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Teaching and Pedagogy

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Teaching and Pedagogy

It is no light task to educate our children aright. (Erasmus)

Approaches to Teaching

To teach is to be a felt presence as well as reverberating influence in the life of another person. Teaching occurs in countless settings: a parent helping a child learn to ride a bicycle; a news writer penning an editorial; a president speaking to his or her fellow citizens; a dance instructor choreographing a student's steps; or a friend showing another how to fish. In some circumstances people acquire knowledge without the benefit of explicit or intentional teaching; consider how people learn their native language or how to respond to a death in the family. Nonetheless, the activities of teaching – explaining, demonstrating, correcting, and the like – saturate human life. It is possible to work towards an understanding of teaching by examining a broad tableau of human affairs and distilling out their shared educational elements.

A more direct approach is to address the work of people explicitly recognized as teachers. One can ponder historical exemplars such as the Buddha, Christ, Confucius, and Socrates, as well as fictional teachers such as Dumbledore in the *Harry Potter* series and Lucy Winter in May Sarton's *The Small Room*. The lesson from these figures is that to be able to teach is one of humanity's highest ideals. The teacher is someone who strives for wisdom. What the teacher learns through such striving extends beyond the living of her or his own life to the counsel of other people. It may be difficult to reconcile these exemplars with what passes for teaching in familiar, everyday experience: offering swimming lessons, instruction on how to use a computer, or training in a scientific laboratory. As Erasmus remarks, 'It is easier to outline the ideal schoolmaster than to find him in reality' (Erasmus, 1964: 209). However, historical exemplars merit a place in the study of teaching. In metaphorical terms they embody the ideals educators aspire to fulfill. They provide enduring images of both the value and difficulty of teaching.

Most people called teachers work in institutions organized for the education of children, adolescents, and adults. Each year the teacher welcomes new students into his or her classroom. Martin Buber (2002) remarks that 'year by year the world, such as it is, is sent in the form of a school class to meet him [the teacher] on his life's way as his destiny; and in this destiny lies the very meaning of his life's work' (2002: 134). It is in the context of his or her life's work that the teacher assumes responsibility for deciding upon curriculum and scheduling, attending meetings, arranging the classroom, instructing students, identifying different learning styles and difficulties, monitoring social interactions, and offering students opportunities for leadership and service. Consequently, to become a teacher is to choose to participate in a particular constellation of social settings, interactions, and concerns which will dominate one's pedagogical life for as long as it endures.

Teaching in formal institutions constitutes a job or occupation which individuals discharge in a professional capacity. But the work is also formative: teachers undergo a process of becoming. Put another way, a person chooses to become a teacher but does not choose whether to be influenced by the experience of teaching. For better or for worse, that influence is as certain as the rising sun. Concerted and ongoing engagement in the activities of teaching shapes the human being in the role.

Educational researchers deploy analytical tools from the social sciences in order to study and,

they hope, improve teaching (including the pedagogy of teacher education). A large industry has grown up around the observation and evaluation of teachers. It approaches teaching as an empirically observable set of actions that teachers undertake in order to educate students. Scholars examine these actions to identify associations (and, ideally, causal connections) between particular instructional acts and student learning. In some cases educational researchers treat teachers as beings who, like themselves, both shape and are shaped by what they do. They attend to the persons in the role of teacher. In other cases researchers concern themselves with acts and activities. They are concerned with the role and its possible effects rather than with persons and their experience.

Philosophers of education also examine teaching. Like their colleagues in the social sciences, they hope that their efforts will make a difference. The difference may be in improving the work. Alternatively, it may reside in better elucidating the nature and purposes of teaching, or in better supporting the hopes of teachers, or in transforming how people conceive the work. Philosophers of education articulate and criticize conceptions of teaching. These conceptions vary widely: some are descriptive and taxonomic, others are normative. The conceptions emanate from society, from field-based and quantitative research, and from fellow philosophers of education. Some philosophers of education derive their concept of teaching from conceptions of knowing or acting. Others borrow theories from fields like art and politics to elucidate the nature of teaching and its existential import. Here again a veritable industry has emerged. Scholars look at teaching through the lens of numerous fields and aspects of philosophy – including aesthetics, critical theory, dialogue, ethics, existentialism, feminism, hermeneutics, and phenomenology, to name only a few.

