ELEVEN

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Gambling, Love, and Growth

With Michael Ventimiglia

I once knew a gamblin' man
He said, "Gamblin' seldom pays,
But livin', livin' day to day,
It helps to have some gamblin' ways.

George Gritzbach, "If By Chance"[1]

In previous chapters I have turned to the experiential stories of others to deal with the philosophical issues at hand. In this chapter, I join Michael Ventimiglia in drawing on our own experiences as teachers to provide an existential baseline for our discussion of the art of educating. Teaching and learning, when seriously undertaken, are difficult tasks. No simple recipes will yield excellence in teaching. Yet, some attitudinal orientations seem crucial to effective teaching, even as the specifications of teaching styles remain different. Among these we would include the willingness to risk oneself as a teacher. It is this willingness, we believe, that provides the room for students likewise to risk themselves in their attempts to learn and grow. To put it in cruder terms, we believe that those of us who teach from within the tradition of American philosophy must be both gamblers and lovers.

Every year in midspring the World Series of Poker is held in Las Vegas at Binion's Horseshoe. The best players in the world assemble

at this legendary casino to play not five-card draw or seven-card stud, but what was until recently a relatively little-known game called No-Limit Texas Hold 'Em. Texas Hold 'Em is a game that allows any player to risk his or her entire fortune on any hand at any time. Fortunes that may have been slowly accumulated by hours of intense calculation are matter-of-factly risked in their entirety until, finally, two or three players remain, waiting patiently for a chance to risk it all for about ten million dollars. To outsiders this may seem arbitrary or extreme, but gamblers understand. Gamblers understand that a game which did not require this sort of risk could not produce, at its conclusion, the world's greatest poker player.

Gamblers understand what we will call the difference between betting and gambling. Buy a book on how to play poker, and it will make you a good bettor. You will learn the odds of drawing a winning card, and you will learn how to compare those odds with the probable payoff of the pot. If you play with average players, you will usually win. But if you play with a good player, you will lose. And this is because you will not have learned how to gamble. A good poker player will see that you have hedged your bets, that you lack the faith in yourself necessary to risk what you have for what you want, and she will exploit your lack of nerve. As Emerson said apropos gambling: "Higher natures overpower lower ones by affecting them with a certain sleep" (CW, 3: 55). To win at Binion's, you have to be a good bettor, for sure, but you also have to be a good gambler. You may not win if you risk it all, but you will lose if you don't.

This lesson may strike us as vaguely familiar. Gambling requires a commitment in the absence of absolute certainty, and this gambler's spirit is at the heart of the various American conceptions of experience. For Peirce, the cosmos was shot through with an irreducible element of chance spontaneity. As Dewey said on many occasions, ours is an aleatory and precarious world. And most famously, of course, James offered a word for risk in "The Will to Believe," exposing W. K. Clifford's "ethics of belief" as a fear of "being duped" and arguing that "there are . . . cases where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming."[2] There are cases, in other

words, where it is necessary to risk failure for a chance at success. The game at Binion's is not for the obsessive; it demands a willingness to face loss. In life, as in No-Limit Texas Hold 'Em, we have a stake and we play for keeps.

This theme of risk runs far deeper than the explicit treatments of James and Dewey. The broad motif of American optimism is not, after all, the belief that things are good, but the belief that things can be better. This belief, if it is genuine, is a gamble. It is the decision to commit oneself to a possible future rather than to compromise with a certain present. Amelioration, growth, faith—all of these require that we stake ourselves upon possibilities, that we see ourselves not merely in terms of who we are, but in terms of who we may be. Moral, political, religious, and aesthetic ideals are not idle and irrelevant professional choices; they are the conditions of what is at stake for us. We gamble our ideals in our actions, experimenting with their cash values in a world where others also risk ideals or their absence. To fail when one has staked oneself on the future, a future self or a future community, *is* to lose oneself. It is this risk that lends profundity to American optimism, to a way of being in the world that can easily be confused with a naïveté resulting from a poverty of experience. Irony, cynicism, skepticism—though these may appear to be signs of the wisdom of accumulated experience—are, we would suggest, in fact fearful compromises with the actual. They are bets. They are bets that what we know now and who we are now is about the best we can do, and they are, we believe, antithetical to what is best about American philosophy. Failure to gamble may be a "safe bet," but its consequences are readily recognizable—it stunts the possibility of our growth and deadens our everyday lives. As bettors, we are no longer alive to our possibilities—we resign ourselves to the comforts and amusements Dewey described.

