A Rhetorical Study Concerning Leo Buscaglia

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How often have you been hugged (or even touched) by a teacher? How often do teachers put aside the red pencil and discuss only the correct spelling words or give Suzy a pat on the back for the creative way that she completed her math problems? Not often enough, if we are to listen to Dr. Leo Buscaglia.¹

Dr. Buscaglia has recently become renowned for his lectures and workshops concerning love. A basic precept of his requires hugs and touching to prove the very existence of you.² This charismatic gentleman can have an audience of thousands up and hugging with a few, well-chosen, simple phrases. His identification with those to whom he is speaking rarely fails in its goal and people feel as if they can accomplish anything after an evening with "Dr. Hug."³ Dr. Buscaglia's ability to create this fervor over a while relatively new, known teaching strategy makes him all the more intriguing for researchers and critics.

What quality allows this fifty-ish college professor to touch an audience as he does? This study is an attempt to define the persuasive approaches used by Dr. Buscaglia to encourage more extensive affective classroom instruction. Also to be discussed are the audience's role in his success and the effectiveness of his speeches in motivating his audiences to action. Dr. Buscaglia's mode of speaking is eclectic and encompasses several approaches.
Various articles and methodologies have been utilized in this endeavor, however, the bases of this study are the concepts of Burke's critical vocabulary. This will be discussed further in Chapter 1, the Survey of Literature.

In evaluating Dr. Buscaglia's methods, this study will focus upon one particular speech. The vehicle chosen was "Love in the Classroom," a speech given before the Iowa School of Social Work conference in September of 1976. This speech was chosen for its appropriateness to the author's experiences, and for its exemplification of Dr. Buscaglia's presentation style. Many of Dr. Buscaglia's speeches include the same components adapted and re-organized for different groups. The transcript used for the videocassette viewed is from the book, Living, Loving and Learning. There may be a few specific detail changes in his stories, however, the essence of the speeches remains the same.

This study will progress through five distinct parts and their subheadings. The first will contain a review of literature previously written by or about Leo Buscaglia. It will also contain some resources concerning affective teaching strategies and rhetorical criticism methodologies. Next, the study will concentrate upon Dr. Leo Buscaglia the person behind the speeches. The audience and its characteristics will be studied third. The fourth section will provide an analysis of the speech "Love in the Classroom" and the fifth portion of the study will involve the conclusions resulting from the observations stated
within the body of the paper.

Review of Literature

The following literature has been reviewed as resources toward the study of Leo Buscaglia as a speaker. The materials can be classified in four categories. The first classification is those materials written by Dr. Buscaglia. The literature about Dr. Buscaglia is second. Affective-humanistic education and speech communication works make up the third and fourth categories, respectively. Each review will include the significance of the book or article to the topic at hand as well as a brief summary of the material.

Dr. Leo Buscaglia as author

*Love* is a collection of discussions and ideas which developed from Dr. Buscaglia's *Love, 1A* class at USC. These are the initial writings and speeches from which several subsequent books have been derived or revised. Its use as a resource here is found in its basis of his ideas on love, itself.

*Personhood: The Art of Being Fully Human* involves the reader in the ways of becoming a "fully functioning person." This work discussed the stages of, ways to, and roles of life events in being a human. Unlike *Love*, *Personhood* functions as a guide to improving yourself with love a mere tool in the process. In order to understand why Dr. Buscaglia says what he does about "human beings" in his lectures, you must understand what he considers
to be a "human being." The cycles of life and death are presented in The Fall of Freddie the Leaf. Dr. Buscaglia tells us in story form that it is not such a bad thing to die and that it is not the end of the world. As in his other books, individuality is stressed. In this case, each leaf becomes a different color and falls in its own way at its own time. Information concerning Dr. Buscaglia's view of life as a series of beginnings and no ends can be seen from this interesting and informative resource.

One of the major derived forms of Love is Living, Loving and Learning. The latter is a compilation of Dr. Buscaglia's lectures given between 1970 and 1981. This collection contains several revised discourses used by Dr. Buscaglia in Love. Many stories which are repeated frequently by Dr. Buscaglia have been edited from subsequent sections in this book. This was the source of the transcript which will be used to exemplify Dr. Buscaglia's techniques.

Because I Am Human is a simple, captioned photographic essay that attempts to describe human beings, much as Personhood tried to define being a fully functioning person. The simplistic style and variety of subjects could be used with children. The value of this resource lies in its ability to tell the reader something about the author.

Human Advocacy and PL 94-142: The Educators Role was co-edited by Dr. Buscaglia and a colleague in the
USC Special Education Department. It contains essays written by others discussing various aspects of PL 94-142. This material showed the depth and breadth of Dr. Buscalia's involvement with the disabled and their rights.

As a counselor for the disabled and their parents, Dr. Buscaglia felt the need for a definitive work to guide other such counselors and himself. So he wrote one. The Disabled and Their Parents: A Counseling Challenge discusses various problems and solutions in dealing with counseling the disabled. This authoritative volume allows Dr. Buscaglia to exercise his knowledge and expertise as special education educator.

The final book by Dr. Buscaglia to be covered here is The Way of the Bull, a look at his own search-for-self travels. While traveling and collecting the information that would become this book, Dr. Buscaglia more fully developed his view of life and love.

The above are only those works read by this author found to pertain to the speech being evaluated. Dr. Buscaglia has had excerpts and writings in most major periodicals and has been involved with PBS productions concerning love and personhood.

Leo Buscaglia as a subject

The following three periodicals have been utilized as sources of information concerning Dr. Buscaglia. Current Biography Yearbook included a biography of Dr. Buscaglia in the 1983 edition. 50 Plus, a magazine directed toward the 50 plus age bracket, printed a review
of his work in August 1983. Also printing a review of Dr. Buscaglia's ideas and style was Psychology Today in November 1983. As can be seen, most material written about Dr. Buscaglia has been published within the last two to five years.

**Affective Education Literature**

Used as resources for understanding Dr. Buscaglia's stand on affective-humanistic education were The Affective Domain in Education and Affective-Humanistic Education. Those texts provided a well-defined, easy-to-follow base in affective education philosophies. All that Dr. Buscaglia advocates is part of affective learning strategies. He usually concentrated on affective behavior used as a person but includes the idea that a teacher/educator is a person and thus needs to be aware of the affective realm of educating.

**Speech Communication Literature**

In order that Dr. Buscaglia's speeches could be studied with confidence and authority, the following speech communication articles and texts were consulted. The Burkean set of concepts and critical vocabulary were used as the major components of criticism in the fourth section. This vocabulary was obtained from the textbook, Principles and Types of Speech Communication (Ehninger, Monroe, and Gronbeck). Other materials utilized were the following articles: "Agitative Rhetoric: Its Nature and Effect" (Western Speech); "A Motive View of Communication"
(Quarterly Journal of Speech); "Advice from a Speech Teacher: Put Humor in your Speeches" (Today's Speech); "Rhetorical Timing in Public Communication" (Central States Speech Journal); "Propaganda and the Rhetoric of the American Revolution" (Southern Speech); and "An Approach to Rhetorical Criticism" (The Rhetorical Idiom). The above articles contain varying information on techniques, methodologies, and ways of rhetorical criticism.

