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Special Focus on Personhood and Risk

You may remember that in the April newsletter I discussed the body-mind-brain problem. This was in follow up to the feature of the October 2018 Newsletter on an 'ethic of risk'. At the foundation of an ethic of risk is the nature of personhood. Unless we are clear on how we define humans as persons-in-risk then it is most likely that one will dehumanize others in the quest to control risk.

The following is an outline extract from the book to be published later this year: The Social Psychology of Risk Handbook. I am expecting this book will be released in October 2019.
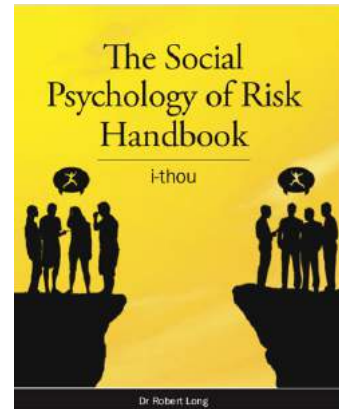
Personhood

There is perhaps no more important concept in the Social Psychology of Risk than Personhood. The biggest challenge in orthodox risk and safety, particularly under the rubric of zero harm, is the demonisation and dehumanisation of the workforce. When intolerance is the calling card for risk and safety then brutalism becomes the method. This is set by a fixation in the risk and safety industry on numerics and metrics - the product of cognitivist and behaviourist ideologies.

The risk and safety industry is not holistic, it defines the process of risk and safety as the management and control of objects. In risk and safety, humans are understood as a factor in a system at best or an object in a process at worst. This is why the recent trends in risk and safety in 'human factors' and 'neuropsychology' has become a mask for behaviourist and cognitivist ideologies.

The brand may have changed but the demonisation of the human has not relented.

Its always instructive to do a search for papers and articles in an industry to guage the pulse of what is important. Of course in risk and safety there are no published papers or conference presentations on 'an ethic of risk' or 'personhood'. How could there be? One simply could not maintain the delusions of professionalism and the ideology of zero in the same cognitve space. Without an 'ethic of risk' or definition of personhood it is a 'piece of cake' to demonise and brutalise others in the name of intolerance for unsafety.

Human personhood is essential to understanding an 'ethic of risk'. Of course, in professions such as medicine, teaching, law, social work and nursing such definition is essential to professional practice. It is in these professions that one will find extensive discussion on personhood but in the risk and safety industry, nothing. You'd sure want to hope that the legal and medical professions had a clear sense of personhood when treating the elderly with dementia, Alzheimers or contemplating 'assisted dying'. I sure want my teacher and school to teach my child as a whole person, not some receptacle for data.

Testing Theories of Personhood

One of the first assignments my daughter had in her nursing degree in 2017 was an ethics essay

involving a moral conflict. The topic of the essay put her as a paramedic in a home event involving a dead person and various decisions involving moral compromise of the body. Here is the essay question:

'Sam and Natalie, both senior paramedics, attempted to resuscitate a 78 year old man who had suffered a cardiac arrest at home. After 45 minutes, resuscitative efforts were discontinued due to lack of clinical response. Immediately afterwards, a student paramedic, Jim, who had accompanied Sam and Natalie on the call-out, asked if he could re-intubate the patient for practice purposes. Jim argued that, as the man's wife would not really understand what he was doing, no-one would be harmed. However, Sam and Natalie thought it inappropriate, but were unable to explain to Jim why they objected to his proposal. Jim reluctantly agreed not to re-intubate the man but asked, instead, if he could take a photograph of the deceased man to upload on to his clinical experience portfolio'. Discuss.

The essay confronted the challenge of rights involving dead persons. If a person is dead, what right do they have to a conscious decision making? Does it matter what we do to a cadaver/corpse? If they are not conscious of what is done to their body, in what sense must we maintain dignity, integrity and compassion?

The detail of the essay is not important for this discussion other than to make clear that even in the first year the nursing profession and ethic of risk and personhood were considered foundational to the profession of 'helping'. It was also helpful to step beyond the simplistic binary notions of 'the easy fix'. It didn't matter what decision the paramedic made, some extended interests/people that were not present at the time had to be considered in decision making. Furthermore, the issue of trajectory and principles had to considered even though those people of interest wre neither present nor informed.

