

CHAPTER 3

THE TEACHER AS LOVER

A natural love of contact with the young . . . a natural love of communicating knowledge . . . a love of knowledge . . . [a] love of arousing in others the same intellectual interests and enthusiasms . . . an unusual love . . . [of] some one subject . . . [a] love of learning . . . [characterize the successful teacher].

—John Dewey (LW 13: 344–345)

The teacher as lover? A weird idea, isn't it? If it is for us, it isn't for Dewey.

He envisions a teacher who is a lover of learning, knowledge, a particular subject, interacting with students, communicating knowledge, and arousing students' intellectual curiosity. And more. But let's begin with these six loves and, during the voyage, add two others: a love of others and a love of thinking.

In "To Those Who Aspire to the Profession of Teaching" (1938), Dewey states that a prospective teacher should seriously consider a number of matters before deciding on whether to enter teaching. Interestingly, he does not make

Authors' Note: References to works by John Dewey are from the collection of his works published by Southern Illinois University Press: *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882–1898*; *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899–1924*; and *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925–1953*. References to these works are abbreviated as EW, MW, and LW, where, for example, EW 5: 94 indicates that the material cited or idea noted is in *The Early Works*, volume 5, page 94.

an indiscriminate appeal to people to get them to enter the profession. Nor does he make an appeal to a narrow band of intellectually talented prospects. His view of the artistic teacher is a very sophisticated one, one that reaches beyond the realms of the expected. He discusses his views under three general headings: the opportunities, the demands, and the difficulties of the profession. Although the three realms overlap, the second is particularly important in understanding his view of the qualities that enable a teacher to be both successful and artistic (LW 13: 342).

He begins by discussing the prospective teacher's health and moves to her emotional fitness. Teaching is taxing, emotionally and physically, and, to be sure, there are those who should not be allowed to work with children and youth. But in addition, he advises those who are especially anxious and nervous not to pursue teaching, because he thinks they will probably have a negative effect on the children they teach. In essence, he believes that the anxiety and apprehensiveness of a person will contribute to her being an unhappy and ineffective educator. In context, he argues for the first kind of love that aspiring teachers should have, and that highly anxious and apprehensive people may not have: a love of being involved with children or youth. Dewey believes that when a teacher does not have this love, students will easily detect that she does not enjoy being with them. Students easily identify, he says, the teachers who work out of obligation, not out of interest in them (LW 13: 344). A love of contact with students is also crucially important in the teacher's coming to have an extensive understanding of them and, thereby, diagnosing their educational needs, which, according to Dewey in *Democracy and Education*, is a basis for the teacher being able to artistically teach each student (MW 9: 177). Put candidly, he says two things about the art of teaching: that insight into students and the ability to diagnose their needs are prerequisites to being an artistic teacher. An in-depth, personal, and growing knowledge of each student, therefore, is an imperative for the artist of pedagogy.

Dewey's exact words deserve attention. Although he believes that teachers should love students themselves, he does not specifically say so in this instance. In the quotation, Dewey says teachers should love *contact with* the young. This love obviously involves developing a set of positive relationships, including an enjoyment of interacting with students (LW 13: 343). The teacher, it appears, is to love contact with students but to avoid a parental or emotional attachment that may prejudice her professional judgment (LW 13: 343). Neither pedagogical expertise nor content mastery, Dewey adds, can overcome a lack of this

kind of love. Technical facility and knowledge of subject matter alone are inadequate. Consequently, only those who have and use the ability to stay young and sympathize with children or adolescents should remain teachers very long. Or, to revise the statement slightly, only those who desire to interact with students should be teachers (LW 13: 344). Those who lack these qualities should not even consider teaching as a career. Enjoying contact with children, staying young at heart, and retaining sympathy for the young, then, reach into the core of what

A Reflective Opportunity

Why do you think it is difficult for some teachers to love or respect a student? Can a person learn to love or respect students who are genuinely unlikable? If your answer is yes, what can a person do to facilitate change?

