

On 4 Aug 2018, at 16:28, Ben Cunningham <cunninghamben6@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Jack, I'm delighted for you that you were able to take time out from all your onerous work in order to be with Luke and with Rebecca and Joan.

Strange to relate I am not depressed about the fact that I now have Alzheimers. It was finally confirmed a day or two ago when the results of the tests were conveyed to me. Last night I took the first of the Alzheimer's tablets on schedule. It's meant to either improve my symptoms or possibly slow down the progression of dementia. Lets' hope it'll do something like that. Whatever else happens, I know now that I am living on borrowed time in terms of my understanding of the world and of myself. I'll eventually go into the dark night of the soul and, surprise, surprise, I'm not upset about that – at least not yet. There's also health advice for me to follow, etc.

Let me emphasise, though, that the work I have been doing with Moira's help at least once every week about my prison work is, I believe, worth celebrating. It comprises not only the work, but some of the celebrated world renowned psychologists and psychiatrists' ideas, as I understand them. Though it may sound a little pretentious, I think Carl Rogers and others, if alive, would be proud of me, and what I'm doing and how I'm doing it. To be honest, all my social life is now to do with visiting five prisoners five days every week and all those I meet are intelligent and they welcome me with open arms. The Alzheimers literature warns me about stress, anxiety and depression. Well, I never experience any of it either within myself, or with prisoners. It's the opposite. I love meeting them. I have fun with them. They tell me I stimulate them and I tell them that I am likewise stimulated by them.

I will have to do the driving test again and I will do so. The other issue is that I have been recommended to use a document called an 'enduring power of attorney', which is a document where I nominate someone to manage my affairs before I die. I was speaking with Gina, my sister, and she agreed that her husband, a solicitor, would do it for me, I have complete trust in him and am a good friend of his. So, that's okay, too. The other thing I now have to do, too, is to tell my Insurance Company about my diagnosis. I also have to notify the National Driving Licence Service and will have to fill in a Driving Licence application form and, in addition, I will need a Driving Licence Medical Report completed by my doctor. That may be somewhat formidable, but I'll go for it anyway. After all that I'll just wait for death!!! No, I'm joking!

Actually, I'm more sanguine than I thought I'd be, and am actually very surprised at that. Normally, something like this would have me worried to high heavens, but not now for some reason. Perhaps, it may be that I had known for some time that there was a problem and that now that it has been diagnosed I am able to accept it, not with love, mind you, but at least with a form of resignation and equanimity that doesn't leave me upset. In the face of what I am experiencing I'm actually quite calm and am genuinely surprised at that.

I consider that the work I do in prison is possibly the most important work I have ever done in my life. Why? Because I have so easily gained the confidence of so many prisoners that I can, literally do what I like with them and it's not only acceptable but welcomed. If for any reason I am absent the officers tell me that the prisoners are out of sorts until I return. I'm not surprised. I have invested my whole life in them more perhaps than I have ever done in my life with anyone else. If I may say so, some of the prisoners' responses to me are quite remarkable. They jump off the page at times. I offer feedback to them in writing about what I have discovered about them and support it with remarks from some of the world's great psychiatrists' ideas and philosophies to let them know that there is no reason why they can't grow and develop in step with some of the ideas and findings of the world's greatest psychologists and psychiatrists. Sometimes I also write to them in prison in between and they tell me they cherish these letters, too.

I think that the results of my collaboration with prisoners are remarkable for them and for me. I have been writing weekly to Moira about this work and, I believe, she would agree with what I have just said. Whatever I might put into the public arena regarding Living Theory would have to be about that and how it fits with some of the findings of the world's greatest psychologists and psychiatrists.

And, yes, I'd like to continue working with Moira – if she agrees – and then follow through on what you suggest. She has been a stalwart supporter of the work I have doing for many years since my time at Bath.

Love,  
Ben

On Sat, Aug 4, 2018 at 3:15 PM, [jack@actionresearch.net](mailto:jack@actionresearch.net) <[jack@actionresearch.net](mailto:jack@actionresearch.net)> wrote:  
Hi Ben - good to hear from you - sorry for the delay in responding - I've been away for a week at Centre Parc near Penrith mainly for Luke (8 year old) and with Rebecca and Joan.

I'm pleased that you intend to keep going until the day comes when you can't remember your name ! What I'm looking forward to is sharing ideas as we work at our 'living legacy'. The clarity of your letter doesn't give any sign of any difficulty in communicating, but I'll let you know if I notice anything.

What I'm wondering is whether we could continue a conversation, perhaps involving Moira, that we share as part of the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Educational Journal of Living Theories with what is called the Living Theory wiki.

I know that you are reticent about the technology, but I think I could easily work with you on this to see if you like its potential for developing a contribution to your living legacy.

For example - if you click on:

[http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main_Page)

It should take you into the Living Theory wiki

If you browse down you will come to a list of names. The ones in black have already made contributions that you can click on. The ones in red including yours have yet to make a contribution.

You should be able to click on Ben and type in whatever you want for your page...

I've got administrator permissions for the web-site and I'll give you the username Ben and the password Ben1 so that you can practice making an entry if you would like to.

Please don't be put off by the technology - lots of people find the initial entry difficult and I'll help...

Hoping that you like the idea.

Love Jack.

On 27 Jul 2018, at 20:14, Ben Cunningham <[cunninghamben6@gmail.com](mailto:cunninghamben6@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hi Jack,

It has been confirmed that I have the onset of Alzheimers. Strangely enough I wasn't totally shocked. I had guessed it from the recent meetings I have had with various doctors, but was hoping, naturally, that it wasn't true. Well, now it is and I know it is. I don't yet know how it'll affect my whole life but, of course, it will. I know that.

What is wrong to put it simply is that damage has been done to my brain. It'll gradually affect my memory, my thinking, my language and even my ability to carry out everyday tasks.

My symptoms, to put it simply, are that it has become noticeable even to myself that I find it hard to remember recent happenings but still retain my recall of things from the past. Not only that, but I have a tendency to repeat myself and re-tell past stories and happenings. I think that is symptomatic of my anxiety about knowing that I have difficulty remembering. There are also times when I find myself searching for words to express myself and sometimes I even lose track of a conversation.

However, let me stress that I'm not yet sad, angry or frustrated and haven't yet felt low in mood nor do I feel less confidence in myself, but this is also going to happen eventually, unfortunately - if I live long enough.

The two professionals I met today asked me what it has been like for me to help prisoners and I explained as thoroughly as I could what I do and why I do it the way I do. For me, they are human beings like me who made mistakes in their lives and now have to answer to the law for them. My task, in my view, is not to denigrate them but to find ways in conversations with them about how they might now start changing the course of their lives. I usually find a way during our conversations to point to positive things I hear them saying about themselves in order to boost their self-confidence, but also to let them know that I don't condemn them. I also use watered down versions of various psychologies and psychologist, particularly, Carl Rogers and even notables like John Macmurray and there are many others. Because most of the prisoners are intelligent they ask me for copies of my summaries of these writers, which I am delighted to do and they form of our discussion at subsequent meetings.

I'm going to keep going until the day comes when I can't remember my name.

Love,

Ben