I remember when training in theology I did field placements at a cemetery/crematorium and a funeral clinic. In such circumstances even though family and people of interest are not present, the same principles of dignity, respect, integrity and beneficence must be present because of the principles of personhood. Of course, some come at the notion of care through fear, just imagine if someone found out that their loved one's body was abused? What if the ashes got mixed up? etc. This is the mythology of fear and punishment that domiantes the risk and safety industry and cannot ever be a foundation for an 'ethic of risk'.

So what is personhood? How do we define the human person?
The following help to define the nature of personhood.

1. A person is first and foremost a social subject. Personhood can only be understood in relation to others socially and psychologically. There is no such thing as an individual, there is only i-thou (Buber). From the moment of birth we are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, babies and relatives. We participate in socialitie and can only be defined intercorporeally (Fuchs).
2. As embodied persons we are affected by all that happens in, to, around and for us. Interaffectivity, (Fuchs) determines all our actions and limits any sense of autonomy. Whilst human persons have a degree of autonomy this is incomplete and relative to identity, context and the collective unconscious. Individuality is only confirmed in relation to socialitie.
3. As embodied persons we act as agents in decision making. Most human decisions affect others and involve a degree of self-consciousness, however, this is not complete either.
4. Humans are conscious, subconscious (deficit), non-conscious (Damasio) and unconscious (positive - Jung).
5. As self conscious knowers we don't know all things, humans are fallible and limited as agents. In this sense, persons are unable to anticipate all things (mortal) and so cannot anticipate many consequences of their limited ability to choose (finite). Yet despite this, as embodied persons, humans possess an essential unity. Human persons are identified with their body and their soul/spirit/personality.
6. Humans are not just rational beings but also moral, emotional and unconscious beings. They are not objects nor machines in a system, they are participants in their own ecology.
7. As self-conscious limited agents humans discover, imagine and create not just physically but semiotically, in language, discourse, sign systems, metaphor, poetics, aethetics and creation of meaning and purpose (semiosis).
8. As choosers human persons are valuers, for to chose is to value. Most importantly, human persons dream and enter into knowing unconsciously uncluding, the creation of music, art, dance, religion and poetics.
9. A critical capability of personhood is the making of meaning and purpose through language and semiotics (sign and symbols systems).
10. Personhood is strongly anchored to feelings and these are expressed through language, semiotics, reasoning, mataphor and moral action. Persons are able to create and initiate language and behaviours with and without determination/necessity.
11. All of these qualities and capabilities mean that a human person lives and acts in dialectic with their environment, culture, embodiment and fallibility.
12. Persons cannot sit at anytime in absolutes neither can they know perfection. Everything persons do is contingent on their sociliatie and humanity. A critical aspect of human personhood is coming to grips with fallibility, vulnerability and uncertainty and the nature of learning, development and risk.
13. Persons are also teleological, that is, they are shaped and formed by their ends. Humans know that

when their bury their dead they are viewing their own death and so this facilitates the creation of meaning, even religious meaning in living.

Benner (2016) uses the metaphor of the Russian nested dolls in an effort to explain how all these qualities define personhood. All of these sit within another and one cannot dissect human personhood like a machine/object and find the seat of personhood in just sentience, brain or intelligence. Personhood is very much embodied.

One of the best approaches to an integrated sense of personhood comes from the apostle Paul integrated all of the following into his understanding of personhood: head, heart, gut, conscience, soul, spirit and flesh (Jewett). In many ways Pauline anthropology was both original and radical for its day. Even though Paul used expressions like the inner and outer person he very much saw humans as unified and embodied which was far removed from the anthropology of either Plato or Aristotle. He used the language of heart, mind, flesh, conscience, soul and mind to give purpose to social relationships and meaning in the face of political tyranny.

Why does personhood need defining and defending?

Personhood needs defending because of the dynamic of dehumanising is alive and well in the risk and safety industry. This is why the industry needs an 'ethic of risk'. Without an ethic of risk this industry thrives on de-personalised and dehumanised actions in the name of risk aversion and objectifying safety.
The following help define the processes involved in dehumanising and de-personalising risk.

