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Unconscious Teacher models in Teacher Training

by Mario Rinvoluceri, Pilgrims

Ephraim Weintraub, an outstanding teacher trainer working in Jerusalem, spends a good part of the year with initial trainees working on the ghosts of past teachers they each carry round in their heads. Ephraim is as much worried by the 'heroes' and 'heroines' that trainees have in their minds as by past 'demon' teachers. He tells the story of one girl who simply could not find her own teaching style because she was unconsciously living up to the model offered to her by a brilliant teacher she had had. The work they did together got this monster/heroine out of the hidden closets of the trainee's mind.

Let me express Weintraub's thought via an image: as a trainer you are wasting your time planting the seeds of new teaching ways until you have ploughed and harrowed the ground, uprooting previous growth. The interiorised and submerged images of past teachers are a large part of this past growth.

There was no point just telling 200 people in Zaragoza about what was going on the other end of the Mediterranean. We did a variety of things:

1. Each person totted up how many teachers s/he had worked with at primary/secondary and tertiary levels. The general answer was between sixty and one hundred.
2. Each person then estimated the number of hours s/he had spent with the teacher who had most influenced him/her.
3. I gave an example from my family life about the way people learn what is going on alongside what you are teaching much more securely than the stuff you are actually teaching. This is the main way that past teachers have influenced us.
4. Lynn Jackson from Madrid then told us about her tertiary level Spanish literature teacher, how much she loved her, and why. Sonia, her colleague, offered a counter-portrait of a primary school demon, Miss Manzini, who brutalised seven year olds. Sonia told us that finally Manzini got so patently bad she was sacked. Triumph for the kids.
5. Participants then worked in groups and did mimes of teachers they remembered - hand gestures, ways of walking, sitting, standing....This developed into recall of voices. More difficult for many people.
6. Working in threes, colleagues spoke for a minute on one of these teacher types:

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- my most insignificant teacher
- the teacher who was most like someone in my family at the time
- the teacher I remember with love and/or respect
- a teacher I disliked....
- any other category of teacher

The buzz in the room was animated.

7. The workshop closed with each person writing a five to seven sentence story about one of his/her teachers. The story could be a true happening or an invented anecdote. People read each other their stories.

Here are some good books to read if this area of thinking interests you:

<u>The Drama of the Gifted Child</u>)	
<u>Thou Shalt not be Aware</u>)	by Alice Miller
<u>For your own Good</u>)	

If you want to find out more about Weintraub's work write to him at:

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