Dewey means by this type of love of the successful teacher. Even so, simply loving to be with children or youth does not guarantee that a person will be an effective teacher. Once again, much more is required. The person who enjoys being with children or adolescents should certainly nourish this interest but also look beyond it to other important qualifications.

One of these qualifications is a second kind of love, one that Dewey discusses in his book *Psychology* (1887–1891). There he writes of parental, filial, and religious loves, describing them as an interest in the others' well-being (EW 2: 249, 293–294). Later, he amplifies the idea of familial love and, by extension, community-wide and universal love. He says that this kind of love—today we might call this kind of love respect for others—is an intentional choice to seek another's good and, when applied to society, includes promoting the common good (MW 5: 518). The loving teacher seeks the individual good of every student as well as the common good of students and society. This love of others seems foundational to Dewey's social, political, moral, and pedagogical thought and is deemed essential for the teacher who is constantly moving in and among school and external communities. Such love, of course, demands the guidance of reflective thinking if it is to be profitably applied. When reflection is used in the interest of individuals and society, it provides an important point of reference, suggesting thoughts often not found in the thinking of other, more process-oriented advocates of democratic schools. The teacher who works in a Deweyan democratic school loves colleagues and students in the sense that she intentionally pursues their good. Being interested in the welfare of others, she can more readily see the need to

adapt the abilities of students for the good of society. The absence of this kind of love results in the marginalization of individuals and groups in school and undermines the artistic interests of the teacher.

Immediately after discussing a love of contact with students, Dewey mentions two other loves required for pedagogical success: a love of knowledge and a love of communicating it (LW 13: 344–345). Although both kinds of love are necessary for being a successful, artistic teacher, again neither by itself nor both combined is sufficient for the teacher Dewey visualizes. Contrary to what many school critics today appear to believe, he thinks that the third kind of love, a passion for knowledge, alone does not make a person a successful teacher, just as he believes that the fourth love of communicating is by itself an insufficient quality. A love of knowledge in general assists the teacher as she understands, interprets, and explains the interconnectedness of fields of inquiry and, thereby, life. But the love of knowledge—also called a “love of truth for truth’s sake”—suggests an enjoyment of playing with ideas that teachers should pass on to their students (MW 7: 322). A love of communicating, then, must be attached to sharing something, namely knowledge, not just unwarranted personal opinion. Note that Dewey is in favor of the teacher’s communicating ideas, information, and knowledge, which is a part of her responsibility to create an environment that stimulates learning. The teacher has a responsibility to learn, be passionate about what she knows, and share some of what she loves with students.

At this stage, we need to examine further his idea of creating a learning environment. Four points deserve attention. First, it is crucial to understand that the teacher’s love and pursuit of knowledge is, in part, an ongoing process of self-creation. Second, this process of personal creation—the teacher’s creating herself by continuing to grow—is an intrinsic part of the activity of fashioning a learning environment for students. That is, the teacher is actively preparing a significant aspect of the learning environment—herself—when she learns more about students, teaching, learning, community, and subject matter. Third, creating a broader learning environment does not shift weight away from the teacher’s responsibility to communicate knowledge. As a result, Dewey argues that teachers should be so well prepared in their subjects that their knowledge richly overflows (LW 8: 338). Finally, this knowledge, combined with matured experience, enables the teacher to be the leader in the classroom, a topic that we will return to later (LW 8: 337).

We also need to stop briefly to examine what Dewey means by natural love and the natural teacher. He elaborates on the notion of a natural love for communicating by saying that the person who is a natural teacher does not view learning as complete without the opportunity to share what has been learned. The natural-born teacher, Dewey declares, uses knowledge and her enthusiasm for it to plant a spark and eventually ignite the flames of learning and thinking in others (LW 13: 345). So, it seems that Dewey believes that a natural-born teacher is a person who has particular gifts or inclinations that give her a decided edge in becoming a great teacher (LW 13: 345). These gifts or inclinations include a definite and lively interest in the thinking and feelings of children or youth (LW 13: 345) and a bent toward enthusiastically sharing with them what she knows. But the natural-born teacher can still profit greatly by having these gifts nurtured in a teacher preparation program, and other educators can benefit by having the gifted teacher's abilities, attitudes, and qualities studied (LW 5: 4–5).

