
Teacher as stranger : educational philosophy for the modern age

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Notes:

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Teacher as Stranger

Week #3

1. *“ And, indeed, one of the objectives of this book is to enable the reader to let his consciousness take over, to enable him -- in the face of mechanization and controls -- to create himself as a human being, as a teacher capable of freeing other human beings to choose themselves.” (Greene, p. 21)*

The educational system in its current state is rigid and many of the nuts and bolts are beyond a teacher's grasp. Through metacognition and allowing their consciousness take over, teachers will be able to be free themselves from the constraints of the lens in which they view the world. To understand that their everyday reality is their own interpretation of the world around them. Through this heightened awareness they can help unlock a student's mind to be free and to not be taught under the vise of a single view. To be careful to include multiple perspectives, from multiple cultures. So that students may pursue interests, discover passions, and mold their own individual identity.

“Philosophy, for the teacher, may be coming to terms, a getting used to the upheaval and a consideration of its consequences for teaching and enabling others to learn. It may become a way of understanding old paradigms and the lure of them, a way of revealing the presuppositions that lead so many into confusion, complacency, or despair. It may be an activity that leads the individual to a discovery of what lucidity can mean for his existence-- and his commitment to making a humane civilization. If Philosophy turns out to be these things each of us will have learned “to think what we are doing.” Each of us will have advanced the process of shaping a decent future and the struggle to identify ourselves.” (Greene, p. 38) While examining one's self through a clear lens, by being self reflective, one can hopefully break through the barriers of expectation and prejudice. In that becoming a better conclusion of who one really is. Working through personal bias and assumptions, then and only then will one start to see the world in a new light. It is then a teacher's responsibility to take that information and transform one's self into someone who is ready to take up the work of a teacher. Through this work on identity, one will be able to clear their mind of any assumptions about students. One will be able to use imagination and cultivate a new possibility of

what students can accomplish.

“A great deal depends on how the teacher adjusts his perspectives on human beings and the institutions they have made. Much also depends on how he chooses himself as a teacher, how he decides to act on what he has come to know.” (Greene, p. 65) Green is calling teachers to become self conscious about ways that culture, political, personal, and social aspects of life, influences the way teachers carry out roles and responsibilities in the classroom. It affects how they view the current power structures and the role race plays within that structure. Becoming self conscious will allow teachers to be aware of how they carry out curriculum and to consider the moral and political aspects of what they teach from many perspectives.

“The teacher who believes in stimulating and developing potential will be challenging, at least implicitly, the inhumanity of credentialing systems, which sort and rank people according to market demand. He will be challenging the depersonalization of a society that offers fewer and fewer opportunities for people to use their initiative, to put their vital energies to work, to find their own voices and their own skills.” (Greene, p. 92) Social transformations are only possible when people find their own truth and work towards discovering it. Greene is arguing that with this clarity people will be able to break free from the conventional ways of thought and question things that they take for granted. To develop their own voice in a world in which people are normally dictated what to think and how to behave from a young age.

“Teachers today are aware of the need to teach the concepts or principles fundamental to the various subject matter disciplines. They may not realize that, when they teach these principles, they are enabling their students to reason, to effect relationships, to impose order in an intrinsically inchoate world.”

(Greene, p. 8) There are many valuable skills learned in school that are not simply learning the subject matter. Learning outcomes are much more than memorizing a set of information to be reproduced on a standardized test. There is a need to “draw inferences, frame arguments, and have self consistency” which is accomplished when taking inquiry as stance. Instead of acting passively while acquiring knowledge, it is important to take ownership and power over what is learned. Through inquiry as stance there can be a transformation in the school systems.

(2) List of Key Terms and Definitions:

Philosophy- Way of framing distinctive sorts of questions having to do with what is presupposed, perceived, intuited, believed, and known.

Paradigm- Standard for giving significance to life. Or a pattern of significance.

Existential philosophy- Philosophical thinking starts with the human subject

Self-consciousness- Having knowledge of one's own existence, especially the knowledge of oneself as a conscious being. Deliberate and with full awareness, especially affectedly so.

