

Ann Belford Ulanov: Professor

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Having known Professor Ann Belford Ulanov since 1972 as teacher and mentor, as well as having the privilege of serving as her colleague, I want to comment on the gift and challenge she has entrusted to all of us as “teachers.”

In the spirit of a Freudian mourning I refer to Ann’s service as a teacher in the past tense. Indeed, although she continues as a Lecturer and Author and Jungian Analyst, in some formal sense her “Professorship” has ended. Mourning, not melancholia: as we join with those inspired by Ann, similarly as those celebrating Kanji Watanabe in Kurosawa’s *Ikiru* (“to live”).

Recollecting Watanabe-San singing, snow falling while seated on a swing in the newly established playground he had brought into life, Ann as a final act of mentorship would have us discover in our teaching, freeing play, work that is the free play of the imagination.

Many academicians are brilliant and highly published. Few possess that rarest of gifts: the capacity to teach in a manner in which true learning occurs. Ann possessed and exemplified that ability. For years I have pondered just exactly what it was that she did that so few do. Tutored at the feet of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, I wondered was it her having a novel paradigm, an embodied revolutionary style, or was it her being one who sought to liberate the learner from being a spongy blank slate to the status of co-learner, or these and something more. Though we “know well” what Freire and Kuhn presented, I suspect few of us have “bought in.” So easy to comprehend, so daunting to embody.

Freire, one might say, wisely followed the model of the Pauline charisms: each has an essential contribution, no one reducible to the other, no one superior to the other, and only when all are received and held in mutual subjugation do we begin to approach a valid understanding. No voice matters more than another. Only if all voices are valued can what we know adequately be anywhere in the field of true knowing. What might secure us all into signing onto this approach? For Paul it was the awareness of the Spirit activated as we have assembled in genuine mutuality. For the Gospel writers it was the sentiment expressed in “where two or three have gathered in my name, I am in their midst...”: sheltered under the embrace of one who came to serve and not to be served, under the expansive cloak of Mother Mary, we enhance and foster one another’s learning. Still, far easier grasped than done, like some un-lived firmly held dogma.

Kuhn sagely observed that all models are limited and as such cannot readily acknowledge what does not fit, yet each model would claim to explain the misfit. And here too we can see the approach to learning that Ann exemplified: “explain the misfit?” The misfit is not to be explained, discounted, expunged; rather, the

model is to be seen as in deficit as it has failed to take in and be transformed by the misfit. So Ann veered toward a new model of teaching, a fresh paradigm.

Was it just “Ann,” simply her? Of course! And yet there are hints of how we might work toward what she was endeavoring for. Not that we become “Ann like”. This is like thinking one might become Christ, or any great leader, Jung for that matter. All such leaders have scoffed at such an idea, much as it flatters. No, rather we might move toward our own version, which shall definitionally be novel, of what I suspect Ann, rooted in Tillich, was “doing” in her “being” a teacher.

Jung offers us a clue in his comments on *The Transcendent Function* as well as in his *The Psychology of the Transference*. In his explorations of the emergence of the transcendent function, Jung hypothesizes a dialog or exchange between two differentials which yields a novel third, or symbolic transformation which neither reduces the “two,” nor is simply “a” plus “b.” Rather, the emerging novel third integrates and transforms into something fresh that is neither “a” nor “b” but an altogether unexpected third. Nothing is lost, and more is present than just the sum of the parts. In such dialog, indeed, the divinity manifests: more than, yet expressing, the parts.

In his essay on the transference, Jung makes much of the participants in a process entering into a pre-existing, constellated by the intention of meeting, fountain in which both bathe as different yet equal, each truly valuing the other. In mutual subjection the two substances meet, both doctor and patient are in the bath with naked truth. Learner and teacher in the bath.

Again, many would profess to such beliefs as Jung espouses, but as realized they are as shockingly rare as those types of encounters now seen in a figure such as Pope Francis. Beyond the rhetoric, there is the actual living: what does it mean genuinely to submit to the other, to realize that one’s “knowledge” often blocks one’s grasp of what the other means or says, and that, yet, one must attend receptively, longingly to the other, so that thus both might experience revelation.

