Part I

Setting the Tone

Dialogue and Discourse

2 Non-judgmental Steps on a Road to Understanding

Julian Edge

I have no inkling why some people believe (I almost wrote, "choose to believe," but that would be to beg the question I am trying to address and to engage in the type of rhetorical trickery I am trying to avoid) in the existence of a supernatural creator of the world in which we live. At the same time, I have no glimmer of a response to the implicit counter-question as to what exactly preceded, or caused, or provided a context for the "big bang" with which our universe is thought (by those of an evolutionary mind-set) to have begun. I acknowledge immediately that these two perspectives are by no means necessarily incompatible with each other.

I acknowledge, too, that my everyday concepts of "before" and "cause" and "context" are inadequate to this discussion in ways that I am not able to comprehend. I find some respite in the notion that it is the very nature of the universe, outside a concept of time, to be in a constant state of inflation and retraction (Steinhardt, 2003). I find affirmations of such a view in the fragmentary writings of Heraclitus "Everything flows and nothing abides; everything gives way and nothing stays fixed.... It is in changing that things find repose" (as cited in Wheelwright, 1959, pp. 70–71).

I acknowledge that there are many ways of knowing and learning, all of them bound up with some form of communication. A frequent difficulty is found in communication between and among these different ways of knowing and learning, and that is the issue to which I wish to attempt some small contribution. While the specifics of this collection concern Christian belief, I want to make a more general beginning with regard to communication in the "Western" culture with which I am most familiar.

Arguments and Challenges

Two relatively recent books by well-respected sociolinguists (Tannen, 1998 and Cameron, 2000) have delivered startlingly opposed visions of a major discourse challenge facing British and USAmerican society. To summarize in the briefest of terms, Tannen's thesis is that there exists a deep-seated cultural overcommitment to argument that is unhealthy. It has led, to take an institutional example, to a legal system in which truth is sacrificed to rhetoric. That is to say, lawyers are not educated to discover and reveal what has happened in any particular case, they

are educated to put forward the best possible representation of their client's position. This, and not a commitment to truth, is the ethical core of the lawyer's commitment and issues of guilt and innocence are decided according to which side is seen to have been more persuasive. In this light, one may also note the prevalence of lawyers among British and USAmerican political representatives and reflect on the influence of their presence on the governance of those societies.

In domestic terms, communications and relationships are too often dominated by a desire to have the last word and to come out the winner. Tannen presents us with an "argument culture" that, at individual, social, and international levels, is internally corrosive and externally aggressive. Tannen (1998) writes, in conclusion:

> We need to use our imaginations and ingenuity to find different ways to seek truth and gain knowledge.... It will take creativity to find ways to blunt the most dangerous blades of the argument culture. It's a challenge we must undertake, because our public and private lives are at stake.
>
> (p. 298)

Equally briefly, Cameron's thesis is that through such widespread phenomena as workplace training, particularly in the service industries, confessional television chat shows, and communication skills courses throughout the education system, we are producing classes and generations of people all too ready to confess, compromise, and concede, but unable to sustain an argument and stand up for their rights. She presents us with a "communication culture," rife with manipulative "discourse technologies" (Fairclough, 1992) with which people are trained to fit into patterns of phony communication that serve the purposes of others. As an outcome, Cameron (2000) writes:

> The general devaluation of argument as a communication skill has some potentially worrying implications.... A society which conducts its discourse on the principle that "everyone has a right to their opinion but no one's opinion is preferable to anyone else's" is in one sense "democratic", but how can it move towards any collective notion of what might constitute the common good?
>
> (p. 163)

Both writers make serious points and both, I believe, put forward partial (in both senses of the word) arguments in order to serve their own immediate purposes. Tannen selects her examples well in order to highlight instances in which an overreliance on agonistic discourse alone limits our human potential to communicate with each other. One intuits, however, that such an academically socialized writer and skilled rhetorician would be unlikely to be in favor of a situation in which the power of lucid, rational argument were to be devalued, or in which the ability of some sections of the populace to stand up for their rights (and clarify their responsibilities) were to be lost. Cameron, in complementary

fashion, looks out examples of non-argumentative discourse, which she finds inappropriate. With reference to Phillips (1998), for instance, Cameron (2000) writes in these terms:

