

Ode to Teaching

"SOCRATES: You are a young rogue, as I said a moment ago, Menon, and now you ask me if I can teach you, when I tell you there is no such thing as teaching, only remembering. I see you want to show me up at once as contradicting myself. ...

[... later, after Socrates showed the slave boy, Menon that he could solve the length of the diagonal of a square to be the square root of 2 times the length of one side ...]

SOCRATES: Then in one who does not know, about things he does not know, there are true opinions about the things which he does not know?

MENON: So it appears."

- Plato, Meno (81B - 86E)

Do you want to teach?

You can't do that!

No person that I ever met can do that ...

teach ...

or can one ...

To do that you would have to bring students along.

You would have to lead them somewhere new.

You would have to show them something they didn't know.

But if they did not know - how could you tell them?

...

Besides, you would have to be supernatural.

Only someone supernatural could show students something they already knew.

If you are to teach, and they are to learn,
then you will be uncovering knowledge that was already inside.

You will have to lead them inside.

You will have to go where only they can take you -
to their own inner connections to knowledge.

So you will have to follow them!

But you would have to be supernatural to follow students in order to
teach them,

because you would be leading while following.

And that would take real genius.

...

Now, how many teachers have you had
that were successful at that?

I, for one have had many.

...

John Bickart
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