Our purpose in these remarks is not to provide an adequate phenomenology of existential risk. Rather, we want to note that in American philosophy, gambling and risk underwrite the very possibility of our growth as individuals and communities, and therefore of learning, teaching, and administrating. We want to stress that the risk re-

quired for human growth can be terrifying. That it is a genuine gamble with real consequences. And our suspicion is that many of our personal flaws—our dogmas, our intolerances, our addictions—are often the consequence of the fear of risk, of our fundamental insecurity. Learning, teaching, and administering, when seriously undertaken, are difficult tasks. No simple recipes will yield excellence. Yet, some attitudinal orientations for these arts seem crucial, even as the specifications of individual styles remain different. Among these we would include the willingness to risk oneself. It is this willingness, we believe, that provides the room for teachers or students likewise to risk themselves in their attempts to learn and grow. To put it in cruder terms, we believe that those of us who teach and lead from within the tradition of American philosophy must be both gamblers and lovers.

If this is the case, it seems to us that the practical question becomes how it is that we *ever* find the courage for such risk. One route to producing such courage is characterized in Charles Peirce's story of "agapism," the presence of cherishing love. Let us turn, then, to a brief account of the Peircean claim that "growth comes only from love" as a way of developing the discussion concerning our vocation as educators. We will then discuss why the art of teaching has been endangered by administrative and pedagogical orientations that are unduly risk-aversive.

The American Transcendentalists believed that human education was a process of growth. They rejected the Lockean "sensualism" that described persons as surfaces on which an educator might imprint a world. This linking of education and organic growth was taken up by the pragmatic thinkers and was brought to fruition in Dewey's *Democracy and Education*. It is not entirely accidental that Dewey had been reading both Peirce's work, including "Evolutionary Love," and James's *Psychology* in the years preceding the publication of *Democracy and Education*. Both focused on the importance of growth. Peirce, however, also focused on love (*agape*) as an agency that could provide the courage to risk that is necessary for growth.

Agape has been associated with growth at least since its Christian popularization, and probably before. Through the use of the noun in the Greek translation of the Old Testament and eventually the New Testament, especially in the works of John and Paul, agape became nearly synonymous with the love of the Christian God for his creation. While the precise meaning of agape has undergone subtle transformations and is likewise the subject of various interpretations, it is generally summarized as a selfless or nonacquisitive love that seeks to nourish the growth and foster the welfare of its object. There are two distinctive features of agape that are useful for understanding this connection between growth and love.

On the one hand, agape takes no account of the merit of its object. Agape is an unconditional love; it does not seek to coerce its object by threatening the withdrawal of its care and support. Agape loves, as Peirce notes, even that which is hostile to it (CP, 6:321). The claim that Christianity is a religion of the sinner rather than the righteous is, when generalized and secularized, a claim about the nature of agape. Agape is a commitment. It does not enforce its will through the threat of its withdrawal. In practice, this provides the beloved with a freedom to choose his or her own ends.

On the other hand, while agape does not seek to dominate its object, it is not uninterested in its object, and traditionally agape has been associated with the power to transform the ideals of its object into ideals harmonious with its own. This active aspect of agape has been represented in the Christian tradition as the love of God for each individual, which is experienced as a "grace" or a love that persuades the individual to express this love to himself. God's love for even that which is hostile is thus transformed into a *human* love for even that which is hostile, thus establishing the ideal of the love of the enemy. In "Evolutionary Love" Peirce draws on the work of Henry James, Sr., to make the same point: creative love's "tenderness *ex vi termini* must be reserved only for what intrinsically is most bitterly hostile and negative to itself" (CP, 6:287).

Agape, in short, offers a "directed freedom." When we apply the theoretical considerations above to our experience, we find support

for a connection between agape and growth. Specifically, we see that it is in the space of agape that we—as leaders, teachers, or students—are willing to take the risks that are necessary for growth. Anyone who has raised children will recognize, either from success or from failure, the experiential truth of this. Why is this so?