> Consider the following description of "Circle Time", an approach to teaching interpersonal and communicational skills that is used in some British Schools:
>
> The object is to provide a safe environment in which everyone has an equal opportunity to speak and to be listened to.... Within the circles children are encouraged to talk about their feelings and about problems that may have arisen at school (or elsewhere). However, no child may use the circle as a means of shaming others. The emphasis is on expressing feelings rather than accusations.... [I]f a child talks about having sweets stolen or being pushed around by another child, the circle may ... offer support and talk about their own experience of being victimized.... [The circles] encourage the very complex social skill of mirroring (reflecting mood in a way which displays empathy).
>
> The norms of Circle Time talk as described or implied in this passage are evidently designed to promote discourse, which is egalitarian, emotionally "literate", non-judgmental, supportive and empathetic. Conversely, they are intended to discourage more confrontational or adversarial forms of discourse. Thus a child who has been the victim of stealing or bullying may seek support from others in the circle, but s/he is specifically prohibited from confronting the thief or bully.
>
> Whatever one thinks of the discoursal (and moral) preferences embodied in the practice of Circle Time, it clearly operates with a selective notion of what constitutes "skill" in interactive spoken discourse. ("Mirroring" is encouraged; arguing, accusing and name-calling are not.)
>
> (pp. 147–148)

In this instance, however, I doubt that a compelling argument has actually been made. Neither in the excerpt quoted, nor in the work from which Cameron takes it, is it suggested that non-judgmental interaction encompasses the whole of "skill" in interactive discourse. My own interpretation is rather that "arguing, accusing and name-calling" are forms of interaction widely available to us and widely practiced. They have not, however, always proved successful as strategies for resolving conflict. It might be that, by setting up an interaction situation outside the prevailing rules of social discourse, different understandings might be made available, allowing the resolution of difficulties that had previously proved intractable. This does not take away the need to put a stop to theft and bullying at school. It does not deny the need, when appropriate, to accuse, to confront, and to punish thieves and bullies. It states that the Circle Time is not the appropriate arena for these acts. The Circle Time offers an alternative in the sense of an additional possibility. To appropriate in advance the argument that I wish to develop below, it offers a chance to augment (rather than displace) our current discoursal potential as the basis for shaping our actions.

Academic and Professional Discourse

In professional and academic domains, the default position on the generation of knowledge is that it is produced by argument, by disagreement, and by debate. This position is asserted in the generally accepted Popperian stance that science progresses not so much by proof as by disproof and by the displacement of earlier theories by more powerful ones; it is noted as fundamental in move-based genre analyses (e.g., Swales, 1990) that demonstrate that writers find a niche for the presentation of their own work by first identifying a lack or weakness in work that has gone before; it is the underlying assumption that leads writers to allow themselves quite extravagant tropes of attack on, and dismissal of, ideas other than their own, such as Widdowson (2003) on an argument of Cook's: "The learner, it would seem, is conceived of not as a human being but as a digestive system" (p. 132).

Finally, it is the attitudinal set that can boil over into something between exasperation and personal antipathy, even as expressed in the measured terms of academic journals (Lightbown, 2002): "Perhaps, in future, Sheen will devote less time to criticizing the work of others and more to publishing the kind of work that will answer the questions that are important to him" (p. 534).

In short, the academic community has a long-term investment in the proposition that a good idea will find a worthy champion and that one's thinking is sharpened in challenge and response. This investment pays a perfectly satisfactory dividend, as Brumfit (2001), for example, warmly acknowledges "The debt I owe to past and present students and colleagues is immeasurable, both for their willingness to argue and force me to clarify, and for their persistently motivating insistence on the central role of language in the education process" (p. xv).

However (a signal that this argument now turns in order to establish its own niche), accepting the centrality of rational debate and disagreement to our discourse of inquiry is not the same thing as committing ourselves to it in an exclusive way, at all times, for all purposes. Let us admit that, at least in principle, rationality can take other rhetorical forms. Rigor in thought and discipline in speech are not confined to disputation. The experience that drives the work referred to in this chapter is that truth can be sought, and knowledge created, in interaction without disagreement. In this sense, the work is a domain-specific response to Tannen's call. We can invest our language awareness and our creativity in the enhancement of our discourse of inquiry emphatically not by replacing argument, but by extending our repertoire of interactive ability. I hope, therefore, *not* to be understood as attempting to argue against the importance of robust discussion and critique. I *do* want to argue that restricting ourselves to such styles is an unnecessary limitation of our potential.

