

# Chalkboard

By

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Words. From time to time I have had a school board member or two to suggest that I am too full of them. Well, at least I think that was the implication. In my defense, it would be hard to be an educator without slinging a few words around here and there.

Have you ever thought really what a word is? While I cannot do so, I am sure that one of the school district's speech teachers or speech pathologists could explain in great detail the physical process by which air is expelled through the larynx and the combination of tongue, lips, mouth, and pharynx to form vowel and consonant sounds. But that is not my interest today, an accordion can make many sounds but it cannot think.

My interest today in words gravitates toward the metaphysical with a slight brush with physics. Do not get too excited, most of what I learned about physics is remembered from seventh grade science. Remember the first law of thermodynamics? "Energy can neither be created nor destroyed. It can only change forms." Ditto for the law of conservation of mass/matter which basically says, "matter cannot be created/destroyed". Note that it may be rearranged.

Note too that a pretty smart guy came up with a simple equation,  $E=mc^2$ , which basically said matter and energy are interchangeable. Keep that thought in mind. While you are thinking, think about thinking, which some say is simply the electrical and chemical communication of the neurons which make up our brains.

Where am I going with this? Imagine that a "thought" is actually a material part of a person transformed into energy and that energy is translated into sound waves or written symbols which make up a word or series of words which is/are translated by someone's eye or ear back into energy and then transformed back into the original thought of the "sender".

Simple process? A material part of your body, a thought, is received by someone and becomes a physical part of his or her body existing as a material "thought". Hey, remember, matter and energy cannot be created or destroyed (by humans anyway); it can only change forms.

If that could or should be true then I believe we all, educators and others, need to be very careful with what we think, what we read, what we write, what we speak and to whom we listen to because when we engage in those activities we are sharing a part of our self or receiving a physical part

of someone else. All of those activities are the same thing, just in a different state of matter/energy transference.

“Oh, Dr. Barrett,” you say. “You have already been in the special Christmas egg nog.” Not so, not yet anyway.

Brain research in the field of education regarding how we think has progressed over the years since Descartes coined the term "*Cogito, ergo sum*" ("I think, therefore I am"). While I am not endorsing or validating any of the ideas found there, interesting sites you might want to visit regarding brain research and education are

[http://712educators.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=712educators&cdn=education&tm=14&gps=73\\_367\\_1020\\_533&f=00&tt=14&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.brains.org/hottopics.htm](http://712educators.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=712educators&cdn=education&tm=14&gps=73_367_1020_533&f=00&tt=14&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.brains.org/hottopics.htm) and <http://www.speaker.gov/pdf/CS3108.pdf> .

So is a word really capable of having a life of it's own? Because it is the Christmas season and because “I believe”, I will share early research from my favorite history/science/literature compendium.

My first citation is from a historian/researcher named John, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

This was the same Word the author had written an earlier research paper concerning the energy/matter transfer- “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”.

Merry Christmas from my family to yours.