Growth is a moment of discontinuity with one's habits, with one's everyday way of being in the world. Growth involves moments of self-aversion and requires a revision of the self. These are moments of vulnerability and, consequently, of risk. To be detached from some portion of our habitual being is to be to that degree defenseless. It is this vulnerability that Plato repeatedly alludes to in the allegory of the cave. But agape, insofar as it approaches its ideal of unconditionality, gives us the courage to risk failure. This is because agape provides us with a certainty of its own, the certainty that failure will not result in a loss of its support. Agape is not attracted to its object because of merit, and so it does not withdraw its support because of failure. Agape allows us to risk belief in future possibilities because we are certain that, whatever else, the love will remain. The point is this: When we feel the love of other human beings, we take chances because we know this love will not be withdrawn if we fail. Agape gives us the feeling of certainty that is necessary to risk uncertainty, the feeling that is necessary for an existential gamble.

Following Peirce's lead, let us consider directly how agape operates in the classroom. Consider how our students learn and grow most when they feel secure enough to risk thinking or offering something of their own, even a simple question. When we create a classroom environment that is tolerant of mistakes, we encourage, literally *encourage*, our students to grow, through their efforts and struggles, beyond these mistakes. Their risk of failure is the condition of their success. When we create the opposite environment, one in which students feel that they may not err, they risk nothing and gain nothing. They leave more or less as they came in, and, in the end, become cynical about the value of education. When the students do not feel themselves being transformed in our classes, they naturally assume that the ends and ideals they possess are final, and they demand from

us the marketable skills that will help them secure these ends. When we are not concerned for *their* growth, *their* integrity, we ourselves become a means to the corporate model of education they bring to the classroom. It is through a caring love for our students that they grow and come to appreciate philosophy and the humanities as truly liberating.

In his essay "The Law of Mind," Peirce noted that the "breaking up of habit and renewed fortuitous spontaneity will, according to the law of mind, be accompanied by an intensification of feeling" (CP, 6:264). It is in our moments of growth, in other words, that we feel the most alive. Thoreau's metaphors of walking and wildness are intended to capture just this—to be alive is to live in transience, to grow. Such is the life of both teaching and learning in which we American philosophers engage. The intensity of feeling that accompanies the extension of our faculties and our human interrelations is the joy of life. Why, then, are these moments so rare? Because they require that both we and those who have a stake in our performances take a gamble. They require a risk, and we are all too often afraid. It is within a network of agapic orientations that the courage for pedagogical risk can be found. For students to become gamblers, willing to risk themselves, teachers must care enough to take their own risks. For teachers to be willing to risk themselves, their administrators must likewise risk an agapic orientation toward teachers. Let us consider this gambling attitude at length in a somewhat less abstract fashion, looking in turn at each of the features we have emphasized for the art of educating in our contemporary culture.

Creative Teaching: Gambling at Work

Love engenders both security *and* openness; this is what underwrites a student's willingness to risk and to learn. This requires teachers to be creative—to take risks against a background of stability. Consider the Athenian and the Spartan as particular modifiers of one's teaching style: Athens represents the spirit of risk and spontaneous cultural revision; Sparta, that of stability and conservative cultural mainte-

nance. Over the course of Western history, assessments of good teaching have tended toward the one or the other as an exemplar. That each side routinely gets a hearing indicates that there is some truth in each. This suggests that instead of residing in either extreme, the best teaching lives within the tension between these two spirits. It is in this tension that creative or experimental teaching—a teaching of love and risk—may arise; it is a teaching that at once requires the teacher's Athenian autonomy and spontaneity as well as Spartan responsibility and stability.

Teaching in America seems presently in the midst of a movement toward mechanical pedagogy. Both in the ways we teach our teachers and in our habits of administering our schools, we are tending toward a Spartan extreme. This mechanistic approach brings to mind a concern Jacques Barzun gave voice to some years ago: "Teaching is not a lost art but regard for it is a lost tradition."[3] There is an artfulness, an element of creativity, in good teaching that requires teachers to be more than technicians. This is not an abstract principle but a truth found in the experience of teaching. Simply put, it is premised on the ways in which our best teachers have taught us.