1. A range of ideologies and unethical tendencies have been established in the risk and safety industry that serve to work against personhood and human 'being'. These ideologies include: reductionism, scientism, behaviourism, cognitvism, rationalism and positivism. All these ideologies emerge in the risk and safety industry from a mathematico-engineering view of the world and result in the definition of humans as 'objects'. Indeed, the scientist (science as ideology) view (not science view) understands humans as just creatures of the natural world, as biological objects in the sense of 'just another animal'.
2. Recent developments highlight problems associated with ethics, morality and mis-defintion of personhood. One such event has been the development of sex with robots (https://www.forbes.com /sites/andreamorris/2018/09/25/prediction-sex-robots-are-the-most-disruptive-technology-we-didnt-see-coming/#7641193b6a56). The ethical dilemmas associated with this development highlight all the problems associated with a mis-definition of personhood.
3. We only need to listen to the language of the Technology industry to understand how it views persons. It speaks of: 'Artificial' intelligence, 'Non-human' Intelligence, 'Synthetic', 'Simulation', 'Machine' learning, 'programmed' and 'algorithms'. Of course machines cannot 'learn' and so machines cannot be persons. In what ways do machines learn, dream, create and feel?
4. It is clear from any perspective that machines don't have a 'lived experience'. Anything machines do can only ever be a secondary representation of human experience. In other words it is not 'real' but simulated. One would need to read some work on existential thinking or phenomenology to get a hold of this.
5. Machines cannot have a 'mind' in the sense of personhood, soul, spirit and mind. They cannot 'feel' emotions interactively (Fuchs) as an embodied person just as machines cannot dream or learn through the unconscious.
6. Similarly, machines cannot know suffering, pain, risk or learning. The repetition of algorithms is at best 'parrot learning' but cannot result in a change in personhood because machines are not persons.

Some Important Texts on Personhood.

Arendt, H., (1958) The Human Condition.

Bauer, J., and Harteis, C., (2012) Human fallibility, The Ambiguity of Errors for Work and Learning.

Benner, D., (2016) Human being and Becoming, Living the adventure of life and love.

Fuchs, T., (2018) ecology of the brain.

Harding, S., (2015) Paul's Eschatological Anthropology: The Dynamics of Human Transformation

Jewett, R., (1971) Paul's Anthropological Terms, A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings.

Kirkwood, C., (2012) The Persons in Relation Perspective, In Counselling, Psychotherapy and Community Adult Learning.

Lotman, Y., (1990) Universe of the Mind, A Semiotic Theory of Culture.

Madsbjerg, C., (2017) Sensemaking, What makes Human Intelligence Essential in the Age of the Algorithm.

Martin, J., Sugarman, J., and Hickinbottom, S., (2010) Persons: Understanding Psychological Selfhood and Agency

Schwarz, H., (2013) The Human Being, A Theological Anthropology.

Semler, L., Hodge, B., and Kelly, P., (2012) What is the Human? Australian Voices from the Humanities.

Splitter, L., (2015) Identity and Personhood, Confusions and Clarifications across Disciplines

Personhood and Risk

The Personhood Tool (displayed at the start of this article) emphasizes the five essential perspectives on human personhood namely: the inner self, social self, cultural self, environmental self and the transcendent self. It is from these perspectives that we must understand an ethic of risk and the challenges of personhood.

If we look at what defines personhood in elements previously discussed in bold then, anything that detracts from those qualities must result in dehumanising and de-personizing trajectories. For example, the more a human is understood as an object in a system or as a 'hazard' that needs control, then the more humans will organise in ways that punish, harm and injure humans psychologically and socially.

One of the most destructive dynamics in dehumanising in the risk and safety industry emerges from the ideology of zero harm and the quest for perfectionism. The denial of fallibility is the beginning of the objectivisation and dehumanisation of the human. The ideology of zero and associated intolerance is the foundation for unethical practice and the denial of personhood.