Non-judgmental Approaches

The key source from which the ideas and argumentation of this chapter arise is the work of Carl Rogers, emerging in response to the hypothesis that he first proposed for consideration in 1951: "that the major barrier to mutual interpersonal

communication is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statement of the other person, or the other group" (as cited in Teich, 1992, p. 28).

As well as being a barrier to communication, Rogers (1969; Rogers & Freiburg, 1994) argued that such evaluation was also a barrier to education and learning in general. In the field of TESOL, we have become familiar with adaptations of Rogers' thinking through Curran's Community Language Learning (Curran, 1972, 1976; Rardin, Tranel, Tirone, & Green, 1988). This work was also memorably brought into the TESOL mainstream by Stevick (1976, 1980, 1982) in ways that helped bring out a broader, non-judgmental attitude that asserted, for example, the importance of deeper human values in being a teacher, without stipulating what those values should be:

> Teaching language is only one kind of teaching, and teaching and learning are only two limited aspects of being human. I therefore hope, first of all, that you will take time to sit down and read again whatever philosophical or religious writings you have found most nourishing to you.
>
> (Stevick, 1982, p. 201)

Non-judgmental attitudes and interaction styles have also proved effective in teacher education (e.g., Korthagen, 2001), particularly in the area of giving feedback after teaching observations (e.g., Freeman, 1982; Oprandy, 1999).

Axiomatic to all this work is the proposition that the person speaking has the potential to engage in their own self-development, and that this development can be facilitated by skillful and sensitive understanding. This understanding is based on a set of attitudes, drawn from Rogers, that I shall briefly gloss as:

respect: an unqualified acceptance (involving neither agreement nor disagreement) of the speaker and of what the speaker has to say;

empathy: a non-evaluative attempt to see things from the speaker's point of view, without oneself committing to that point of view;

sincerity: a commitment to place the above respect and empathy at the service of the speaker, toward the speaker's purposes, with no attempt to influence the outcomes in directions favored by the understander.

Unsurprisingly, non-judgmental discourse has proven particularly effective in the area of teacher self-development (e.g., Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001). In this field, it has provided the wellspring of the work that has proved the most stimulating in my own professional life, and which I have called *Cooperative Development*. This has been documented from early schematic attempts at devising a developmental discourse framework (Edge, 1992), to more detailed, data-based

reports and analyses (Edge, 2002), and on into more sociopolitical arenas (Edge, 2006a) and online environments (Edge, 2006b). Other case studies involving this same approach can be read in Boshell (2002), Mann (2002), Stewart (2003), Boon (2003, 2005) and De Sonneville (2005, 2007). I expand on this approach briefly below in order to give an insider's view of some of the experiences involved.

In this interactive framework, Understanders organize their verbal interaction around a set of agreed moves that can also be simply characterized as follows, where no specific sequence is suggested by the listing:

Reflecting: where Understanders mirror back to Speakers what they have Understood, both in cognitive and affective terms.

Relating: where Understanders draw attention to possible relationships between elements of that they have Understood, whether these elements appear to be complementary (Thematizing) or contradictory (Challenging).

Focusing: where Understanders invite Speakers to go into more depth with regard to some element of what they have Understood.

Based on this support, Speakers commit themselves to a style of non-defensive Speaking that leads them to explore their ideas and practice, to make individual discoveries, and to plan future action.

In addition to breakthroughs on individual agendas, the group reported on in Edge (2002) also experienced an increase in collegiality. This is a difficult claim to substantiate, but the following factors seem important. First, Understanders were regularly impressed and intrigued by the ideas, associations, and plans that Speakers produced when working in this way. Second, Understanders took pride and pleasure in seeing Speakers reach conclusions, make discoveries, and plan future actions that were their own, but which they may well not have found without the group's assistance. We referred to this process as a creative co-construction, in which involvement in the process is shared, but ownership of what is produced by the Speaker belongs to the Speaker. Third, by putting aside their own opinions and preferences in order better to focus on the individual Speaker, the group came to appreciate more fully individual differences that were previously only dimly perceived. With this increased understanding over time came an ability to recognize what was meant and intended beyond its idiosyncratic presentation. One person's liking for analogy, another's for extended metaphor, and yet another's taste for hyperbole might be simply annoying, but in this deliberately caring context (Noddings, 1992; Katz, Noddings, & Strike, 1999) these preferences came to be seen not as weaknesses to be condoned, but as individual strengths to be nurtured.