These scholars aspire to do justice to teaching's uniqueness as a human undertaking. They take seriously its ever-present difficulties as well as its unfathomable promise, even as they acknowledge the ordinary, everyday aspects of the work. Scholars have sought to identify and articulate teaching's paradoxical dimensions. For example, teachers are authorities and yet they strive, at their best, to fuel student freedom and autonomy. Teaching often leads to frustration, failure, and disappointment, and yet those very experiences can trigger moments of delight, beauty, and joy. Teaching in a serious vein forces the teacher to confront her or his limitations – but therein resides the possibility for improvement and fulfillment. Philosophical inquiries create a portrait of teaching's complexity and significance. They also point to moments of mystery and ineffability in the work, with regards to how human influence 'happens,' that may be as old as teaching itself.

Our purpose in this chapter is to characterize some central questions and concerns about teaching that scholarship has raised. We organize such questions and concerns under the following two headings:

- 1 Humanization, or how philosophical research can illuminate teaching's formative human role.
- 2 Teacher growth, or how philosophical analysis can show why teaching involves a continual process of learning and renewal.

Humanization

Human life would be static if not desiccated without teachers. It would carry on, no doubt, just as it did for millennia before the emergence of culture and civilization. If the latter terms mean anything beyond honorifics, they signal the value of movement, growth, and cultivation. They disclose the meaning of ascension: to become educated is to rise to meet the challenges of

life and to realize one's capacities as fully as possible. Education is not pulling oneself up by the bootstraps, although it does include, at various junctures, a self-generative gesture. Education entails taking the hand of more experienced persons willing to assist one to take the next step up. It also means taking in hand books, art objects, scientific equipment, and other materials that can bring individuals into human culture and position them to contribute to it.

Teachers' hands can also help people persevere under the pressure of difficult if not unjust conditions. Consider those who taught newly freed slaves in the American South how to read, write, numerate, and more. Though their efforts may seem puny in comparison with the forces of post-Civil War oppression, they were vital in cultivating a commitment to education that outlasted those forces and that flourishes today. Consider life in Nazi concentration camps and in Soviet gulags, and in less harrowing if also unjust situations such as the internment camps set up by Britain for Afrikaaner families during the Boer War and by the United States for Japanese-Americans during World War II. People under these terrible and often horrifying conditions continued to teach one another everything from writing to music to philosophy. The mere act of teaching signifies that 'meaninglessness, however hard pressed you are by it, cannot be the real truth' (Buber, 2002: 116). Many individuals and organizations today focus on the vital role of teachers in war-torn, strife-ridden regions of the world even as other organizations attend to economic and political concerns. Teaching can be a humanizing force that works against the most formidable powers of dehumanization.

Teachers humanize by cultivating students' humanity: their capacities to think, feel, communicate, explore, analyze, manipulate objects, and the like. They also humanize by contributing to their students' humanity. They bring to their lives not only what they know but also their ways of holding and making use of that knowledge. In short, to teach is to give, but it is also to criticize and challenge. Experienced teachers know that real learning often entails tension, anxiety, moments of uncertainty, and the disconfirmation of expectations. They know that what succeeds with a particular student, in a particular situation, may fail in a different context. The art of teaching is understanding how and when to make use of the science of teaching. 'What works' – that is, what research indicates is efficacious in practice – is never self-justifying in education.