"Agitative Rhetoric: Its Nature and Effect" deals with contrasting agitative and invective rhetoric. Agitative being the more positive and less personal method of the two. Motives and their influence on speaking are discussed in Fischer's "A Motive View of Communication." Various forms of humor embody Tacey's article, "Advice from a Speech Teacher: Put Humor in your Speeches." Historical timing becomes the focal point in "Rhetorical Timing in Public Communication." For its propaganda information, "Propaganda and the Rhetoric of the American Revolution" was reviewed. The last article, "An Approach to Rhetorical Criticism" contained information on identification methods in rhetoric.
Biography

Dr. Leo F. Buscaglia has been crowned reigning expert on hugs and love. As a professor at the University of Southern California - Los Angeles, he teaches courses in the education of special students.\(^{34}\) He also "guides" students in a non-credit course entitled "Love, IA". No other university offers such a course and, according to Dr. Buscaglia, most other professors would not attempt to supervise a project like that.\(^{35}\) Dr. Leo Buscaglia is definitely cut from a different cloth than most.

Felice Leonardo Buscaglia was born in Los Angeles, California on March 31, approximately 1925. He will not confirm a definite birth year and tells reporters that his age is irrelevant. Leo's family returned to their hometown of Aosta, Italy when he was approximately one hear of age. When he was five, the family moved back to Los Angeles and Felice started school there.

Leo's primary language was Italian and he knew some French and Spanish when he arrived in the U. S. at five. When he began school he could speak very little English so he was diagnosed as mentally retarded and spent his initial educational time in a special classroom. The teacher of the special education class was both an affective and effective teacher. She realized that Leo was merely English language deficient and so proceeded to correct the error. Dr. Buscaglia still recalls that time in special education as the best time in his educational career.\(^{36}\)
Leo's family encouraged learning for learning's sake and all were devoted to the others. This positive background helped him to overcome the language barrier and the ethnic taunts he received during elementary school. He so enjoyed learning that he organized storytelling in his garage on a regular basis.

Leo still delights in sharing his life with his audiences. All of his speeches and writings contain mention of his early home life and/or his family.

Following high school, Leo enlisted in the U. S. Navy to serve during WW II as was expected at that time. Following his discharge in 1944, he lived for a time in Paris before continuing home to Los Angeles and a college career. He earned an A.B. in Speech and English from USC as well as general teaching credentials for secondary schools and special credentials in speech correction and hearing in 1950. He followed this with an M.A. in 1954 and a Ph. D. in 1963, both from USC and both in language and speech pathology.

Dr. Buscaglia supported his graduate studies by working as a speech therapy supervisor in Lawndale in 1950-51 and as a teacher/speech therapist in Pasadena from 1951-1960. Dr. Buscaglia served as supervisor of special education programs in Pasadena city schools. He became disenchanted with his administrative position and in 1965 he joined the USC special education department as assistant professor. In the ensuing years, Buscaglia took a sabbatical, sold everything he owned, and traveled the world, mainly Asia.
By 1975, he was back at USC in a full professorship after having obtained associate professor status in 1968 and writing his search-for-self book, *The Way of the Bull*, in 1973. During 1975-77 Dr. Buscaglia was involved in the USC overseas program and taught in other countries.

Following his return to USC, one of his students committed suicide and changed Dr. Buscaglia's view of what he was accomplishing and what he wanted to do.³⁷ This need to teach more than academics lead to his first Love, 1A class. Subsequently, Dr. Buscaglia was voted professor of the year more than once and his Love class continued to be the favorite on campus for the twelve years he supervised the course.³⁸ Dr. Buscaglia's ability to incorporate his Love 1A principles with his education courses seem to have helped lead him down the path of authorship. Both *The Disabled and their Parents: A Counseling Challenge* and *Human Advocacy and PL 94-142* deal with the educator or counselor as a loving, caring human being.³⁹

Following a lecture in 1972, Dr. Buscaglia was approached by publisher Charles B. Slack to share his Love classes' ideas in book form.⁴⁰ This was the beginning of a torrent of books by Dr. Buscaglia on Love. He has received more than two dozen awards and special honors and despite quintuple bypass surgery in 1982 he continues to expound on the virtues of spontaneity, individuality and, of course, love.⁴¹
Occasion/Audience

As stated before, in dealing with the content of Dr. Buscaglia's speech, "Love in the Classroom," Burkean concepts are most appropriate for criticism. However, when reviewing the occasion and the audience of this speech and others like it, Fischer's motive theory and Gronbeck's rhetorical timing theory are the most thorough.

First of all, Dr. Buscaglia's audience mainly consisted of social workers and social work students. Social work tends to be selected by compassionate men and women as a career choice. Continuing in this vein it is possible to assume that people who care enough to attend a special learning conference would be receptive to the humanistic/affective form of learning and modifying behavior. This assumption of concern can be validated with Fischer's concept of reaffirmation. In this instance Dr. Buscaglia was probably keying into the need for revitalization of ideals and enthusiasm. He made no attempt to purify or subvert any belief. He was speaking to an audience of people who already felt love and concern so there was no introduction of the unknown.

Working for Dr. Buscaglia's success in this and other speeches was his timing. When he first began preaching the need for affective education, love, and uniqueness he was one of few. Recently there has been a return to the need to view students and others as humans with needs and feelings like our own. Historical timing in this instance helped forward the affective educator movement.
In speaking of timing, Gronbeck said, "... a message will be fitting (i.e. properly timed) only if, through past experience, advice, or some idiosyncratic sensitivities, a rhetor understands that a situation needs a response now rather than then, with this message rather than that message, by himself rather than someone else." 49

By this statement Gronbeck justifies the idea of Fischer's reaffirmation while including the need for a timed response or reaffirmation. Dr. Buscaglia needed to know who he was speaking to, what they wanted from him, and why he was the one speaking to them.

One last reference to Fischer's motive model of communication needs to be made. When discussing motives for speaking to groups, monetary rewards must be examined. 50 Although committed to "the Cause", a speaker may rely upon his speaking engagements payments for paying the bills. This in itself is a powerful motivator.
Abstract of Speech

Love in the Classroom

Dr. Buscaglia initially relates personal experiences to the audience concerning his name and topic of speech. He gives background information concerning himself and his class. Next, discussion focuses on the development of affective education as a movement. Dr. Buscaglia casually tosses out various authoritative names and names that are common to most Americans' experiences. His next topic is the turning point in his life where he re-evaluated his values and started the Love class.

Dr. Buscaglia tries to impress upon his audience the idea that no one can be "taught" something. They can learn, and do, but in their own way, in their own time. He likes to use the word "educate" instead of "teach" because "educate" derives from the latin for "to guide."