Ann very much taught from this perspective. Namely, not just being the humble self-effacing teacher seeking to empower the participants: all (students) have a voice, the teacher is simply to listen and affirm. No, rather “all” do have a voice, including the teacher. And all must seek to offer, and experience their own voice, even if suspecting subjectively that one is a misfit, such misfitness becomes part of the kindling that shall not misfire, but be fired up as the attitude of hearing all voices and having a forth and back is sustained. Fire. As a learner, one experiences the fires of cleansing and scouring, as a co-learner all experience the fire, a heat that does not consume, instead, with Ann as teacher, remolds what was previously held into something new for all.

One might say Ann longed to honor the soul, within all and within the group. By engaging the misfit, the “non consciously welcomed,” and wrestling with it, something new could come. In exchanges with Ann, one knew they had been honored, and heard, and respected enough to be engaged with difference. One suspects such an art was possible only because Ann daily found such engagement from within. So herein another challenge. Like all those things we are told can be done daily in just fifteen minutes.

Daunting: not only are we invited to welcome the other, and to welcome our own otherness, and to go back and forth in a genuine and non-patronizing manner, but to so do, as teachers (learners also if learning is to be imbibed and vitalizing like the new wine it is), we must daily devote attention to the voices within ourselves, taking time not just to research, but to insearch. If we attend little to such processes, then little, no matter what we advertise and claim to know, will occur within a particular course. “Give us our Daily Bread.” But where is there enough time for this? Hard enough to draft a syllabus, or prepare a class, or read the materials that one has required. And the pay, well, quite modest, so where then shall we get the dough to buy the bread? “Not enough time”: herein an internal colloquy for the teacher challenged by a proverbially impossible situation, one potentially yielding such inner presence that one can indeed teach “being attuned to all.” Ah, perhaps this was the meaning of Ann’s disciplined availability, use of time.

What then is to be learned? Materials, of course. Much is achieved by being able to recite the poetry lesson, or play the notes. But as Auden observed about Freud, of more interest than the words of the poem are those phrases wherein, through one’s stumbling, the alive peeks out. And as Winnicott reflects on technique, forever we practice the notes, and then one day music pours forth. Years before Ann, I was blessed to have as a professor of ethics a lecturer who was so on fire with the material that we barely moved beyond the third chapter (of fifteen) of the material, his notes, before the semester was over. Still what he made clear was that all of ethics, (anticipating what we now associate to Levinas) came first. If we could not figure out how to be with each other in ways in which no other got dropped, we could certainly not do metaphysics or epistemology or the history of philosophy. And if we could not do philosophy then attempting theology was doomed. To do theology we necessarily must have arrived at the posture vis-à-vis the Divinity and the community that ethics calls for: in the face of the divinity we need to not drop ourselves as we hold out our hands to catch the divine sparks. As well as within the community—*lex orandi, lex credendi*—our being together in prayer as genuinely efficacious becomes a net coming into being so that our beliefs can truly be. In our experience of Ann’s practice as teacher, we knew the arising of new belief.

Challenging: that the professor “betray” the supposed subject matter (the syllabus) for the true subject matter (the learning).

In Ann’s case, her willingness to prioritize the process actually allowed the syllabus to be realized. Instead of working against “resistance” and other such issues—the out of tune student—by working with them, learning became both more efficient and solidly embodied and transformative. This is not a case of running a class like a psychoanalytic session (misguided at that), or a Rogerian evocation. This is a case of faith in the matter, the matter of the body, the body of material, the bodies of the learners, the body of life going forward yielding in such motion new birth. Ann had firm faith in her own interior process, predictably bringing her to her own edges, and firm faith in the precision of engaging the text as it is rather than as we would have it be, and firm faith that much as we learners might complain about having to struggle with so much text, or having to

articulate and disclose our knowing and unknowing, such engagement was what teaching was all about.

I concur.

Weekly Bach awakened by the Spirit composed a fresh Cantata. Weekly, for semester after semester, year after year, decade after decade, Ann created a new skin for the wine that might come forth, no simple recycling of old notes. And she did not know what music might come into being. Knowing in faith, she could not know, and we all, being thus known, could come to awareneses our poetic stumblings hinted forth. A new verse. And she would have us now as teachers proceed in a way that of necessity must be different as it is ours not hers. Yet bathing in such dialog between us and our students, between us and the text, between us and the outlawed portions called not-me in us and in our students: herein, living water.

Recollecting Eliot: "Fare forward, O voyagers.," we may melancholically wonder: "fare well, Professor", how shall we voyage without you, Ann? And yet, instructing up to the final moments of your professorial class, Ann, you still mentor and gift us, mourning becoming teacherly playing: there is fresh passage with you, Ann, so we sing "fare forward, traveller."