

## Am I Communicating My Meanings Of Loving Wisdom?

Jack Whitehead 16/09/11

I know that for many philosophers, philosophy is the love of wisdom. Because I want to communicate a **living** philosophy of educational enquiry I am focusing on my meanings of **loving wisdom** in my life in education.

Most of this life has been spent enabling educators to: recognize, value, critically engage with and evolve their embodied, yet often unarticulated, knowledge of educational theory, practice and provision; and make influentially public, particularly in the Academy, their explanations of their educational influence.

Over the past 40 years I have learnt much about the nature of such explanations and coined the term, living educational theory, to mean an individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. At the heart of these explanations are the practical principles that individuals use to explain their influence. Hence my interest in loving wisdom as a practical principle in explanations of educational influence.

Because of my belief that practitioner-researchers could produce their own living educational theories and that these could be legitimated in the Academy as original and significant contributions to educational knowledge in enhancing the knowledge-base of education, I have focused much of my supervision on doctoral research programmes.

All the doctoral research programmes I have supervised to successful completion have had to satisfy internal and external examiners that they have fulfilled criteria of originality, critical judgment and matter worthy of publication to the standard of a Ph.D. which is a Doctor of Philosophy. What has been very important to me is that the doctorates also fulfilled the personal criteria of the researcher. Not just an intellectual interest satisfied, but to satisfy the emotional and ontological desires of the researcher.

Each individual has sustained a commitment to their research programme over a minimum of 5 years. This has been an educational process of learning. I make a distinction between education and learning. For me to recognise something as educational it must involve learning in relation to values that carry hope for the future of humanity. Learning does not necessarily imply such values. Much learning in the world has included a denial of such values. Being born in 1944 when engineers were learning how to improve the lifts to take the bodies from the gas chambers, has influenced my sensitivity to insisting that education involves learning that carries values that sustain and enhance hope for the future of humanity.

I use the term 'loving wisdom' to focus on the qualities that resonate most powerfully for me in my relationships with the individuals I have supervised for their Doctoral Degrees. Each individual is unique, with their own interests, biographies, contexts and personalities. However, each individual has expressed their originality in the practical principles they express in their explanations for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which they live and work.

There are over 30 doctorates accessible from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml> which have satisfied internal and external examiners as to their originality as contributions to knowledge. They have also satisfied the researcher that they have done justice to the ontological values that give meaning and purpose to their lives.

The reason I give for sustaining my supervision over a minimum of 5 years with the doctoral researchers is that of 'loving wisdom'. Each individual expresses their unique values in a way that resonates, in my intuition, with the values I associate as carrying hope for the future of humanity. It is my identification and energetic feeling of resonance of these values, together with my communication of such responses to the researcher than I am meaning by loving wisdom. I am stressing that each individual is unique; the values they express and clarify in their doctorates are different. Yet, I feel a strong pooling of life-affirming energy in their expression of the uniqueness of their constellation of values and understandings that I relate to hope for the future of humanity.

I know that there are limitations in my expression and communication of meanings though the words I use. I think I can overcome some of these limitations by using my words in relation meanings that are being expressed through visual data. The table overleaf contains the images and live urls to video-clips where the individuals evoke a response in me that I recognise as loving wisdom. It is a relational quality in which I experience a resonance with the values I associate as carrying hope for the future of humanity and at the same time are expressed in a way that holds safely the integrity and uniqueness of the individual. Some of the individuals in the table below I have worked with rather than supervised.

In my expression of loving wisdom I believe that I am helping to enable others to identify the practical principles that motivate them in doing what they do. I am thinking of practical principles in terms of the flows of energy with the values that individuals use to give meaning and purpose to their lives. They use these principles to explain their influence. My intention is to contribute an educational influence with others through their stories and, through these stories, to contribute towards the flow of energy and values that carry hope for the future of humanity. Following the table of 19 images and video-clips I have only chosen the clips of Andrew Henon and Sonia Hutchison, because of limitations of space, to identify what I experience as the expression of their wisdom and to continue to communicate my meanings of loving wisdom. Each individual in the table evokes my meaning of loving wisdom.