For those who find the work compatible, there is a unique satisfaction to be found in discovering one's next best step forward on the basis of an exploration of one's own resources that is supported by the work of colleagues who have decided to commit the time and the care required. Similarly, there is a unique satisfaction to be gained from being that kind of colleague. One of the group (of six people, who met for one hour each week) provided the following feedback on the experience:

> For me, whatever else this may be, it's a weekly demonstration that as colleagues we really do have time for each other and respect for one another. To know that at some point my colleagues are going to give five hours a week of their combined time to something I think is important enough to tell them about fills me with a sense of wonder, surprise, gratitude and, most of all, faith in what we can all do together. It's a weekly affirmation of our sense of shared responsibility and commitment.

We in the group saw the deliberate acquisition and use of this style of discourse as an important element of our general development as teacher-researchers. We felt that we had enriched our own small community and we heard echoes of Lave and Wenger's (1991) proposition that, "learning to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning how to talk (and be silent) in the manner of full participants" (p. 105). We certainly experienced the truth of Wenger's (1998) statement that a discourse stands in a negotiable and reflexively constitutive relationship to its community of practice, and we did so in creative, pro-active terms.

This is not the place for me to expand further on this scheme and its uses. I refer interested readers to the data-based studies cited above and to my contact details.

Discourse and Community

If one accepts the point made in the previous part of this chapter regarding a reflexively constitutive relationship between discourse and community, it becomes important to articulate more precisely than I have thus far attempted what one understands the nature and function of the discourse presented here to be. Although I have grown accustomed to this work being referred to as an application of counseling, or therapeutic, discourse (see Cameron, 2002, pp. 67–82), I am by no means resigned to accepting this designation, which I find unhelpful in its associations and anyway inaccurate.

First of all, one needs to distinguish this work from those educational, medical and managerial situations (e.g., Farr, 2003; Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Kerry & Shelton-Mayes, 1995; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999), which feature an asymmetrical counseling relationship in which the counselor is in the more powerful position (as teacher educator, mentor, manager, doctor, consultant) and may well carry ultimate responsibility for guiding or evaluating the other's progress. In Cooperative Development, the Speaker takes full and self-motivated responsibility for

directions and outcomes in a way that is completely free of ends, means, or standards to be evaluated by Understanders, who function by definition as members of a peer group.

More interestingly, once guidance and evaluation have been put to one side, one must initially concede demonstrable common ground between non-directive forms of counseling (see Nelson-Jones, 2000) and our Cooperative Development work in terms of the attitudes required and the discourse moves made. Furthermore, debts to Rogers (e.g., 1980, 1992; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994) and to Egan (1986) are enthusiastically acknowledged. There is much common ground, therefore, but our professional development work operates far removed from a domain of analysts and analysands, clients and patients, counselors and therapy, deviance and recovery. There, at the risk of some oversimplification, we may assume a desire on the part of the client to conform to norms that will offer a greater possibility of happiness, norms that are to a great extent represented, and not only facilitated, by the therapist. Our professional development work seeks to facilitate individual development with no implication of the Speaker being a person with behavioral or psychological problems to solve. The work is based in Rogerian thinking along the lines that one does not have to be sick in order to get better, and we can all get better (see Teich, 1992; Barrett-Lennard, 1998), but this is not, I would submit, what is most usually understood by the idea of someone being "in counseling."

At fundamental levels of principle and philosophy, Cooperative Development is also distinct from Counseling-Learning (e.g., Curran 1972, 1976; Rardin et al., 1988), which maintains learner dependence on the role and status of the Understander/Knower, until the learner progresses to a state of independence from the Knower. Our work depends on an already independent Speaker/Knower being keen to establish some measure of interdependence among a supportive peer group.

One hopes that, to a readership of language professionals, it is not too difficult to make the argument that if, in a speech situation, one changes the setting, the attitudinal key, the participants, their relationships, and, above all, their purposes, then one is dealing with a different event. This is, therefore, not counseling.

To broaden the picture further, non-judgmental discourse of the type that we employ can be seen to play a significant role in the domains of conflict resolution (e.g., Isenhart & Spangle, 2000; Katz & Lawyer, 1993; Stewart, 1998, also the example of "Circle Time" discussed above) and of intercultural communication (e.g., Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2003; Byram, 1997).

