of interpretive work. Journal of Philosophy of Education #26 1, 51-61

with different eyes. Therefore, I entered my assigned classroom armed with enthusiasm, hope and vigor.

Nevertheless, it was the semester I came across my share of monstrous students, "teacher – student gaps" and nightmares. It seems to me that from the perspective of the teacher, the "teacher – student gaps" happen because of monstrous students. However, it is the monstrous students who send teachers back to the drawing board to understand and re-member what is at the heart of teaching. It is at the edges and in the gaps between students and teachers that the greatest learning takes place for both the teacher and the student.

For Jardine, the monstrous student is an alethea: an opening – the truth, which provides a teacher with an understanding of teaching itself:

> The monstrous child (central as it is to both pedagogy and interpretation) has the effect of making the community of teaching understandable and visible to the initiate/student-teacher as something more than a flat, literal set of accumulable information and surface skills and techniques. Teaching becomes understandable as a deeply communal, interpretive act, ...a "community of conversation" (Gadamer, 1983, p. 165) (cited by Jardine, 1998, p. 126)

While I was not a novice teacher, I needed to re-member and re-learn some important lessons in order to be a better teacher. The following section explores instances where such "teacher-student gaps" were created and the learning that followed.

Sato's Story

My class was a multicultural one composed of twenty students. The students seemed pleasant, gregarious and appeared to take to each other. However, I found myself drawn to a particular backbencher in the class. He had long hair that covered his face. He wore glasses. He was silent and withdrawn. He seemed to be a bright young man, but tended to be divorced from the proceedings in the class. His name was Sato, and he hailed from Japan. Later, I found out this was his first overseas trip. Sato was not sullen; he just seemed uninterested in what was going on around him. At first, I thought he had language difficulties.

Tentative inquiries indicated this was not the case. Sometimes, I thought he was shy, so I tried not to put him on the spot by asking too many direct questions. However, I did try to draw him into class discussions. I was also cognizant not to get too focused on him, but it was hard. Perhaps I sensed that his involvement in our learning community was not as active as I would have liked it to be. He participated, but just enough; he did not partake any more than he had to in class. Yet, he seemed to know his material and could answer questions put to him in class. Obviously, the low level of participation was not for lack of understanding.

We - I ran into trouble when I assigned the first journal and field assignment to the class. The journals were worth 2% of the total 27% module mark, which at the end of the semester, when the students

scrambled for a passing mark, saved the day for many a student. So, I made it a point to emphasize the importance of handing in assignments on time at the beginning of each semester. For this reason, for the first two weeks, I would remind students of the deadlines or any overdue assignments. After that, it would be the students' responsibility.

All assignments were handed in on time, except for Sato's. I got a chance to speak to him in the last hour of the class during the library tour. Sato had completed his library assignment and wanted to know if he could leave for the day. I asked him if he could spare me a few moments to speak to him. He was agreeable.

The Irresponsible Player

I took up the first five minutes or so to inquire how he was finding the class. His response was that he was comfortable with the pace and the material covered in class. I then broached the subject of the late assignment. I indicated that the assignment had been due the previous day, but that I would make an exception and accept it on the following day. However, if I did not receive the assignment by the following day, I would not accept it.

In a burst of fury, Sato spoke to me: "Why are you making me do this? I wish you would stop being my mother and leave me alone." With that, he stormed out. I was stunned. I was totally unprepared. My mind went blank

and I sat there stupefied. It was the end of the day, so, thankfully, I did not have to meet any of the students.

I felt nauseated. I could hardly wait to get home. I wanted to hide. On the train ride home, shock gave way to anger. How dare he speak to me in such a tone? I had not intended to be a surrogate mother, and even if I had, he had no right to speak to me in such a manner. I was completely in my right to remind him to hand in an overdue assignment. However, if he did not want to do so, it was his prerogative. I had carried out my responsibilities. Then, my anger switched from Sato to me. What did I care if he did not do his work? Why did I not just penalize him for not having handed in his work? Why had I left myself open to him? Now what was I to do? Did I face him and tell him I did not appreciate his behaviour? Did I ignore him? Did I pretend nothing had happened?