Locating Autonomy and Risk

One clear way to diminish the artfulness of teaching is to retract teachers' autonomy so that they cannot exercise any creativity. By "teacher autonomy" we mean some basic things. We have in mind, for example, a teacher's ability to present materials in ways that she finds significant and effective. She must be able to establish a variety of relations with students. She must be free to create or help create the curriculum that she teaches. Having developed a curriculum, a teacher needs also to be able to bend it, to expand it, or to move spontaneously beyond it. Teacher autonomy means control over course, classroom, and even what have come to be called "course objectives." Such autonomy is one condition of the possibility of creative teaching. As Gill Helsby puts it, "Since teaching is such a complex activity which demands creativity and non-routine decision

making, it will require a greater degree of trust in the capacity of teachers to act as semi-autonomous professionals, rather than as compliant technicians in need of constant direction, monitoring, and inspection."[4]

In college and university settings we have come to take this sort of autonomy for granted, though it is worth noting that even in higher education, the tide is turning toward more centralized and programmatic control of course description and development. In our primary and secondary schools, however, teacher autonomy is no longer an obvious or welcome feature. A managerial or "corporate" style or mood has settled on the education industry.[5] Such a mood makes sense in a culture that has become concerned about the ineffectiveness, inefficiency, and lack of accountability of many of its schools. But, however much we sympathize with these concerns, we cannot overlook the damage this managerial, Spartanesque outlook is visiting on the art of teaching and, consequently, on the art of learning. Love and gambling seem to have taken a back seat to law and order. In terms of our earlier distinction, it is a bettor's attitude, not a gambler's.

The managerial attitude has altered the perception of teachers in the minds of administrators. Teachers are no longer professionals. Teachers are "labor" who, if they display proper credentials, can be treated as interchangeable parts in educational structures. This is reflected, for example, in Ronald Rebore's assertion that the "'systems' approach to management . . . shifted the emphasis [in assessing teachers' work] from the traditional concept of teacher evaluation to the broader concept of employee appraisal management."[6] The terminological change is not innocent; being a "teacher" is quite distinct from being an "employee" whose appraisal is to be "managed." This outlook is becoming pervasive among administrators and, like many other features of contemporary education, it is slowly (and in some places quickly) working its way up into higher education.

Teachers are not blameless in this shift of outlook. Though I leave it to the historians to assess which is cause and which is effect, it is clear that the emergence of the managerial outlook in administrative

circles and the unionization of teachers go hand in hand. Unions, like administrative structures, impose constraints on teachers. Ironically, these constraints develop as part of the collective bargaining process, the process meant to protect and empower teachers. The problem is that unions borrow from industrial settings a very limited notion of the goals of collective bargaining: money, free time, good working conditions, and protection from being fired. The upshot is that teachers are now measured chiefly by their ability to survive (attain seniority) and not rock the boat (adapt to the negotiated union and administration rules). The current situation, in many instances, not only eliminates incentive for creative and excellent teaching, but also is an active incentive *not* to risk creativity or excellence.

The combination of administrative "managing" and unionization deprives teachers of control of the curriculum. Curriculum development for schools is now being turned over to specialists. This practice is not yet universal, but in many places it is already well entrenched. "Curriculum specialists" were first drawn from the ranks of teachers, but are now being trained independently in schools of education. The task of these specialists is to provide teachers with blueprints both for standards and objectives and for classroom management. With the contemporary focus on achieving a set of narrow standards, this means there is emerging a narrowing set of constraints on what and how teachers teach.[7] Thus, one school we know housed its fifth-grade curriculum in a three-inch-thick loose-leaf binder. Not only did it lay out the basic units and the objectives for each unit, but in confounding detail it told teachers how to direct discussions of specific readings and just how many minutes should be allotted to each task. It is a teach-by-numbers program; it aims low to achieve a more certain outcome. It is a safe bet with a predictably mediocre outcome. Meeting these formulas does not enable good teaching, nor does it provide an environment in which students are likely to risk real growth. Another source of control for curriculum specialists is the selection of texts and course materials. Such selection is not an innocent task, since it governs much of what takes place in a course.

The addition of "curriculum specialists," moreover, lowers teachers on the organizational flowchart. The specialists are given the status of lower-level administrators and inserted above teachers in a school's hierarchy. This makes it easier—and seemingly more reasonable—to take autonomy away from teachers who are perceived to be interchangeable laborers carrying out instructions from above. The premise seems to be that if we can automate our teachers and develop a smoothly running system, we will have improved education. In reality, the reverse is true.

