

Review Of Eleanor Lohr's Doctoral Thesis Love At Work: What Is My Lived Experience Of Love, And How May I Become An Instrument Of Love's Purpose?

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Eleanor Lohr's doctoral thesis, completed in 2006, is significant for me for two reasons. The first is that the subject of love is often viewed as taboo in academic work and especially as it pertains to the workplace and yet her inquiry investigates the subject by 'letting love show me the way' (p. 257). In her abstract, she describes her inquiry:

This is a first person action research account in which I immerse myself in my embodied experience of love. My aim is to learn through love how my practice, as a Director in social housing, and as a teacher of yoga, might be improved by giving primacy to a value laden theorising of my lived experience.

In both of these work-settings, Eleanor's process melds together spiritual practice and cycles of action and reflection and develops her embodied living-educational-theory as she clarifies how she becomes an instrument of love through pedagogy of presence (p. 260). She says, 'I let love lead my actions on organisational issues as I foster the growth of the organisations in which I work' (p. 264).

She describes this process very eloquently:

My inquiry brings my knowledge of love into the academy through propositional knowing and into my practice through the dynamical boundaries between self and other. The boundary between 'me and we' is the pivotal place where resonances and dissonances are both felt and dispersed into the relational flow. If I feel and act with love, this understanding leaks through the boundary of the self into the inclusional flow, and is returned to me. In the resonance of the return, my understanding of love is clarified(p.259).

The second significance emerges in the Epilogue, where she describes and explains the difficult and depressing process of the Viva (oral examination) and the required rewriting, which was, 'not a labour of love' (p. 317). She goes on to say, 'I found myself in a tug-of-war between conventional rationality and my relational (e)pistemology, and it was very painful (p. 312). She continues, 'In the viva I experienced a dissonance between the examiner's verbalised statements and their judgements, and I wanted a sufficient clarification in order to attune myself to their understanding' (pp. 315-316). Because she wanted her scholarship recognized, she completed the requirements of the examiners and says, 'By doing a complete rewrite, I have learned more about how I use language, about the intersection of spiritual practice and action research, and have found further confirmation of my scholarship by expressing my 'truth' differently' (p. 318).

The strength of Lohr's doctoral writings lies in the importance of ontological and relational values that are expressed as love, and described as 'holding the 'other' as part of the self' (Prologue, p. x). I have read Lohr's thesis several times and continue to find it inspirational.



Video 1: Eleanor Lohr introducing her thesis.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmFkhPNmi6s&feature=em-upload_owner

References

Lohr, E. (2006). *Love at Work*. Doctoral thesis, University of Bath, UK. Retrieved June 3, 2016, from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/lohr.shtml>