Dewey's fifth love is implicit in our previous discussion, a love of stimulating interest in the subjects for which she has great interest and enthusiasm (LW 13: 345). This love seems to be firmly joined with the love of communicating knowledge and is at least one desired outcome of that communication. Here it is easy to see how arousing students' interest in living and stirring ideas is tied to behavioral change and moral development. Without the love of stimulating others' interest in a subject or issue, it is difficult to think that moral education—or any other kind of education—can be successful (MW 4: 267). This love is critical, in part, because its enthusiasm is so powerful, surpassing even the force of methodological expertise: “A genuine enthusiasm is an attitude that operates as an intellectual force. A teacher who arouses such an enthusiasm in his pupils has done something that no amount of formalized method, no matter how correct, can accomplish” (LW 8: 137).

A sixth love, alluded to previously, is what Dewey identifies as an extraordinary love for one field of study (LW 13: 345). This love for and aptitude in one particular subject appears to overlap with the “love of knowledge itself.” Yet Dewey qualifies his statement in important ways. First, the love is an unusual,

An Introspective Moment

If you do not have a burning passion for anything you teach or plan to teach, should you reconsider your career plans? Are there other options? What made you draw this conclusion?

not ordinary, passion. Second, it is for one subject, not for knowledge in general. These two ideas suggest that the teacher—and for Dewey this applies to all kindergarten through 12th-grade teachers¹—needs a particularly strong love for at least one of the subjects she teaches. Third, Dewey clarifies that a love of knowledge in general and a strong love of one field is not enough: Aptitude in the subject is also required. But aptitude without love is also undesirable: A person who is uncommitted to intellectual growth and slithers along the bottom academically is not the kind of person Dewey wants teaching. Why is Dewey so firm on this point? In part, it is because he wants students to have capable teachers who are passionate about their fields of expertise. But he also wants them to have teachers who demonstrate the ability to think critically and imaginatively in these fields. He wants students to catch the passion and learn to think like the teacher. That is to say, he wants students who are passionate about knowledge and thinking for themselves.

This love of a subject illuminates why Dewey subscribes to a seventh love of the successful teacher: a contagious love of learning (LW 13: 345). At first glance, this love may seem to be identical with a love of stirring intellectual interests in others, but Dewey may intend subtle differences. First, the intentional love of arousing a student's intellectual interest and enthusiasm may be different from unconsciously spreading a contagion for learning. Second, arousing in a student the same intellectual interests may be different from passing on a contagious love of learning in general or a love of learning that leads into different intellectual interests. Third, although akin to a love for knowledge, a love of learning is manifestly dynamic and not satisfied with loving that which has already been acquired. In any event, the complementary relationship of intentionally arousing love of intellectual matters in students and unconsciously spreading a love of learning to them suggests the multiple ways Dewey wishes to nurture an excitement for and about educative activities.

In *The Quest for Certainty*, Dewey (LW 4: 182) argues for yet another love, an eighth one that applies to the successful teacher: a love of thinking that leads to an interest in solving problems (LW 4: 182). This love, in certain respects, encapsulates the other loves and may explain the professional enthusiasm and dedication of excellent teachers and the spirit of openness and inquiry that characterizes their classrooms. Likewise, it may help explain why there is on the part of some a growing interest in preparing educators and students to think critically and be open minded in examining intellectual issues.

