

**A response to Kate’s question ‘How have you learnt to respond to both your relational commitment to valuing the other and exercising professional judgment?’**

My response is related to my video-taped response to Kate’s request that participants in the Conversation Café conversation on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014 share their reflections on their experiences of holding together their valuing of another with their professional judgment. Here is the 30 minute video of the participants’ responses at:

[http://www.youtube.com/my\\_videos?o=U](http://www.youtube.com/my_videos?o=U)



I feel the need to be clear about what I think I am expressing to others when I say that ‘I value the other’. My valuing of another feels complex. I think my valuing has a cosmological core in the sense that at the age of 22 I remember an experience of feeling at one with the cosmic energy of the universe. I found this experience of a flow of life-affirming energy, life enhancing, and I think that my embodied expression of this flow of energy is communicated within my relationships that I distinguish as ‘valuing the other’. Fukuyama writes clearly about ‘Thymos’ in the sense of human beings seeking recognition of their own worth and the tension in evaluating both self and other:

*Human beings seek recognition of their own worth, or of the people, things, or principles that they invest with worth. The desire for recognition, and the accompanying emotions of anger, shame and pride, are parts of the human personality critical to political life. According to Hegel, they are what drives the whole historical process. (Fukuyama, 1992, p. xvii)*

*“The existence of a moral dimension in the human personality that constantly evaluates both the self and others does not, however, mean that there will be any agreement on the substantive content of morality. In a world of thymotic moral selves, they will be constantly disagreeing and arguing and growing angry with one another over a host of questions, large and small. Hence thymos is, even in its most humble manifestations, the starting point for human conflict.” (pp. 181-182).*

I believe that in my 'valuing the other' I communicate a recognition that the other communicates their own flow of life-affirming energy. I like the way Paul Tillich expresses ontological security as a state of being grasped by the power of being (1962, p. 168), from his perspective as a Christian existentialist philosopher and theologian. I describe my own experience of a cosmic flow of life-affirming energy as being grasped by the power of being from within my own secular humanism.

Within my relationships I also believe that I expressed the quality of humility described by Martin Buber as I seek to support others to make public their own embodied knowledge in a way that enhances the flow of values that carries hope for the future of humanity.

*"If this educator should ever believe that for the sake of education he has to practise selection and arrangement, then he will be guided by another criterion than that of inclination, however legitimate this may be in its own sphere; he will be guided by the recognition of values which is in his glance as an educator. But even then his selection remains suspended, under constant correction by the special humility of the educator for whom the life and particular being of all his pupils is the decisive factor to which his 'hierarchical' recognition is subordinated." (Buber, p 122, 1947)*

**How have I learnt to sustain my expression of a life-affirming energy in my valuing the other with the humanity of the educator as I exercise my professional judgment in helping to make public the embodied knowledge of the other?**

I have learnt to do this within my 6 years teaching science in London Comprehensive Schools (1967-1973) and my work (1973-2012) in the Department of Education at the University of Bath which includes my supervision of over 30 successfully completed doctoral theses that are accessible at <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>.

In relation to learning how to express a flow of life-affirming energy, I don't think that I learnt how to do this. I recall vividly at the age of 23 this flow of energy and whilst its source remains a mystery and count myself fortunate that I continue to experience and express this energy.

In relation to learning how to express professional judgments whilst expressing this flow of energy in valuing the others, I think that I did learn how to do this and that my learning is continuing with the extension of my cognitive range and concern in my own learning as I support individuals in making public their embodied knowledge.

I have documented the growth of my educational knowledge in my 1993 book at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jwgek93.htm> and I am in the process of produced Part Two of the growth of my educational knowledge to cover the years 1993-2014 which covers the years of my supervision of successfully completed doctorates.

What I continue to learn, in my educational relationships, is how to make professional (and critical) judgments that support another in making their own unique contribution to knowledge, as they make public their embodied knowledge in their explanations of educational influence. I learnt how to make these professional judgments, by being

open to the uniqueness and originality of the other's expression of the values and understandings they use to give meaning and purpose to their lives. I am continuing to learn how to express my professional judgments whilst expressing my valuing of the other, through what Keith Kinsella calls, 'Presencing empathetic responsiveness' and 'Presencing developmental opportunities'. How I learn combines experience, reflection and my use of language.

I'll pause here to see if Kate (or anyone) has further questions. Jack (25/01/14)

References:

- Buber, M. (1947) *Between Man and Man*. London; Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd.
- Fukuyama, F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*, London; Penguin.
- Tillich, P. (1962) *The Courage to be*. London; Fontana.