Perth Workshops

Due Diligence 22-23 July and

Risk Amplification 25 26 July

It's not often that Dr Long gets to Perth to present public workshops. In this case the first workshop is the very popular **Due Diligence Workshop** conducted with Greg Smith. Those coming to the workshop will receive a complementary copy of Greg's latest book *Papersafe* (**https://www.bookdepository.com/Paper-Safe-Gregory-W-Smith/9780987630001**) and a complementary copy of Risky Conversations.

The second workshop is the **Risk Amplification Workshop**. Based on the academic work of Pidgeon, Kasperson and Slovic (**https://www.bookdepository.com/Social-Amplification-Risk-Nick-Pidgeon/9780521520447?ref=grid-view&qid=1558996910823&sr=1-1**) this workshops looks at what amplifies and attenuates risk in the workplace. The workshop unpacks the SARF model (**https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Social-Amplification-of-Risk-Framework-SARF-Reproduced-from-Mills-2011-p-25_fig7_321854002**) and helps participants understand why people so often misjudge risk in assessments.

If you want to register for either workshop or both (with a discount) then you can apply here: **https://cllr.com.au/product/due-diligence-social-amplification-of-risk-perth-workshop-july-2019/**

International Two Week Intensive Workshops August 2019

Due to demand from people in Europe and Canada we have scheduled a Two Week intensive series of workshops from 6 to 16 August 2019.

So far we have participants confirmed from Austria, Sweden, Toronto and Calgary as well as Australian registrations.

You can download an overview of the program here:**https://spor.com.au/home/two-week-intensive-4-modules-august-2019/**

PLEASE NOTE: If you register for more than one module discounts are available. Do not use the online payment system if registering for more than one modules but contact Rob directly: **rob@humandymensions.com** and you will be invoiced separately.

Here is an outline of the modules on offer:

- **6 and 7 August, Module 6 Holistic Ergonomics**
- **8 and 9 August, Module 7 Learning, Community and Risk**
- **12 and 13 August, Module 8 The Social Amplification of Risk**
- 14 August, Whole day Semiotic Walk

- **15 and16 August, Module 12 iThink Workshop**

Choose One, Two, Three or all Four Modules

Times: 8.30am to 4pm daily

Location: CLLR Seminar Room, 10 Jens Place, Kambah, ACT

Cost: Each Module is $1350 (should you only wish to do one module).

Catering and Materials: All catering and materials provided

One of the great benefits of this workshop series is the relationships and sharing across cultures, countries and industry interests. So far people have registered from oil and gas, building and construction, forestry and paper, government, risk and safety consultants, manufacturing, steel production and heavy industry.

New Video on Risk Management on CLLR

A new video is out that seeks to explain the diversity of approaches in risk management. You can view it here:

https://vimeo.com/334363500

In the video Rob chats with Shannon who is thinking of a career change and doing a risk management qualification. Rob talks to Shannon about the nine different approaches to risk and about some options available at Federation University in improving effectiveness in tackling risk.

Improve Your Inductions with Multimedia and Learning Design

If you want to improve the way you do inductions have you thought about using multimedia?

Through the work of InVision Pictures Dr Long helps organisations improve inductions and sharpen presentations.

You can see examples of InVision work here:

https://www.humandymensions.com/services-and-programs/invision/

Here is what happens:

1. Dr Long consults with you about current induction design.
2. Through discussion of purpose and design Dr Long works with you to turn some elements of the induction in to multimedia work. This includes scripting key language, messaging, iconic representations and instructional design discussions.
3. Once this is done InVision pictures joins the team and through: storyboarding, interviews, cut aways, drone footage, voice overs and targeted strategies develops a range of vignettes for draft evaluation.
4. The vignettes are tested for response effectiveness and evaluated.
5. After editing and the addition of sound, iconic indicators and text fields, the videos are set to go and are either embedded current presentations or left as elements that can be utilised as required by the client organisation.

You can see the professional quality of these videos **here** which are produced at a fraction of the cost of a commercial production house. If this is of interest to you please contact Dr Long at **rob@humandymensions.com**

News on SPoR at Federation University

Those wishing to do Master's or PhD with Dr Long as thesis supervisor will need to do the thesis preparation and research methods module as a prerequisite.

