Stephen G. Post

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Why are we so afraid of dementia?

Dear Friends:

Checking in and catching up with a hello.

Just yesterday, the very *avant garde* world web-based "The Conversation.com" featured a nice piece that draws on those years back in Cleveland of working with people who are deeply forgetful and their caregivers, and emphasizing how we all need to get beyond "hypercognitive values," a term I coined in 1995.

The article is **here**. Hope you enjoy it. Over the years there have been no less than five full conferences focused on this work, and on three continents. Love for the deeply forgetful is where any sense of a shared humanity takes us.

Next year I may do a third edition of my book *The Moral Challenge of Alzheimer's Disease: Ethical Issues from Diagnosis to Dying* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, 2nd edition) was designated a "medical classic of the century" by the *British Medical Journal* (2009), which wrote, "Until this pioneering work was published in 1995 the ethical aspects of the one of the most important illnesses of our aging populations were a neglected topic."

So on behalf of people who are deeply forgetful and depersonalized (if not demonized) in the name of narrow "hypercognitive values" (so typical of the analytic philosophers and bioethics types), I would like to cite a passage from Aldous Huxley that he offered in late life:

"It's rather embarrassing to have given one's entire life to pondering the human predicament and to try to find that in the end one has little more to say than, 'Try to be a little kinder.'"

Given how very little the biomedical model has yet to offer in terms of any significant medication, about the best thing we can do is to "Try to be a little kinder."

Real answers? If you have not seen it, go to www.musicandmemory.org and look at the video of Henry on the home page.

Here is an article from the Menninger Clinic entitled "Hope in Caring for the Deeply Forgetful" that pretty much captures how I have felt about these folks over the years.

Cheers,

Stephen G. Post, PhD

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