Dr. Buscaglia stresses the importance of dreaming and creativity. The need to be a loving person before you can be a successful educator is also stressed. He feels a great desire to have everyone understand that you should guide children into learning, not teach them. We must create loving humans and they in turn will learn academically.

Dr. Buscaglia reiterates the need to love yourself and know something yourself before you begin to try and guide someone else to knowledge or love. With the concept of loving yourself and others is the requirement that you love yourself and others as you are. He repeats the story of the animal school and its curriculum requirements.
for every animal. This story is one that should be sad for it is largely true in our schools today, but people laugh at it. Dr. Buscaglia liberally throws in stories of non-conforming and the unique individual to reassure his audience that it is okay to be who you are and that no one has the right to take that away from you.

Dr. Buscaglia relates his experiences in Asia to help relate to the audience the great lack of need most of us have for material things. We want, but we do not need. If someone believes the concept of lack of need they can change themselves at any time and become someone else.

While discussing the idea of being yourself and not worrying about others ideas of youself, he repeats a story of a young poet who committed suicide a couple of years ago. He also believes whole-heartedly in not labeling anyone and that we, as a culture, are tied down by words and time. One of Dr. Buscaglia's greatest peeves is that of the curriculum guides and those who structure themselves and that little book.

As in all of his speeches, Dr. Buscaglia includes a section on touching, looking at each other, and needing as a functioning human being. He concludes with a review of effective teaching methods and studies.
Methodologies

Within Burke's framework there are three main levels -- the charting, praying, and dreaming levels. The charting level deals with the grammatical analysis of a speech. The praying level discusses the rhetorical strategies of a speaker. The third level, dreaming, is the level of symbolic analysis.

Other methodologies used involve the following principles: L.H. Mouat's identification approach; Tacey's theory of rhetorical humor; the inclusion of propaganda in the speeches and the use of agitative language. The theories of timing and motive inducement have already been discussed in the previous chapter.
Burke's Critical Vocabulary

Chart level

Agent - Leo Buscaglia
Agency - Oral language and physical cues
Act - Love is important to the classroom
Scene - Iowa Conference of Social Work
Purpose - To encourage the use of affective teaching and guidance.

Prayer level

Strategies of ideas - Within this framework Dr. Buscaglia shows how the children are the ones who suffer when we do not get our acts together. He wants us to unite in a group to save our children.

Along with Burke’s vocabulary can be added propaganda at this time. The techniques used to polarize an audience deal with ideas. The forms of propaganda used by Dr. Buscaglia include name calling, plain folks, and the bandwagon approach.

Dr. Buscaglia’s name calling methods are much more subtle than most. His use of the term "poor old things", to describe various supervisors and protectors of policies, however, is as much a put down as John Hancock’s use of "murderers" to describe the British. He also speaks irreverently when he says his Dean is a "very official man." His use of the technique plain folks identification is evident in his consistent use of the term "you and me" or his "as you know" genre of remarks. The final propaganda
technique to be discussed is the bandwagon approach which Dr. Buscaglia uses shamelessly. His references to no longer being lonely in his affective education stand and his sweeping "we" statements allow him the privilege of saying "join us now or you'll be left behind."73

Strategies of Identification

Dr. Buscaglia is a master at finding the common ground between himself and an audience. He tells of his name and its disadvantages.74 He discusses experiences common to most teachers and he finds ways to meet them in the more cerebral sense also.75

At Mouat's material level of identification, Dr. Buscaglia selects his development of a loving person definition to begin to create a belief in the reality of that kind of person.76 The formal level of identification is accomplished with his open-handed gestures and full range use of his body to say, "I'm one of you!" The very act of removing his tie and coat allows the audience to view him as a human, one of the crowd.77 At the transcendental level of identification is his view of love as the cure-all and its ability to be seen as a goal in everyone's mind. Basically, Dr. Buscaglia is most effective at the formal identification level with his ability to control a situation with his language style, non-verbal language, and presence.78

Strategies of Form

Within this section of Burke's framework lies the concept of organization. Dr. Buscaglia's speaking techniques could
hardly be described as fully structured, although his stories and asides can be related to the topic in some way. As part of the organizational development, Dr. Buscaglia uses humor to help the flow of the presentation. The main forms of humor that are found in Dr. Buscaglia's work are parody, the turn of phrase, and a story with a surprise twist. Dr. Buscaglia's ramblings do take shape after reviewing them and hearing them for a while. He seems to have his own method of structure.

**Strategies of language**

Dr. Buscaglia, as a specialist in speech rehabilitation and speech communication, can work any sentence to his advantage. He uses simple, direct statements along with interjections of "timely" street talk to set the informal stage of his speech. He knows, for instance, that to say his student "... splattered herself on the rocks below..." will evoke a more immediate response than the more moderately phrased "the girl jumped off the cliff".

Going along with the use of language to create a certain response is the idea of agitative rhetoric. Dr. Buscaglia is a passionate man who demands that you listen and you consider the changes suggested. His statements provoke thought and more likely an arousal of the audience to determine the truth of his statements and the validity of his charges. Much of his time is spent saying "listen to me" in a more or less direct approach.
Strategies of Mimesis

These strategies are important to someone such as Dr. Buscaglia. His presence is one that creates a certain response from the crowd even as he initially enters the stage. As stated before, Dr. Buscaglia uses his whole body as a prop as in his story concerning elevator behavior.85

Dream level

Dialectical terms

This is probably the most extensively used tool by Dr. Buscaglia in the dream level. He enjoys contrasting values such as freedom-slavery, spontaneity-compulsiveness, uniqueness-conformity.86 His contrasting comes not from a specific setting aside of these words but in the manner that he says them and the context within which they are part. His statements concerning statistics are one such context. "I fell very sorry for you indeed if you are ruled only by what you can measure."87

There are so many facets to Dr. Buscaglia's speeches that it is hard to effectively add them up and draw a conclusion concerning his approach to speaking. His ability to play with the English language and yet to sound authoritative is one of the most charismatic things about him. He builds his statements upon common knowledge that most of the world would understand. Just as he preaches, so does he live. He acknowledges that he is nothing more than a human and that his audiences are merely humans, too. And he makes every attempt to meet them on that level.
Conclusion

In determining the significance of Dr. Buscaglia's speech as a separate entity it is hard to say that it changed much of anything. However, if his speeches are seen as continuations of each other and his writings as extensions of that; his significance could be said to be great. His powerful ability to uplift an audience and bring them to a level of belief in themselves and the world can only be described as incredible. As an assumption, it is a probability that some of the audience of the speech are actually practicing his theories. The large majority are still mulling over his words and will continue to whenever a particular catch phrase or his name comes up.

The possibility that Dr. Buscaglia will continue to be a force behind the affective drive in the U.S. is contingent upon his personal drive and the tide of the U.S.'s feelings towards humanistic education.

Judgement

Dr. Buscaglia's reasons for involving himself with the affective movement seem to be genuine. While some of his statements tend to contradict one another and some are sweeping, unfounded generalities, he has the power to provoke thought. That power is one of the greatest on earth and if used correctly could help people come to terms with their own humanity.
Notes


2Ibid., p. 62-65.