This is available in Semester Two July to November

Please contact Liz at **e.seaward@federation.edu.au**

Otherwise next available research module is in Semester One 2020.

Special Demonstration Seminar at Ballarat Campus

There is going to be a special One Day Seminar offered by Dr Long at the Ballarat campus on 24th September as an Introduction to Social psychology of Risk Workshop. Again contact Liz at **e.seaward@federation.edu.au** if interested.

OnLine Studies

If you are intesrted in Online studies in the Social Psychology of Risk you can register here:

https://cllr.com.au/online-courses-overseas-students/

Book Competition

The following competition is based on reading an article on Jungian Archetypes (**https://conorneill.com/2018/04/21/understanding-personality-the-12-jungian-archetypes/**).

The article concludes by matching commercial products with their **style** of advertising.

Without repeating corporate brands already identified in the graphic, name a popular brand and link it to an archetype to win a complementary copy of *Tackling Risk, A Field Guide to Risk and Learning* (**https://www.humandymensions.com/product/tackling-risk/**).

Here is what you do:

1. Name a product brand eg. MacDonalds
2. Match to Archetype: Everyman/Belonging
3. Include your postal address
4. First 5 correct entries will be posted a complementary copy.

It's worth considering, which archetype most amplifies or attenuates risk???
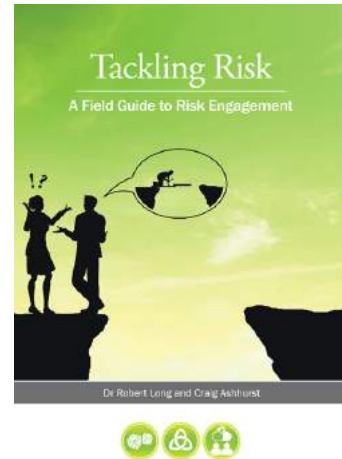
Illusion

These are worth a look.

The Illusion Machine that Taeches us How to See.

Cyber Illusion

Automation and AI

In the June issue of *Scientific American* 2019 (p. 17) there is a stark warning regarding mythical trust in automation and AI.

In '**Safe Words for our AI Friends**' Wade Roush warns of the trajectory of naïve belief in AI and the trajectories of technique (Ellul).

Roush discusses the nature of Siri, Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa and Microsoft Cortana and the trajectory of what he calls 'unsupervised learning'. Of course machines cannot 'learn' and applying such language to machines is nonsense but what Roush highlights is the problem with growing mass surveillance and manipulation by these apps.

Roush points to recent breaches of privacy and integrity by facebook (**https://www.theverge.com/2018/3/18/17134270/cambridge-analyticas-facebook-data-underscores-critical-flaw-american-electorate**; **https://www.zdnet.com/article/facebook-unethical-untrustworthy-and-now-downright-harmful/**).

Roush delivers strong warning about naïve trust in AI and the myths associated with 'learning' created by the AI propaganda machine. He warns of growing encroachments into privacy, growing lack of transparency by digital behemoths and problems with reliability and controls.

There can be no learning unless it results in a humanising personhood, social and ethical outcome. The notion of 'learning' doesn't mean anything if the outcome is evil. Repeating algorithms to make money via the exploitation of people is neither learning not moral.

Unless the technology 'serves' personhood it will most likely be unethical and can only be 'self-serving'. I write about this in my book with Roy Fitzgerald *Tackling Risk, A Field Guide to Risk and Learning* (**https://www.humandymensions.com/product/tackling-risk/**).

Is Smart Technology Making Us Dumb?

This is the question investigated by Frischman in the March Edition of Scientific American Mind 2019. It aslo confirms the work undertaken by Nicholas Carr in *The Shallows. What the INternet is Doing to Our Brains.*

Frischman (from his own book *Engineering Humanity*) argues that with the INternet that we are not actually thinking, just absorbing. We tend to take in data but do we reflect on it? Do we interrogate it? Do we deconstruct it? Are we critical of it? Afterall, data is not learning and if we wish to become wise and better persons we need to exorcise discernment in what we absorb.

Links

Social Psychology of Risk
https://spor.com.au/

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Rob's Blogs
https://safetyrisk.net/author/rob-long/

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