That we enlist a conception of humanization to describe teaching should not be interpreted to mean that we have a notion of the human that we attribute to teaching. Quite the contrary. Our point is that it is always possible to learn about what it means to be human from teaching and teachers. Although we all have aspirations, teaching reveals the contours – the character, quality, and direction – of our next step up. It helps show the way. Teachers assist students in discovering the true object of their desire: they help students perceive and realize what they want to become.

Nor do we intend to imply that students arrive at the door of the school as beings less than or not quite human. To become human is not a matter of undergoing a probationary period, despite the bureaucratic imperatives of institutions that can make people feel that way. As John Dewey posed the issue, all humans – young and old alike – reside on the same plane with respect to growth. The differences between them are matters of degree rather than of kind. Just as the child has much to learn to be able to function as an adult, so the adult has much to learn to retain the sensitivity and freshness of the child (Dewey, 1985: 48, 55).

An important asymmetry abides at the heart of teaching. Teachers assume responsibility for creating, directing, and coordinating educative influences that occur more naturally elsewhere

in human community and life. Moreover, as suggested above, students look to teachers to fulfill the promise of their station by satisfying their expectations for guidance, insight, and inspiration. This expectation is particularly clear in the case of the very young, but it is also present (albeit less overt and more discriminating) in adolescents. Memoirs are filled with descriptions of memorable teachers who, in making a difference, made 'all the difference.'

Memorable teachers humanize by revealing to students the unfathomable capacity and creativity of people. They show students how meaningful human life can be if a person inhabits it as fully as he or she can. They respond to a call to try to exemplify humanity – to try to represent what is best about people. In so doing, memorable teachers dignify themselves and students. They convey worth not as a variable price but as an intrinsic, priceless condition. They do not call attention to themselves but to life itself, to the powers of mind, heart, and spirit. To borrow a trope from Simone Weil (1970: 147), to understand the humanizing influence of a memorable teacher entails looking not at the torch itself but at what the torch illuminates. Many young men and women doubtless aspire to teach in order to be memorable to at least a few of their students, just as they themselves had memorable teachers.

Teaching humanizes because it brings people together to share new ideas, events, texts, activities, and relationships. Teaching helps generate formative experience, such as the absorption of new knowledge, the development of deeper powers of thought and analysis, and the enrichment of capacities to perceive and appreciate. The experience humanizes because it also helps strengthen a sense of reality. Iris Murdoch (1970) illuminates the values in cultivating this sense (for background discussion see Lavery):

If I am learning, for instance, Russian, I am confronted by an authoritative structure which commands my respect. The task is difficult and the goal is distant and perhaps never entirely attainable. My work is a progressive revelation of something which exists independently of me. Attention is rewarded by knowledge of reality. Love of Russian leads me away from myself towards something alien to me, something which my consciousness cannot take over, swallow up, deny or make unreal. The honesty and humility required of the student – not to pretend to know what one does not know – is the preparation for the honesty and humility of the scholar who does not even feel tempted to suppress the fact which damns his theory. (2007: 89)

This honesty and humility mirrors that of the parent, the policewoman, the lawyer, the politician, the grocer, the mailman, indeed of every person as they recognize the reality of facts (like Russian grammar) and of other people. Teaching humanizes by cultivating the capacities of attentiveness and responsiveness to reality. This truth is the teacher's own trajectory, too. Teaching humanizes teachers to the extent that they open themselves to its own humanizing impulses. This openness is not simple or straightforward to maintain. It entails continuous teacher education, which is the topic of the next section.

The Teacher's Ongoing Education

The importance of teaching combined with its demanding complexity has given rise to numerous conceptions of the work. Today's would-be teachers encounter theories such as constructivist, culturally responsive, democratic, and experiential pedagogy in their preparation programs. Such theories are sometimes linked to broad conceptions of education: civic, liberal, moral, multicultural, and others. Part of becoming a successful teacher, it seems, is learning how to hold these various conceptions in judicious ways – rather than being held

by them.