When schools are like industries, good teachers appear *despite* the system, not *because* of it.[8] With Mercutio, we believe it is time to call for "a plague on both their houses"—the house of the administrative managers and the house of those teachers comfortable with their union status. The effect of both has been to reduce teacher autonomy and, consequently, to reduce teacher creativity and responsibility. Teaching is leaving the hands of the teachers, and this, as we see it and experience it, is the primary error of contemporary American education. In light of these developments, it is not surprising that the raft of so-called radical reforms offered since the mid-1950s has been uniformly ineffective: the content of teaching and learning that is constantly being addressed is actually less problematic than the structures and methods we use to effect the reforms. The problem, to recall Barzun's suggestion, is the loss of regard for the art of teaching. As Gene Maeroff, drawing from an essay by Diane Common, maintains:

> Reforms fail because the teacher is cast in "the role of the user rather than creator of curriculum, ideas, and materials. The ensuing power struggle between the reformers who would impose top-down change on the teachers rather than letting it come from teachers ends up producing no change at all."[9]

The question is one of ownership, not merely in the legal sense but in an experiential sense. It is the ownership Thoreau had in mind when in *Walden* he remarked that a home required more than a deed—it required a thorough attentiveness to the place one would

call "home." Teacher autonomy articulates itself best when the teacher owns her class in just this way. The physical space of the classroom often takes on the characteristics of a teacher—neat, rumpled, artsy, natural, and so forth. For good teaching, the ownership needs to extend to the curriculum and the social environment, to the entire fabric of the course and class. The teacher must be essentially at home with her curriculum and environment if she is to achieve her own possibilities as teacher. This will allow a teacher to take the risk of loving the students. It is not that one might not effectively appropriate and to some degree "own" someone else's curriculum. Good teachers prove able to substitute for other teachers with success, and we have seen good teachers adapt to curricula written and developed by others. Nevertheless, a deeper and more thorough sense of ownership develops when one creates and employs one's own curriculum. Familiarity is greater, commitment is more genuine, and the sense of responsibility is heightened. The same is true of classroom method and management.

A good teacher will be at home in her classroom. Nothing is more obvious and awkward to all involved than a teacher's discomfort in a classroom. Yet this is inevitable when teacher ownership is lost to a cookie-cutter version of classroom structure and presentation. Teachers must be free to create their own pedagogical atmospheres. The loss of autonomy entails some loss of ownership even among the best teachers; and the loss of ownership will have a gradually eroding effect on teacher authority. And the loss of authority is dreaded by all teachers; it marks the end of any possibility for establishing a learning environment.

Autonomy that underwrites the possibility of ownership and athomeness is not simply an intellectual ideal; it is an actual condition of good teaching. Good teachers experience both the need for and the enjoyable fruits of such autonomy. Why, then, in the course of Western history, have we on more than one occasion moved away from it? Why are we as a culture presently eager to diminish such autonomy, and why are we suspicious of the creative teaching it might generate? One dimension of a full answer to these questions returns us

to the question of a gambling way of life; like Athenian democracy, teacher autonomy is risky business. Teacher autonomy sets education at the feet of the teachers and leaves the outcomes up to them. In short, we risk living with the incoherent and loose-ended consequences of overly spontaneous, "creative" teachers.

If artful or creative teaching requires the risk generated by autonomy, and if that risk may turn out badly, we must ask what is the value of the risk and in what directions it might be limited. We can begin to answer this question by noting that none of the creative teachers with whom we have worked considered themselves avant-garde in the extreme sense of being cut off from and independent of all tradition. Thus, by "creative teaching" we do not mean randomly or radically "different" approaches to teaching, as if one would excuse oneself from history and tradition. Rather, we have in mind a genre of teaching that has been exemplified repeatedly, and thus has its own history. Socrates, Aristotle, and St. Augustine, whose styles vary drastically, might all be considered contributors to this history. So, too, the teachers whose experiences ground our present reflections—our own best teachers. The most fundamental risk these teachers accept is found in their willingness to confront both success and failure in the interest of teaching better. They risk themselves in being responsible for their work; they literally are willing to gamble as teachers. In this much they are not so different from creative artists in other arenas.

Creativity is not radical novelty in the sense that it is divorced from what precedes it. Nor is it a strictly causal result of antecedent events. John Dewey marks out the middle ground in which creativity may occur. It is the ground between sheer routine and sheer spontaneity. For Dewey the "enemies of the esthetic," and thus also of the creative, are the extremes of overdetermination and merely subjective arbitrariness:

> They [the enemies] are the humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure. Rigid abstinence, coerced submission, tightness on the one side

> and dissipation, incoherence and aimless indulgence on the other. (LW, 10:47)

Achieving this middle ground where creativity is possible is not an easy affair. The teacher must face both the instability of the environment and the uncertainty of his own ability to teach.