I went to work the following day. No assignment was handed in. I did know what needed to be done, but did not have the courage to take the high road. That day, I did not engage with him. I decided to let things ride. I understood the danger for both Sato and me in doing this, but I just could not bring myself to do anything about it.

That evening as I was leafing through Palmer's *The Courage to Teach*, the following caught my eye: "If we want to develop and deepen the capacity for connectedness at the heart of good teaching, we must understand – and resist – the perverse but powerful draw of the

"disconnected" life." (1998, p. 35)   This quote combined with the understanding gained so far in my adventure made me realize that the only way out of this situation was to face it. As my anger subsided, I had time to reflect. The ensuing questions came to mind: Had I unconsciously been mothering him? He did look lost, forlorn and vulnerable. Was I being too protective? Was I letting my cultural background and my concept of Guru and her responsibilities take over? In the eastern culture, a Guru is much revered because she is more than just a teacher. She is a mentor, a benefactor, a guide, and a gate to knowledge. She also has responsibilities to ensure that the *Chella* does not go astray.   She is the protector, very much the pedagogue one reads about in early Greek history.

I was again reminded of the concept of *trace* as discussed by Smith. In this situation, for me, trace alluded to my experiences, my heritage, my understanding of what the guru was and how she should practice. It showed itself in who I was and what I had become; all the things I chose to emulate, and all that I ignored in order to be who I was.   However, Smith also talks of "*trace*" as a sense of agency.   He cites Harold Coward: "The trace is not simply a passive past for it proclaims as much as it recalls – it has impulsive force, the force of articulation or differentiation." He elaborates:

> One's personal or collective past can never be cocooned,
> therefore, into sentimentalized history or nostalgia, but must
> constantly be "faced" within dialectic of "protention and
> retention that one would install in the heart of the present.
> (Smith, 1994, p. 75)

This made me aware that again, I needed to look at my prejudices.[18]   In

other words, I needed to recognize the way in which my family, the society,

and the state in which I had been brought up and now lived influenced my

practice. This was because "the prejudices of the individual, far more than

his judgements, constitute the historical reality of his being". (Gadamer,

1998, p. 277) What was the historical reality of my being? Was there room

for the concept of Guru with which I had grown up? Or was my concept of

what the Guru does, and should do, blinding me to the fact that perhaps I

was mothering my students?

The Player who lost the way

To find myself, I had to face Sato's accusations. I needed to

understand and look at the face of the mother archetype.

According to Carl Jung, we see mothers through the mother

archetype. Our psyches imagine mothers with a positive and a negative

side. The positive side is associated with the role of a caregiver and a

cherisher whereas the negative side is associated with the role of a martyr

and

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[18] I use the word prejudice in the way that Gadamer uses it. Prejudice before the Enlightenment period had positive connotation – that of judgement that is delivered before all the elements in the situation had been fully examined. (1998, p.27)

someone who smothers. He writes:

> "Mother" as our psyches imagine her, is associated with
> maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the
> female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend
> reason; any helpful instinct, all that is benign, all that cherishes
> and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility. The place of
> magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld
> and its inhabitants, are presided over by the mother. On the
> negative side the mother archetype may connote anything
> secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything
> that devours, seduces and poisons, that is terrifying and
> inescapable like fate. (CW 9.1, p.82)

Evidently, Sato had not seen maternal solitude, sympathy or any

helpful instincts in our exchange. Nor had he seen care. He did not see any

generative power emanating from me. Obviously, I had not projected or he

did not see the Guru in me. Perhaps I had been smothering him. So, was

this one of the faces of the negative side of the mother archetype? Was I

wearing that persona? If so, I had to be careful in interactions with my

students. I would watch out for it. I would try to understand it, so that this

behaviour would not be repeated. Perhaps, the Guru ideal needed to be re-

evaluated and put in its historical perspective.

