

THE PHILOSOPHY IN COMMUNICATIONS

EACD Education Working Group's initiator David Willows explores Western philosophy's thoughts on communication and ponders the pedagogic nature of the communications profession.

I imagine that most people stop from time to time and reminisce, if only to figure out how they got to where they are today. Occasionally, one is lucky enough to recall one of those “a-ha” moments – an idea, a thought or a decision that affects the trajectory of a life or career forever.

Personally, I recall one such moment when reading the writings of the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard. “When it comes to communicating a set of ideas,” he explains, “it is important to tie a ‘dialectical knot’ that the readers can untie for themselves.” Certainly, anyone who has ever tried to make sense of the works of this melancholic Dane will understand that he loved to tie the ‘knot’ very tightly indeed! Equally, however, if you are prepared to wrestle with his ideas for a while, the rewards are great.

The point is this. It was at this moment that my fascination with the art of communication began. I had spent years working with ideas, but never before considered that ideas were nothing without good communication.

All journeys are complicated, but in essence it was this which brought me to my current role as Director of External Relations at the International School of Brussels in Belgium. In the context of one of the world's leading international schools, serving globally mobile families from over 70 countries worldwide, my role today is to ensure that the educational vision and international reputation of the school is known and understood by all stakeholders - from prospective parents and members of the current community, to major corporate partners and individual donors from the school's alumni community. I have a storyteller's job description.

Whatever our titles or the organisations for which we now work, it occurs to me that many of us out there have



travelled along a similar path. We have each, in different ways, discovered that communication is an art that takes time to learn. Caught up in a war of words, we all have stories to tell, compelled as we are to ‘out-narrate’ one another and finally ‘conquer’ the market.

One final thought. Socrates once asked one of his pupils about ‘Truth’ and how it can be learned. Whatever ‘Truth’ actually is, Socrates was absolutely clear that what we say cannot be separated from the way we say it. In short, he argues, communication is a form of pedagogy.

So I am left wondering whether if, in the end, that makes all of us educators? |

David Willows



Dr. David Willows is Director of External Relations at the International School of Brussels, Belgium and coordinator of the newly established EACD working group on education.