A course or a class in which a teacher is set free to teach, just because it is shot through with human experiences, constitutes a precarious environment, a site of risk, instability, and possibility. In this environment, a teacher encounters the normal contingencies of teaching. No matter how well a curriculum or teaching style has worked in the past, it may not suffice in a present classroom. No matter how effective a mode of delivery is for one group of students, it may fail in whole or in part with the next group. These are experiential truths for any teacher. In these instances, an autonomous teacher is called upon to create, to move spontaneously toward an aim or objective while keeping in mind one's funded experience. Moreover, students' moods shift from class to class; the creative teacher must become adept at sensing these moods and working with them to achieve her aims.

The kind of autonomy we described earlier generates the second source of risk: the teacher's freedom. An autonomous teacher is free of conventional constraints on his activities. He is also free from overdetermination by managing administrators of all levels. Furthermore, he is free of state determination such that he is free to explore standards as well as to draw on traditional or conventional standards. When a teacher embraces such autonomy, when it becomes his attitude, then creativity becomes a possibility. So does abject failure. This is the necessity of risk that attends a gambling outlook and creative teaching. The artful teacher faces the instabilities of the environment and of his self, and works to achieve fruitful consequences.

For those willing to face it, risk makes teaching an engaging occupation—it is a live form of gambling. The routinized, managerial version of teaching is simply uninteresting to a bright and energetic person—it is a bettor's endeavor. Discussions with exemplary stu-

dents since the 1980s concerning the teaching profession lead us to believe that this concern, as much as pay and social status, is what leads students to pursue other careers. A strong teacher confronts the challenges and accepts the possibility of failure. A sense of adventure attends the implementation of small curricular changes; an air of freshness is achieved when we revise, adapt, or in some cases throw out some feature of our teaching practice. Failure is an obstacle only when it is blindly ignored. That is, the teacher who fails lands in trouble if she dogmatically denies that failure has occurred and does not accept the responsibility to adjust. The engaged, experimental teacher understands up front that failure is an integral feature of experimentation and creative work. But she is willing to learn from failure, to scrap or revise a method or a text; she transforms failure into conditions for improvement. The gambling attitude allows one to fail without thinking that one is a failure. The risk created by autonomy thus brings teaching alive.

Despite its benefits, risk is often feared both by teachers and by administrators. It means that on some occasions one's minimal objectives may not be met. This fear is one of the key reasons why people want to return to a more controlled managerial style—why some choose to be bettors rather than gamblers. And in many cases it seems a just reaction to the pseudocreative teaching that is nothing more than personal arbitrariness. If teachers attempt to be creative by adopting the latest educational fad, they should expect severe responses. Such fads are akin to diet programs and gimmicks for curing one's golf slice. Nevertheless, living in fear of risk is an overreaction. The managerial programs that are suited to interchangeable teachers seek to eliminate risk by establishing mediocrity. They may lower the probability of serious failure in a course or class, but they do so only by eliminating the possibility of truly good teaching. This is the direction in which we have been moving for some time, and it continues to inhibit the recruitment of our very best students into teaching. They do not wish to become technicians—at least not without significantly higher pay and social status. The task is not to eliminate risk, but to attract and develop teachers who are willing and able to

face the risks of teaching well—we must find and set free those gambling teachers who can make teaching an adventure in learning.

Responsibility

The resistance to risk, and thus to creative teaching, occurs for several reasons. Occasionally the reasons are political. In conservative settings, for example, "creativity" is often taken to be a synonym for "liberal left." And in liberal settings, conservatives who defend vouchers or charter schools are actually accused of being unfairly innovative or simply of being elitist. But the creative teaching we have in mind is not politically affiliated; counterexamples abound, and in our own experiences a number of the best teachers with whom we have worked hold radically opposed political outlooks. While this seems a simple experiential truth, we mention it precisely because some find it very difficult to suppose that someone not of their political orientation could be a good, creative teacher.