A month later, I received another journal from Sato. This journal was

instrumental in reinforcing my evaluation of the situation. Sato wrote how

this was the first time he was on his own away from his parents. He wrote

how he missed them, but was also glad to be away from his mother's eagle

eye. He needed the breathing room. It was then, that I took on the mantle of

the shadow side of the mother archetype and became accountable for the

whole incident...*mea culpa...mea culpa*. I could have handled the situation better.

I was an earnest learner. I stopped "molly coddling" my students and was extra careful about boundaries...my boundary ...the students' boundaries...

The Player is shown the Way

The *Chella* met the Guru to converse about pedagogical spielraum. She shared this incident and her "learning" with the Guru.

Chella:	Here, I saw myself as a gentle, helpful and caring teacher. Instead, I was brought face to face to my shadow side, the mother archetype. I was so disillusioned.
Guru:	I find it interesting that you would use the word 'disillusion'. Etymologically, illusion can be traced back to *ludere, which* means to mock, to jest, to play, and to deceive[19]. Dis-illusion may be interpreted to mean being away from play – out of the play. You have taken on the mother label. This is something done subjectively. By doing this, you have taken yourself out of the play. Remember to play means to and fro movement with somebody or something. By taking on the label, you have also taken Sato out of the play.
Chella:	You are right. Sato's voice can no longer be heard. His voice is lost.
Guru:	Full determination of ways of being (as you suggest in the mother archetype) is not rule governed. The Pedagogical space is larger than the identity of people in it. The Spielraum opens the space within the play of each other. By removing yourself out of the play (by taking on the mantle of mother archetype) you constrict the space within. There is topography in the spielraum – yes, but bounding the spielraum by typography not only constricts the space within the spielraum, but also the player's space. Remember "the way we diagnose our students' condition *and sometimes our own* will determine the kind of remedy we offer". {words in italics added} (Palmer, 1998, p. 41)

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[19] Klein, E. (1971). *Klein's comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language – Unabridged One-Volume Edition*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, p.366.

> You talk about boundaries and "dwelling with a boundless heart"[20] What does dwelling with a boundless heart mean to you?

Chella: It means teaching with largess...with an open heart

Guru: Yes, but part of this largess is: "... to understand 'the self in its original countenance'[21] as delicately interwoven in this very Earthly fabric in which we found woven all things, including the children we teach."[22]

> There is an interconnectedness, which completes the play. You still need Sato to complete your teaching. By taking on the responsibility on your own, you have let Sato abdicate his responsibility. You need to consider boundaries of the teacher, the student and the assignment. To dwell with a boundless heart means to be open to listen to the other and when it is appropriate, have the willingness to say no.

As she reflected back on the situation and the conversation with her guru, she realized she had fallen into the trap of placing labels. It is necessary to categorize and name things; Typifications make life easier. However, one needs to be cognizant of the danger of taking on and placing these labels, types, and categories, especially when one begins to rely on these unreflectively.

The Learner had done exactly that. Hence, she had limited both her student and herself. She was again reminded that a world of subjectivization is a world with things that do not belong.[23] She had taken an easy way out by taking on the mantle that the student had put forth. In doing so, she had not only abdicated her responsibility, but also her authoring power. She had

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[20] Jardine, D. (1997). To Dwell with a Boundless Heart. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Co. Inc., p. 69

[21] Jardine (1971) cites K Nishitani, p.81

[22] Jardine (1997) p. 81

[23] Jardine, D. recorded in conversation, February 17, 1999

abdicated her own responsibility as a teacher on two accounts. One, she ceased to teach from the heart. Second, she failed to bring the student to the truth.

She had silenced her student. How could she bring his voice back into the play? She needed him for the play to continue. She needed to invite Sato back to the Spielraum and let him play his part. This is what Gadamer had been trying to explain to her. By taking on the mantle that she had, she had closed Sato off. His voice was lost, and he no longer had the responsibility or the accountability for his part within the play. In this particular case, the play was open to the player (the teacher) only. The spectator (Sato) was needed to complete what the play "as such is" (Gadamer, 1998, p. 109) The only way she could close the play was becoming open to the other again. He needed to play his part to complete the presentation of the play such that the truth could be revealed.