We pose the matter this way because philosophers of education, as a community of inquiry, have made clear the incompleteness of every conception of teaching on the table today. Each defensible conception can be said to emphasize a particular aspect of the educational process: intellectual, moral, aesthetic, cultural or political. Alone, none of them encapsulates the whole of teaching and learning. The scholarly community's philosophical critique of educational theory complements the community of teachers' practical critique. New teachers who yearn to do the right thing quickly grasp the truth in Tzvetan Todorov's remark (1996: 161) that while theory is valuable for the study of social reality it can never take the place of that reality. When the teacher faces a student, she or he faces a distinctive individual, not a shifting intersection point of various theoretical and taxonomic categories. Those categories may derive from studies of subject matter or of social justice. They may reflect theories of human and societal development. Even if it were possible to fuse the best of all these theories into a coherent outlook, the resulting amalgam could never substitute for the teacher's living, responsive judgment.

Good teachers enlist many models and conceptions of teaching in order to perform the work effectively. John Dewey and Paulo Freire notwithstanding, sometimes teachers do seek to 'fill' the student with knowledge. At certain moments such cramming is invaluable in order to ascend to another plane of learning. At other moments teachers facilitate intellectual and emotional movement in order to encourage students to take the lead in determining what to study. There are moments when teachers choose to confront their students about such negative attitudes as laziness and disregard, gambling that the conflict will lead to greater student resolve and improved teacher–student relations. At still other moments teachers strive to care: to comfort, to calm, to encourage, to support, and to console.

A unifying aspect of these otherwise disparate postures is that they reveal how learning transmutes character. The teacher who steadily learns from and about the work becomes, in time, a learned being. As such, the teacher demonstrates through his or her presence the meaning and possibilities of education. The teacher shows why being educated encompasses more than the recitation of facts, the acquisition of knowledge, and the utilization of skills, indispensable as all of those aspects may be. Rather, to be educated, to be learned, means to take an interest 'in learning from all the contacts of life' and to welcome the resulting need for 'continuous readjustment' (Dewey, 1985: 370). The teacher exemplifies such an interest by learning from students' words and deeds how best to educate them. The teacher learns from mundane (to an outsider) classroom incidents as well as from more dramatic interactions, difficulties, and successes. As a human being the teacher reverberates with a commitment to meaning-making and thereby exercises a centrifugal force upon students, drawing them into richer and richer possibilities.

To learn 'steadily' gives rise to a concept that will frame the remainder of this chapter. That concept is steadfastness, and it includes a range of sub-concepts such as maturity, humility, fidelity, and naiveté. Like all taxonomic strategies ours does not provide a 'final' rendering or model of teaching. We think the concept steadfastness mirrors much though not all that philosophers of education have argued about the work. The concept also points to additional questions and topics worthy of further examination. Finally, it represents an attempt to sustain such inquiry. To recall an image sketched previously, the concept may assist scholars and teachers to find efficacious ways of holding theories and possible explanations of teaching rather than being held by them.

Pedagogical Steadfastness

When is teaching? The question highlights how difficult it can be to *perceive* teaching. Does teaching happen whenever the teacher addresses students, or only when he or she says particular things in particular ways? Does it happen only when the teacher is face-to-face with students, or can it be 'preactive' (Jackson, 1968) – that is, does teaching also encompass the teacher's preparations undertaken at home or in the morning before school begins? Does teaching only happen when learning takes place? Or does teaching include the countless undertakings, both planned and spontaneous, that may lead up to or facilitate learning?

Posing such questions yields the following conclusion: teachers are wise to act as if all that they do with regards to students, subject matter, setting, and the like can become a part of teaching. To cultivate this orientation requires steadfastness – a steady, ever-deepening, ever-widening way of looking, thinking, contemplating, and deciding. The quality of steadfastness has not received much attention in the philosophical and educational literature and it is rarely mentioned as a virtue. Perhaps this is because steadfastness is often associated with the military image of soldiers who stand firm and do not give ground in battle. They overcome their fear and endure often terrible trials so that they may achieve their goal.