Some administrators fear autonomous teachers because they are less easily "managed." Administrators are for the most part consummate bettors in the world of education, and a routinized teacher fits the managerial administrator's world better. This *is* a reason to fear creative teaching, but not a good reason—unless one values organizational stability more than good teaching and learning, unless one prefers betting to gambling.[10]

At bottom, resistance to creativity and its attendant risk is rooted in the belief that creative teachers either are or may become irresponsible. Creativity, some worry, leads to wild classrooms, loss of standards, and flimsy curricula. To return to Dewey's two enemies of the aesthetic and the creative, autonomy and risk help overcome the conventional, the routine, and the overly determinate. This encourages the second enemy, which cashes out as "dissipation, incoherence, and aimless indulgence." If "creating" is taken to mean "doing as you please," these features become live possibilities. This second enemy must be met by an acceptance of responsibility on the part of the teacher. It is here that the creative teacher establishes her limits of

risk. An autonomy that is not complemented and placed in tension by this responsibility will remain arbitrary, incoherent, and reckless. It will inevitably call out a reactionary response of the sort presently afoot in the guise of the social scientific management of teaching and teachers. It is just this responsibility, moreover, that provides the conditions for a loving, agapastic learning environment.

As Carl Hausman suggests, creativity occurs in the ongoing tension between risk and responsibility; an autonomous artist works in an environment and with a history.[11] Thus, Cézanne's work is not simply an abandonment of impressionism. Cézanne's painting grows out of impressionism; he creatively develops impressionist elements until they transform impressionism itself. Likewise, if one examines experimentation, one sees that creative development of hypotheses always occurs against a set of beliefs that remains relatively stable. Thus, creativity is *responsible* to a body of working practices and beliefs, and this is no less true for the creative teacher.

In teaching, creative classroom performance and creative curriculum development must take place against the background, or funded experience, of successful practices, the history of a discipline, and various intellectual inheritances. Teachers can be more genuinely creative when they know and are familiar with both traditional pedagogical practices and the skills, methods, and histories of their disciplines. To teach mathematics, for example, one must be able to do the math. Teachers must become familiar with the variety of problem-solving skills that math requires. Teachers should also be familiar with the implications and uses of mathematics; and this familiarity is most easily achieved when one has a conceptual grasp of mathematical principles. This conceptual grasp is distinct from the ability to work problems. Finally, mathematics has a history—it employs the Pythagorean theorem and Cartesian coordinates. Erudition is no guarantor of creative teaching, but when these features are studied and appropriated by a math teacher, his confidence and potential for creative teaching increase dramatically. The same can be said for the sciences. In the scientific disciplines there is an added emphasis on method and the know-how of the laboratory. The science teacher

who commands these and also has a grasp of the history and contemporary import of a particular science has met some of the conditions for excellent teaching.

The humanities likewise place demands on a creative teacher. Good reading and writing skills are neither natural nor automatic; they should be part of the humanities teacher's toolbox. Teachers should also have good familiarity with the history and inherited content of their discipline. In the humanities, however, suspicion of creative teaching runs very deep. People worry that choices in literary or historical texts are too "creative," especially when some version of a canon is threatened. A narrow agenda is suspected of driving the selection. Sometimes this suspicion is justified. But the response should not be to revert to some conventional canon out of habit or dogmatic tendency. This simply returns us to the opposite extreme; Dewey's middle ground must still be sought. Creative teaching, again, needs to be clearly distinguished from both automated teaching and sheer difference-mongering.

Let us consider the selection of either a Shakespearean text or a Toni Morrison novel for a literature course. Suppose we choose the Shakespeare merely because we would like a traditional agenda to reign and because his work is already listed on someone's unreflective list of "good literature." And suppose, on the other side, we choose Morrison's novel simply because it breaks the traditional canon and it appears on someone's dogmatic list of "politically correct" literature. In both cases, the selection, from the teacher's point of view, is arbitrary and uncreative. The selections can become creative only when the choice itself is informed by, and thus is responsible to, the history of literature and literary theory. This places a significant responsibility on anyone who wishes to become a creative teacher: the responsibility for knowing things. Acceptance of this responsibility is necessary for the full ownership of one's curriculum.

Either Shakespeare or Toni Morrison can be a good choice or a poor one—it depends on what enters into the decision. And the quality of that decision will become evident in the classroom. Shakespeare can be taught in a dull, mechanical way, or it can be brought alive

through attention to textual detail, historical setting, and universal human elements. The teacher who shirks the work and care needed for this attentiveness runs the risk of making Shakespeare seem like a foreign, arbitrary, and conservative selection. Morrison's work, too, can be taught in a heavy-handed political way or in ways that engage a much wider audience. Those who are students of literature and its theory see in Morrison's novels something exemplary *within* this tradition, even as the novels revise the tradition itself.[12] In both cases it is incumbent upon the teacher to make decisions based on study and not on cultural habit or trendiness.