Sonia Hutchison's presentation 16:04 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDGSjkFESiU>



Je Kan Adler-Collins' first presentation 13:23 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiX39DQcoLE>



Je Kan Adler-Collins' second presentation 10:51 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID3tcF-BKRo>



Jack Whitehead's presentation 23:50 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqGvc6KjwUo>



Nigel Harrison's presentation 20:02 minutes

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sa5hE0R\\_nU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sa5hE0R_nU)



Christine Jones' presentation 20:29 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czfgT6vFOc>



Marie Huxtable's first presentation 25:40 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mePadTBJMkA>



Joan Walton, Bernie Hughes and Janice Darkes-Sutcliffe's presentations 1:33:32

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Rty5Yna0rM>



Marie Huxtable's third presentation 14:37 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHjatXU2HB8>



Joan Walton's presentation 20:39 minutes

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6WEgXAE\\_A0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6WEgXAE_A0)



Marie Huxtable's second presentation 21:20 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Swt5hrDPbXA>



Nigel Harrison's presentation on his doctoral research at Liverpool Hope University 18:05 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iy04M8ldfVU>



Alan Rayner on the social implications of inclusionality 55:46

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xetG0GD2d6w>



Early Year's Educators Conference at Liverpool Hope University

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc1wMrlukmQ>



William House talking about the Keynsham Kind Project 10:11 minutes

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFoQt\\_6mwpc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFoQt_6mwpc)



Jacqueline Delong reflecting on master's class 11:16 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWjZ17GZDDs>



Je Kan Adler-Collins on 'End of Life Care' 2:33 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCxNenF5VdI>



Andrew Henon's presentation in support of his master's degree report 24:52 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dt2j1DIItE>



Phillip Tattersall on Community Based Auditing 1:47:05

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APnHnx0ys1E>

## **Responding to Andrew Henon with loving wisdom**

As I respond to the video-clip of Andrew I am aware of his self-identification as a socially engaged artist. In his enquiry for his masters degree Andrew engaged in a self-study that included an unsuccessful attempt to give up smoking (he has since succeeded). The visual narrative captivated my imagination for various reasons. It is a highly innovative use of visual narrative and opens up new possibilities for explaining one's educational influence in one's own learning and in the learning of others. Whilst artists have engaged for centuries in life-drawing and self portraiture, Andrew makes use of his own naked body in the creation of a sculpture of a body that is constituted by cigarette ends. Part of Andrew's story includes his narrative wreckage of the failure to give up smoking. Hence it is not a smooth story of self. In the production of the life model part of the video and in the production of the large painting on which he stands, Andrew rolls around naked, and uses his body to paint with the cigarette ends, ash, tobacco and nicotine water. This was part of the intended aversion to smoking activity. However, unknown to Andrew at the time, he was consequently and unintentionally absorbing nicotine and hence making it more difficult to give up smoking!

In watching the video, I experience my expression of loving wisdom as Andy creates (for me) a safe viewing space to understand an acceptance of his naked form in creating a work of art. Given the social pathologies around nakedness, I find Andy's acceptance, both refreshing and wise.

The use of loving wisdom as a practical principle in an explanation of my educational influence, is in my assistance in making public Andrew's explanation of his educational influence in his own learning, to live as fully as he can the life of a socially engaged artist. In this sense of loving wisdom I am contributing to the gift of making public Andrew's life as a work of art with the hope and intention of enhancing the values that carry hope for the future of humanity.

## **Responding to Sonia Hutchison with loving wisdom**

As I respond to the video-clip of Sonia, I feel her wisdom as she highlights the importance of a pooling of energy through conversation, with values of humanity. I identify with feeling, Sonia's wisdom in both her vocational commitment to live a productive life in relation to being a 'carer' and in managing a 'carer's network'. I feel my loving wisdom in an energetic resonance with the values I experience in Sonia's expression of meaning.

In communicating the meanings of my embodied expression of loving wisdom, as a practical principle in my explanations of educational influence, I realize that I am testing the validity of my intuition that the values expressed by Sonia (and Andrew and all those in the clips above) carry hope for the future of humanity. In these communications I am drawing on Habermas' (1976, pp.2-3) insights about four criteria of social validity in my desire to communicate with you. What I mean by this is that in our ongoing communications about meanings of loving wisdom I am seeking to strengthen their comprehensibility; the evidence I use to support my assertions; my awareness of the influence of the normative, historical and sociocultural context in which I am communicating and my authenticity in the sense of showing, through time and interaction that I am truly committed to the values I claim are giving meaning and purpose to my life.

I believe that I am expressing my meaning of loving wisdom as a practical principle in my explanations of educational influence, through clarifying my meanings of the value of wisdom in Sonia's and Andrew's practice and communications. I am also seeking to communicate the idea of loving wisdom as a practical principle for others to use, if they wish, in their own unique way. I am thinking here of the use by each of us of loving wisdom in our explanations of educational influence, as we explore the implications for ourselves and others of asking, researching and answering our own questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

Habermas, J. (1976) *Communication and the evolution of society*. London : Heinemann