Teaching is not war, even if embattled educators may sometimes feel like warriors struggling against societal indifference, or even hostility, toward their profession. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile reflecting on the image of the soldier. Together, soldiers share the burden of protecting a nation's interests. Soldiers contract to act on behalf of their nation, irrespective of who they must coordinate with, and ignorant of what this will entail. Honoring the commitment to serve one's nation requires soldiers to follow orders (even disagreeable ones) and occasionally risk punishment by challenging senior officers. It is similarly the case with teaching. Together, teachers share the burden of educating a community's youth. Teachers take responsibility for educating young people without being fully aware of who they will work with and what their work will involve. Teachers cannot know in advance how subjects will be added or dropped to school curriculum; how teaching technologies will change; what new educational policies will be implemented regarding matters of assessment; and how children will change. Yet, to teach is to remain steadfastly committed to both teaching and the community whom one teaches for.

This condition is not insignificant because it presents its own unique set of challenges. Sometimes, it requires teachers to survive a period of misguided administration by finding ways to 'soften' educational policy. Sometimes, it means working with school leaders, board members, and colleagues who hold differing views of education. At other times it involves retraining and professional development. Sometimes a teacher will conform and at other times feel compelled to speak out. While the teacher sets and accomplishes numerous goals for herself, relative to her changing situation, like the soldier her ultimate goal is bestowed on her by the community in which she serves. Unlike the soldier, however, she honors the community even as she seeks to enlighten it about the substance of education and what is best for its young people.

Within the classroom, teaching necessitates the quality of steadfastness. Teachers must stand firm in their commitment to educate each child who enters their sphere of influence, even though each day is an unknown quantity and there are many hurdles and disappointments to overcome. Steadfast teachers resist the temptation to abuse their position of authority and power in the classroom. They try not to succumb to their own insecurities; they try not to favor some students over others; and they try to fairly assess each student's

strengths and weaknesses. Steadfast teachers deploy the authority and power in the role to promote values such as learning and goodness. They encourage students to talk about the meaning of what they are doing and to listen to one another. They provide students opportunities to work cooperatively and to avoid mocking, striking or stealing from one another. They conduct themselves as principled authorities even if they sometimes fall short (as do all persons) of the principles of justice.

This posture of steadfastness does not mean teachers must be dogmatic, inflexible or unyielding. On the contrary, their steadfastness enables them to be adaptive, experimental, and inventive. They are like the reed that sways in the wind, altering its direction with that of the wind and dipping deeply or shallowly in response to change, meantime all the while remaining rooted in the soil. The term 'steadfast' derives from the Old English *stedef-st* which combines *stede* (fixed) and *f-st* (fast). Steadfastness denotes constancy and resoluteness. Through thought, deliberation, careful study, and consultation with trusted colleagues and significant others, the teacher learns to bounce back from the regrets and failures endemic to the work.

Steadfastness is not blind doggedness. It does not shield the teacher from the unpredictability, ever-varying intensity, and shifting emotions in the educational process. 'Reality, from moment to moment, is always new; and this complete, this perennial newness, is the world' (Comte-Sponville, 2001: 7). Change is the one constant to the practice of teaching: changing subject matter, changing classroom dynamics, and changes within teachers and students themselves. The teacher remains steadfast not toward students per se but toward the endeavor of *educating* each student as best as time, resources, and circumstances permit. It is this educational promise that brings teacher and student together in the first place. The teacher retains a steady gaze on the educational project despite endless distractions, which range from the temptation to cynicism and jadedness in the face of societal obstacles to education, to taking the easy way out when confronted with the challenging aspects of the work.