Upheaval- A violent or sudden change or disruption to something.

Presuppositions- Relates to a belief system, that is required for the argument to make sense

Liberate- For people to take hand in their own destinies.

Behaviorist tendency- Psychology should concern itself with the observable behavior of people and animals, not with unobservable events that take place in their minds.

Progressivist tendency- Try making school interesting and useful by planning lessons that provoke curiosity.

Abstractions- The quality of dealing with ideas rather than events.

Reflective thinking- advances step by step, from belief to doubt to reflection to empirical inference.

Pragmatist- the idea that the function of thought is as an instrument or tool for prediction, action, and problem solving.

Phenomenologist- The structures of experience and consciousness.

1. Maxine Greene makes a strong argument that it is important for teachers to engage in personal reflection, help students find truth, to not take the world for face value, to “disrupt conventional framework”, use caring dispositions, and see things from others perspectives. Green states that people today are demanding to be liberated and find a meaning and purpose in life. Through this liberation and finding of truth there will be a greater chance at “increasing clarity” (p.37) Which will allow people to gain the “ability to say what one means and can defend, to provide good reasons for what one believes.” Greene believes this will help people look past the face value and status quo; and to possibly transform the world.

- 1. (a)** It is the responsibility of a teacher to understand how the world is according their students, especially what they think and feel. It is important for teachers to be careful to avoid having a mindset that takes everything for granted, instead they must be self reflective. Through considering philosophy teachers will be engaging in a process of identifying themselves, which will give them the tools to critically view the world from many different perspectives. This will lead to a greater understanding of how teachers own individual perspectives influences how they teach. Greene makes strong statements regarding the need for teachers to be awakened to the realities that exist outside of their own, considering there are an inconceivable amount of realities in existence. It is a teachers role and social obligation to help students realize their own freedom and give them hope that more is possible for them. It is a teachers role to “free those he can reach to take a hand in their own destinies -- to “liberate” (as so many people are demanding) themselves.” (Greene p. 60)
- (b)** It is very evident that Green and Milner both agree that fostering meaningful, authentic relationships with students is necessary for a teacher to be successful in helping students to “Be freed to actualize themselves.” (Greene p. 125) Milner states that “I have come to understand that at the heart of effective, promising, and successful teaching in any social context is building and sustaining relationships with students.” (Milner p. 184) Without a solid relationship as a foundation students will not trust in their teachers to guide them to new discoveries, to change and learn. Greene extends what Milner is arguing that through the relationships not only will one be able to teach, but one will be able to help students liberate themselves from the mindsets of today. Greene and Milner are also in agreement that it takes self reflection and understanding that there are multiple points of views that affect each individual in different ways. Milner states “ It is difficult to understand the struggles teachers have in making the diversity-opportunity connection without understanding their personal developmental trajectory and also how their familial experiences have molded their thinking and practices. ... examining these roots seems critical to understanding to to prepare White teachers (and all teachers) to address opportunity and diversity in the P--12 classroom.” (Milner, 158) It was only after self reflection did the subjects in Milners text realize where their own bias and prejudices came from and gained insight to then address the diversity in their own classrooms.
- (5)** Through Greene’s work I was able to gain a little more insight into why I gravitate toward the counter culture. I believe one of the reasons I dropped out of high school was because I really resonated with what

Ivan Illich says that “ the institution of the school is, by definition, repressive. .. The schools exist to manipulate them into a consumerism, on which capitalist society depends.” (Greene p. 64) It was this repressive part of my life that lead me to “year for the expansion of consciousness.” (Greene p. 64) I did indeed “act out my restlessness and frustrations in delinquency, truancy, various kinds of disruption.” (Greene p. 48) I know that it will take a lot of work to adjust my perspective, including how I act on what I know. This will give me the tools to provide a rich learning environment that fosters and encourages students to find their inner voice and “pursue a variety of meanings within the classroom.” (Greene p. 63)

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