Table 3.1 The Loves of a Successful Teacher

<i>Type</i>	<i>Relevance to Teaching</i>
Others	Respects each student regardless of background
Contact with the young	Enjoys being and working with students
Learning	Keeps growing as a person and professional
Knowledge	Enjoys distinguishing between warranted conclusions and unfounded opinions
A subject	Manifests a depth of understanding and thinking
Communicating knowledge	Takes pleasure in articulating what she understands
Arousing intellectual interests	Values the opportunity to stimulate curiosity
Thinking	Prizes evaluative and reflective thinking

A love of thinking is also significant for another reason, one central to this book. Dewey specifies that thinking—because it is an activity or entails a set of activities—may be seen as an art (LW 8: 182). The teacher’s process of thinking about educational and classroom challenges should be done in an artistic fashion or in a way that draws on the best experiences, observations, data, critiques, and experimentation available. As he implies in *Democracy and Education*, the teacher whose thinking is judiciously guided toward carefully selected ends engages in one aspect of the art of teaching, namely the art of thinking (MW 9: 177). Having an engaged, thinking, artistic teacher is one of the greatest gifts that a student can receive, Dewey believes. He identifies this love with a “love of inquiry into the puzzling and unknown” and with the “development of curiosity, suggestion, and habits of exploring and testing, which increases sensitiveness to questions” (LW 8: 156).

These eight loves—of others, contact with the young, learning, knowledge, one subject, communicating knowledge, arousing intellectual interests, and thinking—are obviously interwoven and may reflect what we often call a love of teaching. Table 3.1 summarizes these loves and suggests one way each is relevant to teaching. These loves also serve two immediate purposes. First, it makes central Dewey’s volitional, rational, and communitarian conceptions of love—love as a thoughtful concern for promoting the individual and common good or the good of others. We might also talk here of an affective love or ethic of care that is rooted in his thought. A volitional love or equal respect of students and a passionate love for interacting with

students, communicating knowledge to them, and arousing their intellectual curiosity seem to fit nicely with the idea that we should care for their well-being as people. Second, it addresses two common misconceptions about Dewey: (1) that he advocates a sentimental love of children that encourages teachers to allow students to follow their interests wherever they take them and (2) that he overemphasizes independent learning by students to the exclusion of valuing content and the involvement of teachers in the classroom. People who have drawn these later two conclusions have not enjoyed the opportunity of reading Dewey's works.

QUOTES AND QUESTIONS

In Chapter 2, we discussed briefly art as an activity. So, observing that the teacher as lover is involved in numerous activities that may be done artistically is no minor discovery. The activities of communicating, learning, discovering, and arousing interest, to mention just a few, can all be pursued artistically. But there are other sides of art, including the product that we noted in passing. An exploration of the idea of art as a product is now in order. To begin, we should admit that many people may not particularly like the idea of the student being viewed as a product, artistic or not. This is understandable because people differ in kind from other objects of art—for example, paintings, compositions, plays, statues, buildings, and poetry—in that we are living creatures who think and choose for ourselves. This precise point is noted by Dewey in “The Classroom Teacher” (1924) when he declares:

When we come to dealing with living things, especially living characters that vary as human individuals do, and attempt to modify their individual dispositions, develop their individual powers, counteract their individual interests, we have to deal with them in an artistic way, a way which requires sympathy and interest to make all of the needed adjustments to the particular emergencies of the act. The more mechanical a thing is, the more we can manage it; the more vital it is, the more we have to use our observation and interest in order to adjust ourselves properly to it. It is not easy, in other words, to maintain a truly artistic standard, which is, of course, the real business of the teacher. (MW 15: 180)

He complements this thought in “Philosophies of Freedom” (1928) by saying:

A genuine energetic interest in the cause of human freedom will manifest itself in a jealous and unremitting care for the influence of social institutions upon the attitudes of curiosity, inquiry, weighing and testing evidence. I shall begin to believe that we care more for freedom than we do for imposing our own beliefs upon others in order to subject them to our will, when I see that the main purpose of our schools and other institutions is to develop powers of unremitting and discriminating observation and judgment. (LW 3: 113)

A Teacher Snapshot

In a sense, may the act of thinking also be an art product? Can you describe a teacher or colleague who both exemplifies and cultivates this product?

