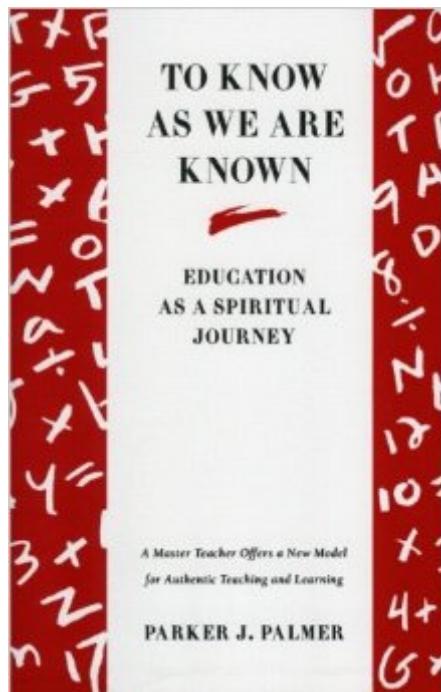


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# To Know As We Are Known: Education As A Spiritual Journey



## Synopsis

This primer on authentic education explores how mind and heart can work together in the learning process. Moving beyond the bankruptcy of our current model of education, Parker Palmer finds the soul of education through a lifelong cultivation of the wisdom each of us possesses and can share to benefit others.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have long been a fan of Parker Palmer, from his work on teaching and vocation to his work on spirituality - his volume 'Let Your Life Speak' is one of my regular 're-reads'; his book 'The Courage to Teach' is also an important piece of my personal vocational discernment. This book is a 'new event' in my life; originally assigned as part of a class, it has already become part of my 'necessary' books. I recognise myself in some of the pages here, both as a teacher and as a student. Palmer combines ideas from theories of education with ideas from theology, spirituality and vocational discernment. I do sense myself falling into the 'must get an A' mode in many of my classes; Palmer writes that this is fairly typical of the Western intellectual paradigm. He draws an example from the film 'The Day After Trinity', about the makers of the first atomic weapons, and how they were goal-oriented to such an extent that they didn't take time to reflect on the greater ramifications of their work - the work itself and progress toward the goal (here an 'A' constituted a workable, fission bomb) was all that mattered. One of the downsides of letting to part of the educational experience go in favour of a less target-oriented, graded approach (not really addressed in his writing) is that the rest of the world does look to this - will others interpret the 'C' on my transcript from my

undergraduate days and realise as I did that that particular class was more valuable to me than any other? Palmer states that our quest for knowledge derives from two sources, curiosity and control. Palmer argues another source, however, beyond these two, and that is love. 'This love is not a soft and sentimental virtue, not a fuzzy feeling of romance.'

Parker Palmer has created a truly outstanding work with *To Know as We Are Known*. This work explores the nature of truth, and challenges readers to examine and transform the ways they teach and learn. Palmer's model centers on the premise that truth is neither objective (an object can be manipulated, abused, and co-opted for use to whatever ends we so desire, we do not bear the kind of love that requires responsibility toward objects) nor subjective (subjectivism is the decision to listen only to ourselves in the search for truth, it concedes diversity without calling into dialogue.) Truth is relational. Real truth can only be found in an open willingness to both search out and listen in respect (borne out of non-selfish love) to the subject being learned, the students being taught, and to the future we are creating together. In order to illustrate the objectivist approach to knowledge, he uses the example of the atomic bomb. He quotes Robert Oppenheimer as saying "The physicists have known sin." The objective way treats knowledge as something self-contained, and takes no responsibility for the outcomes of research or development. He lets the fruits of this way, the example of Hiroshima, stand in stark contrast to a story about 4th century wandering mystics and hermits (the Desert Fathers and Mothers.) The story is about Abba (Father) Felix, and a group of monks who sought him out for his wisdom. They begged him to give them a word of truth. He was silent for a long time, and then explained that God had withdrawn words of truth from old men, because those who seek them out had no intention of following the truth they received with their lives. The brothers then realized their own intentions and groaned "Pray for us Abba Felix!"

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