Pedagogical steadfastness does not emerge de novo. No teacher 'decides' to be steadfast, nor determines its contours unilaterally. The way that teachers come into an understanding of the work is similar to the way that people come into an understanding of love, parenting, and friendship. While such phenomena are universal, each person's experience and understanding of them is individualized. People learn the meaning and reality of these concepts – teaching, love, parenting, and friendship – within the particularities of their personal histories and relationships. An individual's thinking about teaching is informed by his or her life experiences, which include those in the classroom. At the same time, his or her experience of teaching is informed by how he or she understands it. While educators may initially derive their understanding of teaching from cultural and discursive cues, they develop it in the context of their own life-worlds with their distinctive forms, undertakings, and contingencies.

The circularity here is inescapable but not vicious. A dynamic understanding of teaching does not require teachers to try to escape it. Teaching is a concept that is 'infinitely to be learned' and that constitutes an 'ideal end-point' (Murdoch, 1970: 29). As such it marks a place where no teacher ever arrives but toward which they can steadily move. A teacher sometimes finds that the question of what to do in the here and now involves not just a consideration of 'what works' but of 'who' he or she has become as a teacher. New realizations about student learning, about the depths of subject matter, about the complexities of assessment, and the like, can lead teachers to reconstruct their outlooks toward the work as a whole rather than

merely toward a single dimension of it. The teacher who is alert to the vicissitudes of educational work, and steadfast in engaging them, time and again finds her-or himself abandoning previous understandings and assumptions. The teacher takes on new theories, strategies, maxims, and precepts.

Thus, teaching is an activity that can be continuously refined and perfected. As Epictetus counseled two thousand years ago, 'You, even if you are not yet Socrates, ought to live as someone wanting to be Socrates' (1983: 29, #51). The endless perfectibility of teaching is a necessary and not contingent feature of the work. To teach is to be always underway in learning how to become a better teacher. 'To try to get it right means one has not yet, after all, gotten it right' (Hansen, 2001: 189). The process is not straightforward or linear. It is recursive, circular, and multi-directional. It involves making new discoveries, returning to insights previously overlooked, and renewing old commitments. It requires that teachers trust that they can become better teachers by teaching. In Dorothy Emmet's words, teaching is 'a venture reinforced through following it rather than one whose correctness can be demonstrated at the start' (1979: 141).

Teachers often have to operate on the basis of faith, understood as persevering without evidence that it is worthwhile to do so. For long periods of time it may seem that students are not learning, that the teacher's pedagogy is inadequate, and that the defeats are greater than the gains. And yet, serious-minded teachers persist. They do not turn to counterfeits of teaching: indoctrination, sophistry, propaganda, or self-indulgence. Rather, their experience teaches them that patience, flexibility, self-criticism, and discipline constitute pedagogical steadfastness. Throughout this ever-evolving process, an abiding faith in the value of steadfastness remains an underlying condition of their work. Teachers who regulate their conduct in the light of such faith improve and become better as educators. They learn to weather periods of uncertainty, ambiguity, confusion, and doubt, and to stay the course.

These facts help account for why experienced educators distinguish between mature and novice teachers. The concept maturity connotes a developmental and normative process. When one thinks of fruit, one imagines increasing fullness, richness, and ripeness. Those outcomes are natural and they are also esteemed, prized, and preferred. They are better than their alternatives. In likeness, a mature, seasoned teacher is typically better than a novice – better, for example, in bringing together students, subject matter, and settings in ways that can be substantive and satisfying. But unlike fruit, which ripens through natural processes, the teacher's maturity comes through steadfastness. It emerges through the influence of teaching on the teacher's own sensibility and outlook. It finds expression in the increasingly sophisticated ways in which the teacher assesses student learning as well as his or her methods. It is not simply a matter of age or number of years in the classroom. A person with but 2 or 3 years of experience can be more mature than a person with 20. Maturity is an ever-evolving outcome of how the teacher responds and learns. Unlike fruit, which must linger on the vine, teachers can take steps to cultivate their own deepening maturity.

