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## Serving the Song

So, I begin again. Before I had to begin again, I wrote 2 ½ pages of the most effortless prose that I have ever written. It poured out like sweet honey in autumn. I talked about all the great and noble things that I sincerely believe about teaching, how comfortable I feel in the classroom and how I love for students to really take responsibility for their learning. Now, it is gone, like a faint Microsoft memory..... washed away. (I don't know how I lost it but it doesn't matter.)

My own personal theory about every thing I've ever lost like this is way too intellectual and doesn't give me much comfort in terms of my wasted energy of starting and stopping and starting again. It goes back to a basic law of Physics and says something like 'nothing is created or destroyed only changed in form.' In theory, none of that paper ever belonged to me so I had nothing to loose! I could talk about how the basic structure for my essay still exists in my mind and I can easily remember that shape and reconstruct it. My bursted bubble has no structure, but I might be able to pick up some of the pieces.

In Plato's Realm of Ideal Forms, every object on earth has a perfect, etheric counterpart, an idealized blueprint in the Realm beyond the form. Maybe to loose a paper is to become more authentic to the truth of the ideal expression of what I was trying to write originally. Rewriting puts us more in touch with the Ideal Realm. Ahhh, bullshit! It's about loosing something that just cannot be recreated or rationalized except by my

own tears and toil. Ok, no tears...I have never cried about a paper. I just make a barbaric yawp over and over again so my throat hurts and my neighbors complain.

I could write about how loosing that paper will give me more compassion and understanding when it comes to my own students, all the excuses they give me, all the reasons why their papers are late, all the ways that I have tried to be fair even though their papers are 2 weeks late. But, none of that matters.....shall I start again now?

The first day of class, I handed out an anecdote about the older brother teaching the younger brother to swim by throwing him in. It made for some interesting looks and stares and conversation the first day, but I thought it made a good point about feeling unprepared but persevering in spite of this. I reassured my students, “it’s not as if you are actually being thrown in to drown, and I will help you if you need it...I want to help you succeed...” or words to that effect.

Funny how all the vitality of the original writing seems to have gotten sponged up after the bubble burst. There was a perfect time for that paper to just become transparent in my mind and fingertips. It’s like that sacred moment of complete lucidity just came and went: now I am well into the wane of lucid. That time has come and gone. I do remember one thing from the wax of lucid writing: it’s a privilege to be a teacher at SMSU, to paraphrase Dr. Hoogestraat paraphrasing someone else. I sincerely enjoy being a part of the students’ academic lives at this university. It’s a way for me to really feel like a responsible older brother without any of the real responsibility of pulling someone out of the water.

Sometimes when I am teaching and everything seems to be just clicking, it’s like I don’t even need to think of the next word. I feel like I have become transparent to the

universe at those moments. It's like my ego just dries up and blows away and the only thing left is...I don't know what is left and I don't know how to recreate those moments. But it seems as if all the reading and all the thinking and all the preparation might help me to experience this moment in some way. Then, the topic just kind of teaches itself.

I have had this same experience when I perform music and the song just comes through me like a breath: it's almost no effort to play and it connects me to the music in a transcendental way. I don't even think about moving this finger or playing a certain note. It's as if all the notes play themselves. It's the kind of moment that I have thought of as "serving the song." To me, serving the song means to be completely true to the integrity of the music without any sense of personality or ego embellishing the music beyond its universal and timeless character. It's a feeling of complete humility to the truth of the music. In the classroom, it is the same sense of the complete integrity of the topic.

I can't think exactly of the subject I was teaching when this has occurred, almost as if I'm teaching on autopilot. Generally, it is easier to feel at ease with a subject I am familiar with. On the other hand, it is sometimes possible to break through my own self-consciousness if I am a little bit on edge with the topic. Then, I might go in directions that I wouldn't have planned but still push my comfort level to a new boundary. After all, it doesn't matter what you do when you know what to do; it matters what you do when you don't know what to do.

Perhaps one of the most interesting lessons I did was to copy my journal entry for the Aphrodite Show at Pure lounge then copy the completely revised essay on the other side. I believe that I used it as an example of revision, but I could have used it for

description or narrative or maybe even interview. The fact that this was one of the most exciting experiences that I have ever had carried over into the writing and the classroom.

The hardest thing for me to recreate about that original paper was that *original feeling*. The feeling was young and energetic and a little cocky but humble and spiritual. Now, at midnight before the paper is due, I can't help but feel less-than-energetic and less-than-spiritual. I'm too tired to feel either humble or spiritual. And what I am about to write next may even surprise me. It's time to break through the barriers of my own self-awareness and feel comfortable with my own ambiguity.

Writing has always been a way for me to break free from my own ego and feel transparent to the universe. But, writing completely and fluidly without having to think of the next word has been a real challenge for me at times in my life. I know that my best writing comes this way, when I can just break free from my inhibitions about **why** I am writing and just let the words flow through me like a breath. It's as close as I can come to serving the song while I write.

Writing is fundamentally an act of honesty for me—doing what Joseph Campbell describes as living *authentically*. Or, as a wise person once said (and Sting succinctly paraphrased), *just be yourself*. In my humble opinion, this is one of the greatest gifts that we can give students in the classroom: acceptance for who they are. If we can inspire students to be themselves and to write authentically, perhaps we can inspire them to achieve the Ideal Form of their highest potential.