Here we see Dewey's notion of love of or respect for others. Love for others requires, among other things, a concern for their freedom, the development of their abilities including the ability to think, and the building of schools that promote all three—loving others, nurturing freedom, and encouraging reflection. If we genuinely love or respect students, then, we will not exploit or manipulate them, either for personal or ideological ends. Love will not let us do that—or at least, if it is sufficiently strong it will not allow us to habitually use students as we would objects or financial resources. We cannot live our lives through students if we genuinely respect them. A passionate love, too, would seem to keep us from trying to make our students replicas of us: "Craftsmanship to be artistic in the final sense must be 'loving'; it must care deeply for the subject matter upon which skill is exercised" (LW 10: 54).

These thoughts may be seen as placing contradictory and unrealistic expectations on the teacher. Can a teacher really be all that Dewey suggests? Is it correct, for instance, to say that a teacher who lacks love for a specific subject matter cannot be educationally artistic? What does this imply about early childhood and elementary teachers who are required to teach several subjects? Are there down-to-earth points of comparisons between artists who work with material objects and artists who work primarily with humans? Are there dangers in the loves, the passions that Dewey encourages or, rather, expects of the teacher?

Several other questions ask for attention: Are there other loves that you think Dewey should discuss? How might his ideas about the eight loves inform the selection of aspiring teachers? In what ways, if any, should the ongoing

development of seasoned professionals be influenced by these loves? What are the implications of these loves for multicultural education and the ethical development of students? How do we avoid parental love for our students and at the same time care deeply for them? Indeed, should we avoid a parent-type love for our students?

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHER

In Chapter 2, we saw that Dewey's thought about the art of teaching and the teacher as artist covers a number of elements, including the ideas that art is a demanding activity and is based on our nurturing our insight, sympathy, tact, and executive powers, and shaping skills as well as ensuring that the qualities we seek to develop in our students characterize the educational process itself. Now he tells us more but, in a sense, takes us back to Chapter 1, where we saw his emphasis on enthusiasm being a quality of the creative artist. Being an enthusiastic, even passionate, lover of learning, knowledge, a particular subject, interacting with students, communicating knowledge to them, and arousing their intellectual curiosity ties together his thinking and fits marvelously with the idea of being a creative teacher. If we are artists in classrooms or, alternatively, successful teachers, we need to love being with children, a love that leads to learning about each student so that we can artistically personalize our teaching. Moreover, we need to refine our thinking abilities so that we become intellectual artists and practice and encourage the art of thinking with our students. Plus, there is the implication that our passion for the development of students as products of our educational art is not inconsistent with our respect for them as people who need the freedom to think for and, thereby, to create themselves. Teachers, too, are creators and become co-creators with students but do not impose themselves on those in their care. Here we seem to have a creation paradox: We help create a person who also helps to create us—and a person who goes far beyond our contributions as she intelligently selects her own values and learns to think for herself. Students, then, ultimately but not necessarily immediately have the final say, in that their interests and growth determine what they will feel, think, believe, choose, and become in an artist's classroom. Their freedom—like that of the teacher—is both enhanced and limited by the ethics of a democratically responsible classroom and school.

A SUMMATIVE EXERCISE**Table 3.2** The Artistic Teacher

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Understandings</i>	<i>Qualities</i>	<i>Activities</i>
3			

READINGS

“Philosophies of Freedom,” (LW 3, 92–114).

“To Those Who Aspire to the Profession of Teaching,” (LW 13, 342–346).

“What Is the Matter with Teaching?”, (LW 2, 116–123).

NOTE

1. In Dewey’s day, preschool—and often kindergarten—was rare and not a widely accepted idea. It would be consistent with his overall thought to suggest that preschool teachers need this sixth love, too. In fact, it appears safe to say that all teachers should be expected to have a love for a particular subject, even when they teach several different subjects as early and elementary educators often do. Dewey wants children of all ages to learn with teachers who have a passion for and aptitude in a particular field of inquiry or creativity. Their passion and thinking are means of spreading the former and fostering the latter: How can a teacher who shows no sign of caring for a subject communicate interest and enthusiasm for it to others, or even motivate students except by coercion?