5Information from card catalog concerning videocassette of Leo Buscaglia speaking. Video 202-204 (BSU)

6Buscaglia, p. 17-72.


9Ibid.

10For Buscaglia's definition of human being read the book, particularly the first section.

11Buscaglia, Ph. D., The Fall of Freddie the Leaf (Thorofare, NJ: Slack, Inc., 1982).

12Ibid., unnumbered.

13Buscaglia, Living, Loving & Learning.

14Ibid., Editor's note.


16Buscaglia, Human Advocacy and PL 94-142


Love as a Behavior Modifier

I'm overwhelmed at the pleasure of being introduced by someone who knows how to pronounce my name. I love to talk about my name because it's one of those beautiful Italian names that has every letter in the alphabet. It's spelled B-u-s-c-a-g-l-i-a, and it's pronounced like everything. The best thing, I think, that has ever happened with it in terms of introductions was when I was making a long distance telephone call. The line was busy and the operator said she'd call me back as soon as the line was free. When she called back I picked up the phone and she said, "Would you please tell Dr. Box Car that his telephone call is ready?" I said "Could that be Buscaglia?" She said, "Sir, it could be damned near anything."

Today I'm here to talk to you about love and I call this "Love In The Classroom." You're
to maintain his uniqueness. He wants to be the
greatest, because he realizes that this is some-
thing he can give away. I don't know how
many of you know R.D. Laing's writing. *The
Politics of Experience*, is one of the most beauti-
ful gifts I could give you. It's a little paperback,
and, is unbelievable. In this book he talks
of human potential and the development of
human potential. He makes a statement, which
I think is one of the most beautiful I have
ever read. And it isn't italicized or underlined. It's
just part of the way he writes. He says,

We think much less than what we know.
We know much less than what we love. We
love much less than what there is. And to
this precise extent, we are much less than
what we are.

How do you like that?

Exciting things are happening all over the
country. There are institutes for the develop-
ment of the human person. Herbert Otto,
Fitzgerald, and Carl Rogers, are all doing it
and receiving no pay. They are setting up
institutes and are living off royalties of their
own books to find ways to help people develop
their potential again because otherwise we're

... going to be lost. This is what Fuller is
screaming. "Let's go back to us." We have
potential to see, and to feel, and to touch, and
to smell, that we've never dreamed of. But
we've forgotten how to do it. These are the
things we want to be doing, if we care about
ourselves and if we love ourselves.

I had a very unique experience about seven
years ago. I sold everything. I did something
that everyone said was absolute madness. I sold
everything that our culture says has value . . .
the hi-fi set, the records, the books, the
insurance policy, the car, and I collected a little
bit of money and I spent two years going
around the world. I spent most of that time in
Asia because I knew less about Asia than any
other place in the world. Two thirds of the
world is not the Western World. These people
think differently, and feel differently, and
understand differently, and you learn a lot
about yourself and about the human condition
when you get out of our Western environment
and find out that there are people and areas
where even Jesus is unknown. There are places
that have no idea what our Western culture is
thinking about, doing, feeling; and yet these
are the people that we're meeting head on in
conflict. Their words are not our words. Their
feelings are not our feelings. But nevertheless,
Nature has taught them that the only thing they have is from the top of their head to the bottom of their feet . . . themselves. Not things. They can't collect things because every year the Monsoon comes and there is no place to bring these things. And I couldn't help thinking to myself, "What would you do, Buscaglia, if a Monsoon were to come to Los Angeles next week? What would you take? Your color TV set? Your automobile? The spittoon that Aunt Matilda left you?" The only thing you've got to take is you. In Los Angeles we have earthquakes of which you've undoubtedly heard. It's a very unique sensation, I guarantee you, to find that you have no control over where you're going to go or where the house is going to go.

Just recently, we had a severe earthquake in Los Angeles and it very much affected my home. The ceiling in the living room fell in and the fireplace collapsed on itself. We didn't have water, and so on. Suddenly it taught us the value of things; it showed us again that things were stupid, that all we had was us. I walked out of the house with everything falling around me. It was just dawn and there was a streak of light coming over the sky. I have a great big flowering peach in the back yard. Well there it was, flowering its head off. And all of a sudden, in a split second it occurred to me, "You know, the beautiful world is going to go on, with or without you, man." And for me, it was worth the price of the earthquake to be reminded again.

Philosophers and psychologists have told us this for years. "You are all you have. Therefore, make yourself the most beautiful, tender, wonderful, fantastic person in the world. And then you will always survive." Remember Medea in the Greek tragedy? Remember the line of that beautiful play, when everything is gone and the oracle comes to her and says, "Medea, what is left? Everything is destroyed, everything is gone." She says, "What is left? There is me." There's a woman for you! "What do you mean what is left? Everything is left. I am left!" When we recognize this importance of you again returning to a respect for you, a love for you, and realizing that all things come from you, then you can give to others. Then you have arrived at a very important place because if you don't like you, you can always learn again to like you. You can create a new you. You can do it. If you don't like the set you're involved with, strike it and put up a new one. If you don't like the cast of characters you're involved with, get rid of them and start a new bunch. But you've got to do it. And it's
all yours. Okay, so that’s number one. And if we’ve got nothing else said but that, I would believe with all my heart that I’d left something with you anyway. A return to you.

Saint-Exupéry, the French philosopher, makes a magnificent statement in one of his books, and he’s written some lovely ones. He said, “Perhaps love,” (and you can substitute education if you want to), “is the process of my leading you gently back to yourself.” I have no definition of love, but that comes the closest to being the healthiest one I’ve heard. “Perhaps love is the process of my leading you gently back to yourself.” Not to whom I want you to be, but to who you are.

I don’t know how many of you know the City Lights Book Store in San Francisco but it’s an incredible place, and if you ever visit there, you must go. It’s three floors of paperbacks. You’ve never imagined there were so many paperbacks in the world but it has one section that’s uniquely its own. It’s a section that publishes manuscripts from people like you and me, who are frustrated poets and frustrated writers. In one section they offer poetry. All you have to do is mimeograph it on a piece of paper and staple it together, put it on the shelf, and you can put in one corner “five cents please” to cover the cost of paper. And then people buy them and really read them.

I was wandering by and I saw a book, the title of which really threw me. There were only five hundred copies of it printed, and I’ll explain how it happened later. But the name of the book was, I Am Neither A Sacrilege Or A Privilege. I May Not Be Competent or Excellent, But I Am Present. That just came right off the shelf and smacked me across the face. And I thought — well good for you! I opened up the book and I found out that it was written by a young lady who signed her name only as Michelle. She did the drawings and she did the poems, and I slipped through it in my usual way, skipping the preface and everything and diving right into the heart of it. And I found a poem that attracted my eye and I read it! This is what it said:

My happiness is me, not you. Not only because you may be temporary, But also because you want me to be what I am not.

Think of this in terms of the educator.