Boundaries/Boundlessness

She understood that part of authoring of a good teacher was to set boundaries and limits. Her conversation with different educators confirmed this. Palmer assertion was that: "The openness of a space is created by the firmness of its *boundaries*. A space has edges, perimeters, and limits. When those boundaries are violated... the quality of space is destroyed." (1993, p. 72) Bollnow purports that: "To *dwell* is not an activity like any other

but a determination of man in which he realizes his true essence. He needs a firm dwelling place if not to be dragged along helplessly by the stream of time. (1961, p.33)

Each entity in the play has its limits. The assignment was bounded in certain space – it has its rules and regulations. Sato as a student was bound in and by this assignment as much as I was. I could disrupt the game by saying *mea culpa...mea culpa...* and by letting him abdicate his responsibilities and excuse him for doing so. However, I was not being true to the game. Sato had to be responsible for not completing the assignment and I had to be responsible by making him accountable. Part of being a teacher is being nurturing, caring, protecting. However, the other part is setting limits and ensuring that those limits are respected; otherwise, both the student and teacher go astray. She understood what the Guru meant when he said, "to live with a boundless heart is to be open to the other, set limits, and be able to say no" to stuff that did not belong to her.

Playing Infinitely

Many educators have advocated the need to play infinite games when bound together in learning for "finite players play within boundaries; infinite players play with boundaries." (Carse, 1986, p. 12) Gibson also suggests that education be about playing infinitely.

> Education is pedagogy: the continual arrival of each new
> student into the game already in play, with their uniqueness,

their strengths, their weaknesses, their history, their curiosity,
their voices, their questions, their experiences, their wounds. It
is the arrival of new ideas, new insights, new connections, new
encounters, new events, new echoes, new learning, demanding
new interplay and willingness to change oneself as well as
one's perspectives. Education is an infinite game, calling for
infinite players, players who knowingly and willing accept its
obligations, to keep it in play: a cooperative game with
teacher/learner/players." (Gibson1998, p.35)[24]

Carse (1986) asserts:

The rules of the infinite game must change in the course of
play... The rules are changed when the players of an infinite
game agree that the play is imperiled by a finite outcome – that
is, by the victory of some players and the defeat of others. The
rules of an infinite game are changed to prevent anyone from
winning the game and to bring, as many persons as possible to
play... the rules of an infinite game are the contractual terms by
which the players agree to continue playing. (1986, p. 11)

I, too, needed to play the infinite game. As a teacher, I was obliged (bound)

to engage again so that the game of education could continue. I had some

responsibilities as a teacher, so did Sato as a student. Our roles and the

reason why we were in the Spielraum – for the learning bound us both.

Because we were bound by the assignment, we were obliged to defer to the

boundaries set by it. If either one of us refused to adhere to, or did not hold

the other in adherence to this game of education, we became the spoilsports

in the game. Huizinga defines a spoilsport:

"...the spoil-sport shatters the play-world itself. By withdrawing
from the game he reveals the relativity and the fragility of the

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[24] Gibson, Mada (1998). Toying with Learning: The possibilities of and for Play in
the Lived Experience of an Adult Learner. An unpublished paper written for EDER 690,
University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.

play-world in which he had temporarily shut himself with others.
He robs play of its illusion—a pregnant word that means literally
'in-play' (from ilusio, illudere, or inludere). Therefore, he must
be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play
community... The spoil-sport breaks the magic world, therefore
he is coward and must be ejected (1950, p. 11)

When we first came together in our learning community, with the rest of the

community, Sato and I had both pledged ourselves to learning. Therefore,

we were both bound by the pledge we had made to the "community of truth".

Palmer suggests that the play of education should be about truth. He

traces the English word 'truth' to its Germanic root, which connotes to troth –

a pledge. He claims that the troth is with what "one person enters a

covenant with another, a pledge to engage in a mutually accountable and

transforming relationship..." (1993, p. 31) He adds:

Truth requires the knower to become interdependent with the
known. Both parties have their own integrity and otherness,
and one party cannot be collapsed into the other. But the truth
demands acknowledgement of and response to the fact that the
knower and the known are implicated in each other's life.