One element of a teacher's lovingness enters at this portal. In assessing creativity in art, Dewey says, "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). This, we suggest, seems no less true in teaching. Passion brings a teacher's subject matter to life. A teacher's passion is infectious and easily engenders the student's interest. When a teacher's passion for his subject matter is genuine and committed, it shows itself and transforms students; they, too, become believers in its importance. This touch of passionate interest in how and what one teaches transforms the responsibility for knowing things into something more than what we have come to call "professional development." The teacher's passion adds a confessional note to which students' ears are well attuned. The list of teachers who have inspired our own learning in this way is not particularly long, but it is absolutely unforgettable.

Thus, the creative teacher's responsibility begins with the obligation to study and comes to fruition in exercising judgment in practice. As the teacher experiments with texts, modes of presenting ideas, and so forth, she must test these by means of her funded knowledge of teaching and of the discipline. This is not a matter of recipes or formulas; the responsibility has to do with developing a sort of practical judgment through learning, and this judgment is underwritten by a teacher's passion for the ideas at work. A creative teacher must be able to judge when her creative shifts or hypotheses are failing.

Just as administrators are apt to shy away from the *risks* of creative teaching, so teachers are likely to shy away from its *demands*. Creative teaching implies a heavy responsibility for the teacher. This is as important at the primary and secondary levels as at the level of higher education, though the contemporary educational establishment does not seem to think so. Meeting this responsibility at all levels is the only way for a teacher to establish a nonarbitrary authority. Just asserting authority as a matter of organizational status has never worked. Students and colleagues alike find out very quickly when teachers have not accepted the responsibility of learning their craft and caring for their discipline. We need again only recall our own learning experiences—the hollowness of irresponsible teachers is evident. Creative teaching cannot in this pragmatic fashion be mistaken for flash and cheap novelty. The authority earned by responsible learning is the complement to freedom in establishing a teacher's ownership of a classroom and a course. Responsible teachers become confident in their abilities to develop a curriculum, to teach a class, and ultimately to judge the successes and failures they encounter. It is these last features, the practical judgment and the willingness to employ it, that prevent creative teachers from becoming arrogant and dogmatic know-it-alls. And this willingness must be coupled with the teacher's second dimension of lovingness—concern for her students. Risk and responsibility must be undertaken with an outlook that is focused elsewhere than on one's own self-interest, and this brings us back to our earlier discussion of agape and learning.

It is not requisite that teachers show some openly emotive, visible love; rather, the love must simply be part and parcel of all they do in preparing a curriculum, presenting materials, or dealing with students.[13] It is precisely this steady undercurrent of concern that attracts us to Mr. Chips; it is this persistent love that disposes students to write, years later, of a teacher's crucial influence on their growth.

Most important, as we noted earlier, the teacher's agape permits a student freedom to create and to fail, but not so much freedom as to be left alone; it provides constraints within which a student may learn, but it does not dominate the student. Peirce's description of

the agapastic development of his own thoughts provides an apt analogy: "It is not by dealing out cold justice to the circle of my ideas that I can make them grow, but by cherishing and tending them as I would the flowers in my garden" (EP, 1:354). The creative, loving teacher aims, in her best moments, to inspire creative learners—not learners who arbitrarily pursue their own interests, but students who understand the responsibility to learn, who develop some passions for inquiry, and who gradually come to grips with the autonomy that will ultimately be demanded of them.

Our present trend toward managerial control of teaching and teachers fears the freedom of teachers and distrusts teachers to accept the responsibility that comes with freedom. It also tends to neglect the two kinds of love in our best teachers. But as William James persisted in teaching us, experience is the final test, and it is there we should cast our attention. Theoretical models indeed become empty concepts when they ignore what stares us in the face. The risk, responsibility, and love of creative teaching are precipitates of our experiences in education. Our students can tell us who their best teachers are without recourse to the instruments of the social sciences. We as a culture need to develop a genuine respect for the art of teaching and to develop a demand for the kinds of creative teaching we have enjoyed; we cannot afford to encourage the notion that teachers are interchangeable technicians. In doing so, we might meet some basic standards, but we will not teach or learn much. We will be very good bettors but lousy gamblers—and we will pay a very severe price in the long run. To avoid this consequence, we must take to heart as humanists and as teachers the gambling ways that enable both the art of teaching and the art of learning.