I cannot be happy when I change Merely to satisfy your selfishness.
Nor can I feel content when you criticize me for not thinking your thoughts, Or for seeing like you do. You call me a rebel. And yet each time I have rejected your beliefs You have rebelled against mine. I do not try to mold your mind. I know you are trying hard enough to be just you. And I cannot allow you to tell me what to be — for I am concentrating on being me.

And then listen to this line:

You said that I was transparent And easily forgotten. But why then did you try to use my lifetime, To prove to yourself who you are?

Think about that as teachers. Think about that as lovers. Think about that as citizens. Think about that as fathers and mothers. Applicable to all. “You said that I was transparent and easily forgotten. But why then did you try to use my lifetime to prove to yourself who you are?” Then I went back to find out, who is Michelle? And I found this line in the introduction. It says:

Michelle! You were with us for such a short time before choosing that fog-swept beach to continue on your way. It was July 1967, and you were only 20. She left us twenty five poems. She found it too hard to be “just me.” We hope these poems are presented as you wish, Michelle. You are present, we love you, and we need you, and we promise we will remember, until we meet again . . . . . .

San Francisco, July 1969.

I think the second big thing about a loving individual is that he frees himself from labels. You know, man is an incredible creature, really incredible. He does wonderful things. He has a marvelous creative mind. He created time but then was ruled by time. I have to keep watching the clock because at a certain time coffee will be out there, and at a certain time you’re supposed to come in here, and at a certain time we’re supposed to be going to lunch. And it’s twelve o’clock and you’re not hungry but you eat, because it’s twelve. And you’re sitting down in a classroom — you have this in elementary schools and secondary schools —
you're really grooving on a lesson and something fantastic is happening. Then the bell rings and everybody runs out. "It's seven o'clock. Oh, I'm sorry, I've got to leave now." If a mother is sitting in your office weeping and gnashing her teeth but you've got someone else waiting outside, you've got to tell this mother, "I'm sorry, you've got to stop in the middle of your story. I'll see you tomorrow at 8:04."

We have classrooms that are ruled by this — education ruled by the clock. Nine o'clock to 9:05 we will have Share and Tell; 9:05 to 9:30 we will have Reading Group One. From 9:30 to 9:45 we will have Reading Group Two. And Reading Group One may really be excited about something and the teacher says, "Oh my goodness, it's half past. All right, Reading Group Two." Nobody learns by the clock. No one learns in blocks. This is not arithmetic time. This is not spelling time. You learn everything together. But we still go on. Now you must turn your mind onto spelling and then go onto the Westward Movement. Up the Westward Movement! But we still do that kind of thing! We create time and then we become the slaves of time.

We also create words and words are supposed to free us. Words are supposed to make us able to communicate. But words became boxes and bags in which we became trapped. It was a wonderful thing to hear Buckminster Fuller say that, "I was being so involved in words as other people had taught me them that I went away into a ghetto in Chicago, away from family and friends, for two years to clear my mind of words and to find the words that were right for me. So that when I spoke them I knew they were mine and not somebody else's." What a fantastic statement. And now he worships words but we're trapped with words.

When Timothy Leary was doing fantastic work at Harvard in psycholinguistics, he made a statement that I will never forget. He said, "Words are the freezing of reality." We teach children the meaning of words before they are able to truly understand them and rebel. And in words we teach fear, we teach prejudice, we teach all kinds of things. And all somebody has to do now, talking about words being a distancing phenomena, is to poke you and to say, "Watch out for this Buscaglia cat, because he's on the list; he's a Communist." Pow, off I would go. And everything I said would be filtered through this word Communism. And yet, an Eastern university did a study in the United States on what Communism means.
They went around talking to the common man and saying, “Would you define Communism?” And some people were really frightened to death. You should read that study — it’s hilarious. One woman said, “Well, I don’t really know what it means, but there hadn’t better be any in Washington.” Now there’s a good definition of Communism. And they were all about that caliber. All you have to do is be a Communist and you’ll be run out of town. And you don’t even know what it means. And so it is, with “Black man,” with “Chicano,” with “Protestants,” with “Catholics,” with “Jews.” All you have to do is hear a label and you think you know everything about them. No one ever bothers to say, “Does he cry? Does he feel? Does he understand? Does he have hopes? Does he love his kids?” Words.

You, if you are a loving person, will rule words and not allow words to rule you. You will tell yourself what this word means only after you find out by experience what it means; not by believing what people have told you it means.

When I was growing up I had a very interesting experience. I was born in Los Angeles of immigrant parents, Italians of course, and we lived in the city, right in the

ghetto area with all the other Italians. It was really kind of beautiful. When I was a year old my parents had to return to Italy and so they took me with them. They went back to their little home city which is at the base of the Swiss Italian Alps, a little whistle stop called Aosta. Many trains pass through on their way to Milano and Torino but they don’t stop at Aosta. Only one stops at Aosta. I remember as kids we used to go there and watch the trains zooming through. But everybody in that little village knew everybody else. Wine was the main thing in that village and so everybody was stoned cut of their minds all the time. It was beautiful. The fantastic thing is how everybody cared about everybody. The closeness. If Maria was sick, everybody in the city knew it and brought her chickens and squash and took care of her kids, and so on, because it was a community of people, of human beings. Then after I was five, my parents decided to return to Los Angeles. And so they did. Talk about a cultural shock! Here I was all of a sudden dumped in the city where no one cared if I lived or died. An interesting thing about labels is that at that time the Mafia was running rampant and every Italian was considered to be a member of the Mafia. I was called a “dago” and a “wop.” You know, kids
would say, “Get away, you smelly wop.” I remember going to my father and saying, “Papa, what’s a wop? What’s a dago?” He said, “Never mind, Felice. Don’t let it bother you. People have names. They call you names but it doesn’t mean anything.”

But it did bother me because it was a distancing phenomena and they never learned anything about me by calling me “wop” and “dago.” They didn’t know, for instance, that Mama was an opera singer in the old country and that Papa was a waiter. We had an enormous family, enough to cast any opera. She’d sit at the piano and play the complete operas and we’d all take the roles. We’d all sing and it was beautiful. By the time I was eight, I knew five operas. I could take any role. But they didn’t know that by calling me a “dago” and a “wop.”

And they didn’t know, also, that Mama believed that garlic was the cure-all for any disease. Every morning she’d line us all up and she’d rub garlic on a little hankie and tie it around our necks. We’d say, “Mama, don’t do that.” She’d say, “Shut up.” (She was a very loving woman.) She’d send us off to school with this garlic around our necks and we stunk to high heaven. But I want to tell you a secret; I was never sick a day. My theory about it is that no one ever got close enough to me to pass the germs. It was incredible, because I remember getting an award at the end of elementary school for never having missed a day. Now I’ve become very sophisticated and I don’t have garlic on and I get a cold every year. They didn’t know that when they called me a “wop” and a “dago.”