To pursue the point, Bredella (2003) suggests that to be intercultural is to be open to difference in ways that might seem uncomfortable, or even threatening. It is to suspend evaluation of those differences in order better to empathize with others. It is to realize that one's own taken-for-granted assumptions are as much the product of circumstance as anyone else's. It is to use this experience in order to further one's own growth in the sense of an increased ability to interact with others on the basis of an understanding of their own motivations, rather than an evaluation of them in terms of one's own norms and expectations. Having understood, having grown, in this sense, one then has to go on to make

evaluative judgments to a greater or lesser extent in order to maintain a sense of identity or, if one prefers, a manageable sense of coherence among one's identities. If negative evaluation of others' ideas or actions proves unavoidable, one hopes at least for an ability to disagree with increased understanding and respect.

In the domain of professional development, our mutual agreement to employ non-judgmental discourse in specifically designated sessions allows for the development of individual ideas and plans along lines that the give-and-take of argument do not, as well as the development of mutually respectful collegiality. Outside those sessions, we return to the dominant discourses of our profession, where we may disagree with views that we have helped to facilitate, and still take pride in having supported a colleague's articulation of those views.

What we are seeking to do, therefore, is to distinguish between the specifics of counseling and the general qualities of non-judgmental discourse. Here, the work of the nineteenth century German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey, is also relevant, pre-dating, as it does, modern psychology. Dilthey not only differentiated between experiential and intellectual knowing and learning (*erfahren* and *verstehen*), but also wrote on the power of articulation (*ausdrücken*) to unite these forms of knowledge and to "lift mental content from unconscious depth" (as cited in Rickman, 1988, p. 75). The contemporary Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor (1985), has also foregrounded the importance of articulation as a process that develops what is being said in and through the saying:

> Articulations are not simply descriptions. On the contrary, articulations are attempts to formulate what is initially inchoate, or confused, or badly formulated. But this kind of formulation, or reformulation does not leave its object unchanged. To give a certain articulation is to shape our sense of what we desire or what we hold important in a certain way.
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> (p. 36)

In our professional development work, we release this power of articulation by replacing the pressure of argument with the pressure of acceptance. In a related way, we also imply that our general professional predilection for what we might call *displacive* discourse—it is not enough for me to be right, others must also be wrong—could usefully be tempered by what we might equally well call *augmentative* discourse—a use of language that allows for the differing authentic perspectives that we all, multiply, have on the world. Our fundamental interactive response in this work is not, "Yes, but…"; it is "Yes. And?" In this way, we extend our interactive repertoire and make available more possibilities for creative thinking and action.

What one *is* dealing with, therefore, in the various uses of non-judgmental discourse that we have considered, is the facilitation of human creativity through the temporary suspension of evaluation. Steiner's (2001) work on the creative act, on making the move from nothing to something, highlights the importance of self-observation through language, along with the contemporary loss of a social habitat in which this is possible: "We are less and less trained to hear ourselves be, where such hearing may be the key condition to the creative" (p. 261).

Non-judgmental discourse can facilitate this creative process, and through it the recognition of previously unperceived coherence, the accessing of hitherto only tacit knowledge, and the drawing out of a discovery from one's explorations. It is for these reasons that non-judgmental discourse can, of course, work so powerfully in a counseling situation. To refer to this style of language use generically as "counseling discourse," however, is to confuse the superordinate term, non-judgmental discourse, with a hyponym, and thereby to muddy the waters of further discussion and exploration of our discourse possibilities by obscuring the existence of important co-hyponyms defined at the level of particular purpose, such as conflict resolution, intercultural understanding, and professional development.

Evaluation Endures

I have gone into some depth regarding different possible understandings of the term, non-judgmental discourse, because I see a certain level of specificity as essential to its appropriate use in different circumstances. One question that frequently arises in this context, and which might be seen as relating in particular to the theme of this collection is, "What happens if I try to Understand someone, but I simply cannot respect their views? What if they are racist, or sexist, for example?"