Teachers who work with children know that they can be mysterious and perplexing to adults. Although everyone has been a child, the transition into adulthood irrevocably transforms the relationship that adults have with childhood. They can no longer perceive or recall it straightforwardly. But teachers of children are brought vibrantly into that distant world – literally, every second they spend in the classroom. Moreover, such teachers spend more time with children than do any other groups of adults. They are the community's only group of adults who spend regular and extended time with a range of children. Jean-Jacques Rousseau urged the educators of his day to pay attention to children – 'for most assuredly

you do not know them at all' (1979, p. 34). Teachers of children are in a unique position to observe, register, and contemplate the evolving behaviors and interactions of children over the course of 1 or more years. Teachers are well-placed to be students of students: to come to know them in the regular, familiar environment of the school, classroom, and playground. This unrivaled experience enables teachers to educate the world about the nature of children: about their distinctive ways of seeing, sensing, and relating, and about the very character of childhood. Teachers can help the wider community to better interpret and relate to children as it strives to understand, protect, and educate them. Earlier we wrote that a mature teacher fuses self-criticism, faith in educational progress, and steadfastness. A mature culture understands that its very health and continuity depend upon educating, supporting, and listening to its teachers.

These points do not imply that teachers can come to know everything about children that is pertinent to their growth and flourishing. Steadfast teachers remain ever-underway in this learning process. Their relationship with students mirrors that with subject matter: there is always more to learn, to understand, and to appreciate. These facts conjure the need for self-honesty and a measure of humility. They also call to mind the values in what Dewey called a cultivated naiveté (1988: 40), by which he meant learning to retain as best as possible receptivity to fresh impressions, ideas, and emotions. In this light it bears emphasizing once more that the teacher's steadfastness is not like that of a gate shut fast to the world. Rather it implies firmness and suppleness, steadiness and lightness, seriousness and a sense of pleasure in the work of educating.

Conclusion

To teach is to accept a responsibility that stretches back for generations. Teaching connects the practitioner with those who toiled in the past as well as with peers working today. To teach is to find oneself in a community with other teachers. It is to realize that part of the fundamental nature of the work is to examine its nature continuously. In all of these ways, to teach means participating in a tradition whose roots reach back to Confucius, Socrates, and other memorable teachers. These facts do not imply that teachers must agree with or even like one another. Anyone who spends time with teachers knows they can be as contentious and disputatious about the meaning of good practice as any group of dedicated politicians, nurses, or social workers. But teachers share kindred goals and concerns. They are custodians and creators of things that matter. They work in the present for the sake of humanity's future.

One of the greatest challenges in teaching is to survive misconceptions of teaching. We use the verb 'survive' because such misconceptions cannot be overcome in any final sense. Some regard the teacher as a trained technician carrying out the dictates of policy-makers. Some treat the teacher as an economic resource, fabricating 'human capital.' Others regard the teacher as an instrument of political and cultural change. Still others assume that the teacher's charge is merely to conserve extant custom, knowledge, and belief. As a community of inquiry, philosophers of education have challenged these and other conceptions of teaching. They have shown how the activity of teaching is as rich and unfathomable as human life itself, namely because teaching humanizes in countless, substantive ways. They have addressed what it means for the teacher to be steadfast in confronting problems and in engaging opportunities. They have shed light on the perennial difficulties and joys of teaching.

Put another way, philosophers of education have challenged misconceptions of the work by

demonstrating why teaching is an endlessly provocative human endeavor. They ask questions such as: When is teaching? Is teaching an activity, an experience, or a form of relation? Is teaching defined by its intentions or by its outcomes? Is teaching a mode of caring for others or a mode of training them? Is teaching the enactment of occupational skills or of a way of life? Is teaching a functional or purposive undertaking? Does it serve socialization and/or does it serve education understood as something other than socialization? What does it mean to grow and improve as a teacher? Why do many teachers attest to its aesthetic, moral, and spiritual dimensions rather than solely to its academic and intellectual aspects? By posing such questions, and by working toward better responses to them, philosophers of education in concert with teachers keep the practice of teaching dynamic and responsive.

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