They also didn’t know that Papa was a great patriarch. On Sundays, when he was home, we would sit around a big table that he’d never let us leave without telling him something new we had learned that day. So, beforehand we’d be washing our hands and I’d say to my sisters, “What did you learn today?” and they’d say, “Nothing.” And I’d say, “Well, we better learn something!” So we’d go over and get the encyclopedia and we’d flip to something, like, the population of Nepal is one million, and then we’d sit there and think about it while eating. And boy, talk about the meals! Mama never in her life prepared a TV dinner. I remember string beans piled so high that I couldn’t see my sister across the table. We’d eat and when finally it was over, Papa would push this dish away and turn to me and say “Felice, what did you learn today?” And I’d say, “The population of Nepal is one . . .” And nothing was ever insignificant to this man! He would
turn to my mother he’d say, “Mama, did you know . . .” And we’d look at them and we’d say, “Freaks!” And we’d ask our friends, “Do you have to tell your parents about Nepal?” They’d say, “Our parents don’t care if we know anything or not.” But I want to tell you a secret. Even now, when Felice goes to bed, maybe he’s worked twenty nine hours that day and he’s exhausted, but when he crawls into the sheets, that gorgeous moment before you go off, he says to himself, “Felice, what did you learn today?” And if I can’t answer that question, I have to get up and get the encyclopedia and flip to something and learn something new.

Maybe that’s what education is all about. Who knows? But they didn’t know that by calling me a “dago” and a “wop.” If you want to know about me, you’ve got to get into my head, and if I want to know about you, I can’t say, “She is fat. She is thin. She is a Jew. She is a Catholic.” She is more than that. And those of us who are interested in Special Education know these damned labels. We call children mentally retarded. What does that tell us? I have never seen a mentally retarded child. I’ve only seen children, all different. We call them students and, therefore, we think we can stand in front of a classroom and teach them all in the same way. Labels. The loving individual frees himself from labels. He says, “No more.”

I also think this loving individual is one who abhors waste and will not stand for hypocrisy. Rosten says, “It is the weak who are cruel. Gentleness can only be expected from the strong.” It is true. We need strong people in education who are willing to stand up and say, “This is hypocritical, and we won’t do it anymore.” People who are willing to get on the line and say, “No, we’ve got to have changes or we are going to destroy ourselves.” It’s like walking into doom. We are teaching for today and we’re already in tomorrow. No wonder we’re participating in self-destruction.

I want to tell you a little story about hypocrisy. At a time when I was training student teachers, I was working with a young woman who was not only a teacher, but the most beautiful human being I ever saw, so enthusiastic about getting in a classroom she couldn’t stand it. Finally she got her own classroom, that dreamy day that we can all go back and remember. She walked into her first grade classroom and flipped to this beautiful thing called The Curriculum Guide. You know, to me, books are holy, but I wouldn’t hesitate one moment having the biggest book burning of
Curriculum Guides in the world. But anyway, she looked in this damned Curriculum Guide and she saw that in the first grade in this school district in California, (and this was only a couple of years ago,) you teach the store. The s-t-o-r-e. She said, “That is impossible. I don’t believe it. I can’t believe they teach the store.” These kids were raised in a store. They were wheeled around in carts when they were two and three years old. They knocked over Campbell’s soup cans. They did all kinds of crazy things in stores. They go there every day with Mama. And the grand culminating unit has you go to the supermarket.

Well, she said, “This is impossible.” But there it was in black and white. It said you do all kinds of things. You make a store and you make little clay bananas. The kids have been eating real bananas all their lives and slipping on banana peels, but you spend six weeks making clay bananas. A waste of human potential. Anyway, she sat down because she was a good teacher and she sided with her kids, and she said, “Kids.” She thought she’d get up their enthusiasm. She said, “How would you like to study the store?” And they said, “Rotten.” And you know, the moral of that is that little kids are not as stupid now as we used to be. McLuhan has shown us that on the average, children have five thousand hours of TV before reaching kindergarten. They have seen people die in technicolor. They have seen disasters. They have seen wars and massacres. And then we bring them in and we try to interest them and get their motivation by reading, “Spot said, Oh, Oh.”

So she said a beautiful thing. She said, “Okay then, what would you like to do?” And one kid said, “Oh, my father works for Jet Propulsion and he could bring us a rocket ship and we could set it up in the classroom and we could act it working and we could all fly to the moon.” And all the kids said, “Groovy!” So she thought for a minute and said, “Okay, you tell your dad to bring it.” And the next day he brought in a little miniature rocket ship and set it up. He explained to them what this rocket ship was all about, what they were trying to do, what the parts of it were. And he wrote the vocabulary on the board. This was the first grade! You’re not supposed to study rocket ships until you’re in the university. What on earth are they going to study when they get to the university if they can do this in the first grade? Well, we can’t allow this to happen! This is terrible. They’ve got to go to the Supermarket! But you should have seen what was going on. They were learning mathematical
concepts you couldn’t believe. They went on a Saturday field trip to Jet Propulsion and they were shown real rocket ships. They were put through them; their minds were freaking.

I also feel very sorry for supervisors who have to protect this Curriculum Guide because that’s their job, poor things. They want to do something better but, here it is, and your job is to teach this stuff, and their job is to carry the book around and abide by it. So the supervisor walked in and looked around this room. Here was a rocket ship, things on the wall you never saw, a spelling list that even she didn’t know half of, formulas on the walls, all kinds of weird things which the kids understood and were really happy doing. And she asked Mrs. W., “Where is your store?” And then Mrs. W. said, “Well, you know, the kids wanted to fly to the moon, so we set up a...”. The supervisor said, “Nevertheless, Mrs. W., did you read your Curriculum Guide? It states that the first unit in this school district is the store.” Then she smiled broadly because she was a sweet little creature and she said, “You will have one, won’t you dear?”

So Mrs. W. said to the kids, “Do you want Mrs. W. to be here next year?” And they said, “Oh, yes.” “Okay, then we’ve got to have a store.” And you know, the kids were beautiful (as they always are when you’re a human being). They said, “Great. But let’s do it fast.” So they did a six-week unit in two days! They knocked together those damned boxes and they made the clay bananas and then, hypocrisy on hypocrisy, every time the supervisor came, they would walk over to the cash register and say, “Would you like to buy some clay bananas?” And after she left satisfied, they went on flying to the moon. We can’t afford to allow these things to go on anymore. Some teacher has got to stand up and say, “I will not take them to another store. If you want to take them, you take them.”

I also think that a loving individual is spontaneous. The one thing that I would like to see more than anything else in the world is your returning again to your initial spontaneity, the spontaneity of a kid who said what he felt and what he thought and was easily adjustable to what other people were thinking and feeling. Getting back to looking at each other again. We are so ruled by what people tell us we must be that we have forgotten who we are.