Exactly because we are not in a counseling relationship of client and therapist, the question provides its own answer. If you really cannot respect my views, as the term is defined above, then you cannot Understand me and we should break the relationship off. If I cannot, or do not wish to, empathize with your viewpoint and purposes, it would be insincere of me to pretend that I can. I may well wish to use such techniques as Reflecting in order to establish that I have indeed properly understood your position, but then if that which divides us is greater than a collegial wish to support each other in the variety of our endeavors, then we should acknowledge this and move into a more appropriate form of discourse.

Here the need for clarity, argumentation, and standing up for what one believes to be important, takes over. I remain committed to dialogue with all and anyone, but I do not attempt to deny the fact that with some people I expect to remain in fundamental disagreement and, as I have no wish to help them further their purposes, I could not offer them the support of non-judgmental discourse.

In my final analysis, I must take responsibility for my actions, and that will necessarily include an act of judgment. Let us take two examples that are already in the public domain and that might be thought relevant to the theme of this collection. If there are teacher educators in the world who approved of the killing of Professor Hitoshi Igarashi for translating the novel, *The Satanic Verses*, into Japanese, I would not expect to be able to assemble sufficient respect for their values, principles, or beliefs to wish to support them in their thinking (Edge, 1996). The same would apply to anyone committed to the use of English language teaching as a manipulative front for covert Christian evangelism (Edge, 2002, 2004; Griffith, 2004; Purgason, 2004).

And yet, even as I write those words, another voice tells me that this repugnance is a weakness that gets in my way. I know that as an Understander, I am at my best when I am most open to being changed myself. And as a good Understander, I am best equipped to help people articulate themselves clearly to themselves, as well as to me, and thus come to their best decisions. Even here, there is the prospect of what Edwards and Mauthner (2002) refer to as:

> "asymmetrical reciprocity," which means accepting that there are aspects of another person's position that we do not understand, yet are open to asking about and listening to. Asymmetrical reciprocity involves dialogue that enables each subject to understand each other across differences without reversing perspectives or identifying with each other.
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> (p. 26f.)

It is at this point of clarity that one needs to accept that some disagreements are not misunderstandings, and that some disputes need to be faced up to and seen through. We all, I think, have a bedrock of values and beliefs, even if we call our own a foundation, and accuse those of whom we disapprove of being fundamentalists.

There is, however, a broad swathe of professional activity between such extreme cases and everyday matters of opinion and practice where I could suspend my powers of evaluation but usually do not. It is in this area that non-judgmental work of the kind I have presented operates. The extent to which it is liberating, or useful, or perhaps individually constraining, or culturally inappropriate is not, of course, a matter for argument alone, but can be judged effectively only by those who choose to take up the invitation to experience this mode of work.

In Conclusion

I am convinced, both intellectually and experientially, that the disciplined use of non-judgmental discourse offers my own community of professional practice a real opportunity to enrich our investigations by extending our discoursal repertoire. This is not an attack on the importance of debate and argument. How could it be? The persuasive effect of this piece of writing itself depends on my ability to present three mutually supporting arguments: first, an argument against the monolithic position that only an agonistic discourse of argument, debate, disagreement, and criticism can help us move our ideas forward; second, an argument against the categorization of the type of developmental practice presented here negatively as a "discourse technology," or inaccurately as "an application of counseling"; and, third, an argument *for* the creative operationalization of the discoursal awareness that we do have available to us, and according to the use of which we ossify, vegetate, or develop.

When I return, with this conviction, to the broader social themes that I raised earlier in this chapter, it seems clear to me that we should heed both Cameron's warning about manipulative pseudo-communication and Tannen's warning

about the limitations of argument. Unsurprisingly, our preferred response should not be to side with one or the other in blanket fashion, but rather, more subtly, to look closely at which forms of discourse can be beneficial to us under which circumstances. My own position is that it would be unnecessarily wasteful to ignore the positive potential contribution of sincerely non-judgmental discourse to the facilitation of human creativity, across a range of activities, merely because we can identify examples of the fraudulent misuse of insincere imitations, or because we must sometimes accept the reality of sincere dispute. In this sense, I accept the legitimacy of the challenge of Tannen's with which I began this chapter, and find in the aware use of non-judgmental discourse one way to meet that challenge.

With regard to communication concerning the role of religious belief as motivation for, content of, or agenda in language teaching, the disciplined adoption of non-judgmental discourse could help us to understand each other better, to learn from each other, and to know where disagreement is sincerely necessary, beyond the rhetorical devices of clever argument.

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