

Title: Adler and the Art of Discovery

This episode was inspired by an article by Mortimer Adler called "Teaching and Learning, published on the site "Radical Academy," [accessible here](#).

Mortimer Adler, "Teaching and Learning" Discussion Questions (in a sequence inspired by the text)

1. ***"A good teacher should aim to make his tutelage totally dispensable."*** Have we ever taught with the purpose of no longer being needed? Do we agree that the goal of the education system is reducing independent learners? If true, does this goal have significance for the way we should teach?
2. ***"...the effort to communicate what a man knows is not, in itself, successful teaching... Successful teaching occurs only when the mind of the learner passes from a state of ignorance or error to a state of knowledge"***.
 - i) Is the mindset of the average teacher focused more on "What did I teach (i.e. communicate)?" Or "What did they learn (knowledge gained)?"
 - ii) How should we accurately measure this success?
 - iii) Are Grades and Test scores limited in assessing what students have learned?
 - iv) I know I am guilty of a common mistake teachers make; writing a test last minute by asking myself the question, "What did I teach?". Is there an alternative that focuses on 'what they learned'?
 - v) If a student fails to learn, what must a teacher do next? How do you balance this in a classroom?
 - vi) Presumably, this success does not look the same for all students because we need to assess their knowledge rather than assessment by an objective standard. Is this possible?
3. ***"What the teacher does must be deliberately calculated to change the mind of the learner. Merely motivating someone to learn is not enough; stimulation is not teaching...All learning is a process of discovery on the part of the learner."***

Then what is the role of inspiration? What is wrong with trying to be the 'fun' teacher? Is it correct to summarize as communication, motivation, and inspiration, which should lead to the discovery of new knowledge by the students? How do we recognize these lightbulb moments? How do we utilize the thrill of discovery in class?
4. If ***"all learning is a process of discovery"*** and the learner is an ***"agent whose activity is both primary and indispensable"*** to this process, while the teacher is ***"secondary and dispensable,"*** then...
 - i) how do we increase the focus on active student discovery?
 - ii) Who is working harder in the classroom, the teacher or student?
 - iii) Do we feel that our students are actively engaged?
 - iv) What evidence tells us that students are actively engaged?
 - v) to what extent do students willingly engage in discovery as opposed to memorization?
5. How does Adler distinguish the operative and co-operative arts? Do we agree that teaching belongs in the co-operative category? What are the consequences of this assertion? Why are teaching, medicine, and farming arts, and not sciences or philosophies?
6. Can we concisely restate the role of the teacher in this co-operative art form?
7. To what extent do we agree/disagree with the Hippocratic analogy for teaching and its conclusion a)

Indoctrination is like surgery (invasive and unhealthy for the mind, rarely necessary) b) Lecture and books are like medicinal drugs (passive, curative responses to ignorance or error.

c) Discussion is like controlling the patient regimen (an active, healthy lifestyle that promotes well-being, preventative care)

Therefore: Discussion should be the Primary (most beneficial?) teaching method; lecture and books are merely accessories to the discussion.

8. Any thoughts or comments on the seven consequences Adler outlines for this line of reasoning?