Emily Post tells us, “A young lady does not laugh out loud boisterously, she titters.” Well if you want to laugh and fall on the floor and beat the rug, you do it; it’s good. “You do not
get angry: human beings do not get angry." You keep it all in and then you go to a mental institution! It’s far better to go into a classroom if you’re not feeling good, and rather than spend the entire day with your neck all tied up in knots and your eyes bulging, saying, “Children, sit down,” to state right at the beginning, “Look kids, take it easy today because teacher’s hung.” If you do, you’re going to find out that kids can understand this and they’ll creep around the room quietly because they can identify with a human being. And they’ll poke each other when someone makes a noise and say, “Stop it. Teacher’s hung.” But teacher has got to reveal herself as a human being. If you feel like laughing at a kid’s joke, laugh. It always amazes me when I would be in schools and the teachers would die laughing in the teachers’ room over something that Johnny said. But they didn’t let Johnny see them die laughing. They’d say, “Johnny, that’s enough now!” Why couldn’t they laugh to Johnny? It’s funny. “Johnny, you’re a clown. Now sit down and shut up.” Why can’t you just be yourself? Be spontaneous. But we have to ask permission for everything because we can’t trust our own feelings anymore.

It always amuses me when I speak to formal groups. Before I walk in, I can always tell what’s going to happen. I have a big thing about touching people. Spontaneity, you know, I believe in it. When you touch someone you know they are. The existentialist movement had reached its zenith when it said, “In order to become you, you must kill someone or kill yourself because then you know you were being.” If you could jump off a building, you must have lived. Because we’re so alienated that no one looks at you, no one touches you, no one recognizes you in the environment. You are the invisible man. You don’t have to go to that extent. Just touch someone. It’s good. You know, in Europe everybody hugs each other and kisses each other. In my family at Christmas time and all the holidays, everyone walks in the door and everybody kisses everybody. That’s the first thing that’s done from the little bambinos to grandpa. We exchange diseases and it’s beautiful. But Emily has told us that a lady extends her hand to a gentleman if she so desires. *Distancing phenomena!*

If you want to see how alienated we’ve become, watch when a door of an elevator opens. Everyone’s standing like zombies, facing straight forward, hands to the sides, “Don’t you dare reach this way because you may touch someone.” Heaven forbid! So we all stand at attention and the door opens and then
Return to being human again and to liking the human state. Returning to saying you are human and I am human, we do crazy things. But we’re beautiful. We’re the most beautiful creatures on earth. Being human is good. When I go to formal groups there’s always Mrs. So and So who meets me at the door. And she says, “Oh, Dr. Buscaglia. How nice.” That’s our introduction, with her hands to her sides. So I reach for her hand. And she thinks, “What’s he doing?” I reach around and I grab her hand and I put my hand over it and very nervously she takes me into the living room where all the other ladies are sitting in a semi-circle. And they’re all in Position #1 – one knee over the other knee, hands gently folded on the lap, and a smile on the face. They learn that, you see. It would have been much more comfortable if they could have flopped on the floor, leaning on an elbow. But I never saw that; I would freak if I did. Position #1. Everybody.

What’s happening to us, what’s happening to our spontaneity? You feel happy, you tell people you’re happy. You walk into your classroom and you say, “I feel so joyous today we’re all going to freak all day long.” Why not let them know? Laugh! Cry! Another thing; men don’t cry. Who said? I cry at everything. My students always know I’ve read their papers because when I find something that moves me, they see little tear drops there. I very much identify with Don Quixote de la Mancha. This beautiful cat used to charge windmills! Of course you can’t beat a windmill, but he didn’t know that. He’d charge the windmill and it would knock him on his hoopy-doopy. But he’d get up again and he’d charge again and he’d get knocked on his hoopy-doopy. My feeling as I put that hook away was that he may have had a calloused hoopy-doopy but, boy, he lived a wonderful life. He knew that he was alive. “Oh God, to have reached the point of death, only to find that you have never lived at all.” That wasn’t true of Don Quixote. He
knew it! And when they did the beautiful musical, “The Man From La Mancha,” at the ending when he died, all the people he loved were around him and they were all weeping for his death. He wasn’t weeping for his death, for he had lived. Finally he rose up and from the back of the stage came a great staircase with its ray of light shining down. He picked up his lance and looked at everybody he loved and he smiled and walked up into this light. And the orchestra and the chorus were all blaring away “The Impossible Dream.” I was sitting there in the audience and tears were streaming down my cheeks. And a woman next to me poked her husband. She said, “Look, honey. That man is crying.” And I thought, “You silly......... I’ll give you something to really go home and tell your friends about.” So I took out my hankie and really wailed. That blew her mind! She may forget Don Quixote, but she’ll never forget me!

I think the loving person must return to spontaneity – return to touching each other, to holding each other, to smiling at each other, to thinking of each other, to caring about each other. You know, anybody in this audience who wants to hug me, they’re free to, and I won’t disintegrate. I’ll stand here all day if it means getting back to us, getting us together again. Hugs are good, they feel nice, and if you don’t believe it, try it.

Then I think, lastly, the loving individual is one who hasn’t forgotten his own needs. That’s an amazing thing to say. But we do have needs. We don’t really need too much physically, even though we believe we do, but we spend all of our time satisfying our physical needs and those of our children. We eat well, we usually have nice houses to live in. We take care of all those things. We go to the doctor if we’re feeling bad. But the most important needs of all are what we need in ourselves – a need to be seen, a need to be known, a need to be recognized, a need for achievement, a need to enjoy our world, a need to see the continual wonder of life, a need to be able to see how wonderful it is to be alive. But we’ve forgotten how to look at each other anymore. We don’t look at each other; we don’t listen to each other; we don’t touch each other, heaven forbid. Not even our kids. You know in our culture when a kid is three years old we take him off our lap and say, “you don’t do that kind of thing; it’s mushy stuff. You don’t do it with your father. Get off my lap, what are you doing kissing your father at three years old? You ought to be a man. Men don’t kiss men.” You
may not know this, but in Los Angeles there is a city ordinance that makes it a misdemeanor for two men to embrace. How do you like that? That's where we've gone. One of these days you are going to read in the newspaper that I've been jailed because I embraced everybody. I hug our Dean. It freaks his mind. Nobody ever gets across the desk to him; it's two miles long. I see him in an elevator and I say, "Hi, Dean," and I put my arms around him.

It's understandable how out of this generation, how out of our time, a philosophy like early existentialism developed, and that is our tremendous alienation. Am I Real? Do I Exist? Because nobody looks at me. Nobody touches me. I speak to people and they don't hear me. They're looking over my shoulder to see who else is there. Nobody looks in my eyes anymore, I'm alone and I'm dying of loneliness. As Schweitzer says, "We are all so much together and yet we are all dying of loneliness."