In truthful knowing we neither infuse the world with our
subjectivity (as premodern knowing did) nor hold it at arm's
length, manipulating it to suit our needs (as is the modern
style). In truthful knowing the knower becomes co-participant in
a community of faithful relationships with other persons and
creatures and things, with whatever our knowledge makes
known. We find truth by pledging our troth... (1993, p. 32)

Pledging my troth... I was reminded that the word 'play' also alludes to

pledging a troth – to committing oneself to what is at play. I had come a full

cycle. I found myself pledging again to foster a particular environment, an

environment where what needs to be learned can be played out "in freedom"

and guided by "an inner sense of truth." (Palmer, 1993, p. 30)

Concluding Remarks

I started this section with Play and the potential for openings and

possibilities of learning that one can come across when one has the fortune

of being at play with a 'monstrous student'. As I come to the end of my

exploratory journey with an companion I had labeled as the "monstrous

student" or whom Palmer would call "the student from hell", I understand that:

> The teacher must protect the usherance of the young into the
> world while at once protecting those factors that pertain to the
> world that make possible such usherance (open, porous limits
> which let in the young – *need* the young – but limits
> nonetheless). The teacher must lovingly and generously
> embrace this irresolvable difficulty, which simply convolutes
> again and again: for the entrance of the children will inevitably
> transform our precious belief that we always and already know
> what the limits are. Children [or adult students] add themselves
> to the world and the world becomes new, the limen shifts and
> flutters, however slightly. Teaching thus involves the luscious
> agony (Hillman 1983) of "dancing at the edge of the world" (Le
> Guin 1987), keeping the doors ajar, watchful. (Jardine, 1998, p.
> 133) [Brackets added]

This is what it is to dwell with a boundless heart in the pedagogical

spielraum.

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION

"Experience is always acquired, and from it no one can
be exempt. Insight is more than the knowledge of this
or that situation. Rather, experience in this sense
inevitably involves many disappointments of one's
expectations and only thus is experience acquired.
Each experience worthy of the name thwarts an
expectation. (Gadamer, 1998, p.356)

Insight is more than knowledge of this or that situation.
It always involves an escape from something that had
deceived us and held us captive. Thus, insight always
involves an element of self-knowledge... Insight is
something we come to. It too is ultimately part of the
vocation of man – i.e., to be discerning and insightful.
(Gadamer, 1998, p.356)

Endings and Beginnings

I started my quest to find answers to certain questions. Primarily I set

out to become a better teacher, a teacher that could draw and dazzle her

students with the magic of her craft. I had a finite goal that of honing in

existing and learning new techniques that would enable me to be more

competent in my chosen craft. Through my journey, and by understanding

the wisdom of my teachers, I have come to realize the truth in the saying that

"technique is what teachers use until the real teacher arrives...(Palmer,

1998, p.5). Has the real teacher arrived? Have I found her?

I have searched for the 'real teacher', a concrete solid figure, which once found, would never be lost, and who would always be in synch in all space, with every student and in each situation.

As I reflect upon the entirety of my experiences, I understand that the "heart of teacher-knowledge is the knowledge that the world is interpretable". (Jardine, 1994, p.188) I realize that the real teacher exists within me, but she is not a concrete solid figure that I had envisioned. My epiphany is that the real teacher is constantly forming, dissolving and reforming, as she engages in this process with the participation of her students, the subject matter and the space that is created within the classroom. The Real Teacher draws from her experiences the insights and the techniques to deal with each unique situation, and this situation in turn, creates new insights, new or finer techniques to deal with the next situation. I have come away with the understanding that teaching is not a finite goal, a finite process, but an infinite engagement with the students, the subject matter and the world around me.

As we temporarily part ways, Gadamer reminds me that I have acquired some *bildung*, but I am not to be content with what I have achieved, for *Bildung*

> ... cannot as such be sought, except in the reflective thematic of the educator. Bildung is not achieved in the manner of a technical construction, but grows out of an inner process of formation and cultivation, and therefore constantly remains in a state of continual Bildung... (Gadamer, 1998, p. 11)

Thus, I prepare to embark on another quest.

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