Many years ago Thornton Wilder wrote a beautiful play called "Our Town." And in his play he said an incredible thing. Remember the scene where little Emily dies? She goes to the graveyard and is told "Emily, you can return for one day in your life. Which day would you like?" and she said, "Oh, I remember how happy I was on my twelfth birthday. I'd like to come back on my twelfth birthday." And all the people in the graveyard say, "Emily, don't do it. Don't do it Emily." But she wants to. She wants to see Mama again and Papa again. So the scene switches, and there she is, twelve years old, and she's gone back in time to that wonderful day she remembers. She comes down the stairs in a pretty dress with her curls bouncing. But her mother is so busy making the cake for her birthday that she cannot stop long enough to look at her. She says, "Mama, look at me. I'm the birthday girl." And Mama says, "Fine, birthday girl. Sit down and have your breakfast." And Emily stands there and says, "Mama, look at me." But Mama doesn't. Papa comes in and he's so busy making money for her that he's never looked at her either and neither does brother because he's so involved in his own bag, he can't stop to look at her. The scene ends with her standing in the middle of the stage crying, "Please somebody, just look at me. I don't need the cake or the money. Please look at me." And nobody does and when they don't, she turns to her mother once more and says, "Please Mama?" so then she turns and says, "Take me away. I've forgotten what it was like to be human. Nobody looks at anybody. Nobody cares
It's come to that! Your kids grow so fast you don't see them. All of a sudden you look up and there's an adolescent or someone ready to be married. And you've missed the joy of looking in their faces because you've been so busy, running around making things for them, that you've missed the joy. You know, we are a culture of goal seekers. I have news for you—it's not the goal, it's the trip that's life. Life is the trip; life is the process; life is getting there. Well you've gotten there and what have you got? People to look up to you. You have a Cadillac. A Cadillac is a cold bedfellow... The doors and the steering wheel get in the way. But we've forgotten what it's like to look at each other, to touch each other, to relate to each other, to care about each other. It's no wonder we're all dying of loneliness.

I always use the little thing of share and tell time which could be one of the most beautiful ways of seeing kids in your classroom. But it's so abused. The teacher's doing her enrollment because the principal says that her enrollment must be in by 9:15 and this is the time she chooses to have share and tell. Little Sally comes in with a rock and she says, "I found a rock on the way to school." The teacher says, "Fine. Put it on the science table." But we could take the rock and look at it and we could say, "What is a rock? Sally, where does a rock come from? Who made a rock?" We could stop everything for the day and everything would revolve around that rock because all things that are, are in all things. You don't have to create artificial nonsense. It's all here, not outside. It's all there. All that there is to know is in a tree. All that there is to know is in a human being. The little kid stands in front of the classroom and says, "Yesterday my daddy hit my mommy with a hammer and they called the ambulance and they took her away and she's in the hospital." And the teacher says, "All right, next." It's time to see kids, and you know how little it takes? All you have to do is to look down and say, "yes," or "What a beautiful dress." Little Sally will wear that dress every day for the rest of the year because you have seen it.

Ellis Page did a wonderful study in affect where he took his class and he divided it up into three groups, A, B, and C. On every Group A paper, he put only a grade. Remember writing those wonderful papers that were a bit of you and then finding that you got it back with only a grade on it? An A, a B,
or a C, a D, an F? Meaningless. You look somewhere for a little spot of spaghetti or maybe a place where some coffee has been spilled on it so you can see that maybe the guy had read it. Group B, he gave them a grade and a word, like: good, fine, excellent, nice work. With Group C he stopped and wrote each of them a letter and he said, "Dear Johnny: Your syntax is atrocious. Your grammar is not to be believed. Your spelling is nonexistent. And your punctuation is like James Joyce. But you know, as I was sitting in bed last night talking to my wife, I said, ‘Sally, he has the most beautiful ideas in this paper. And I’m really going to try and help him develop it.’ Sincerely yours, Teacher.” And if somebody did something really beautiful, he wrote down, “Thank you. You continually blow my mind. Such a good paper with so many good ideas. Keep it up. I can’t wait to hear what you’re going to say next.” And then he did a statistical study. Group A remained the same. Group B were stationary and Group C grew and became.

Look at the study “Pygmalion in the Classroom.” It’s another paperback. Every educator should read it. Talk about expectation! These people from Harvard came in and said to all of the teachers like yourselves, “Now we are going to go in your classroom and we are going to give (and this isn’t the exact statement, this is the essence), we’re going to be giving a test to be called the Harvard Test of Intellectual Spurts. And what this test is going to measure is which kids in your classroom are going to grow intellectually during the year that they’re in your class. And it will pick them out. It never fails. We’ll be able to tell you, and think of what a help this will be.” So they went in and they gave some old obsolete I.Q. tests. After they finished giving it, they threw it in the garbage can. Then they just took five names at random from roll books and sat down at an interview. They said to a teacher, “Now these are the kids that are going to spurt this semester: Juanita Rodriquez.” “Juanita Rodriquez couldn’t spurt if you put her in a cannon,” said her teacher. “Nevertheless, the Harvard Tests of Intellectual Spurts never fails,” said the bigwigs. And do you know what happened? Every name that they had put on that list spurted all over the walls. Which shows you, you get what you expect. You walk into a class and you say, “These dumb kids. They’ll never learn anything.” You walk in saying, “These kids will and can learn; it’s my challenge to bring them to that table and to show them how fantastic it is.” We all have a need for achievement and recognition. We’ve
got to be able to do something and the greatest thing is joy in the work.

It's too bad when you go to work and you don't love it, especially in our profession. If you don't get excited every morning about getting into that room with all those little kids with their bright eyes waiting for you to help them to get to that table, then get the hell out of education! Do something where you're not going to be coming into contact with little kids and killing them at an early age. There are other things you can do . . . but let children alone. We all need to be recognized for what we're doing, for our work. Every once in a while we need someone to come up to us and say, “You're beautiful, kid. That was well done. That's nice.” And don't forget, if you need it, so do your kids. How about giving up this nonsense about twenty-seven wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Getting back papers with all of the things marked wrong. What about marking those things that are right? “You've got two right, Johnny. Good for you. Wow!” How about letting them know they can do something well and building from that instead of always counting on what is wrong? Accentuating what is right and what is good is just as simple. In fact, you have less wrist movements.

We all have a need for freedom, too. One thing that Thoreau says is that: “Birds never sing in caves.” And neither do we. In order to learn, you've got to be free. You've got to be free to experiment, to try, be free to make mistakes. That's the way you learn. I can understand your mistakes and I profit greatly from mine. The secret is not to make the same one twice. But I need to be free to experiment and to try. Give me that chance. Allow me the freedom to be and to be myself and to find the joy in need. Don't give me your hangups! Let me find and overcome my own!

I'd like to close with a quote from Leo Rosten which, in his very special way, says it all:

In some way, however, small and secret, each of us is a little mad . . . Everyone is lonely at bottom and cries to be understood; but we can never entirely understand someone else, and each of us remains part stranger even to those who love us . . . It is the weak who are cruel; gentleness is to be expected only from the strong . . . Those who do not know fear are not really brave, for courage is the capacity to confront what can be imagined . . . You can understand people better if you look at them — no
matter how old or impressive they may be—as if they are children. For most of us never mature; we simply grow taller... Happiness comes only when we push our brains and hearts to the farthest reaches of which we are capable... The purpose of life is to matter—to count, to stand for something, to have it make some difference that we lived at all.

Tonight my idea talk "Or...trations group we could sh... back from because with such your vib... every no...

Now I
How... briefly in... many of called W... I, with... beautiful. There's... which, we... about lov...