

Living with a Beautiful Mind - The Slings and Arrows of Outrageous Pedantry ... a possibly somewhat rude example of the difference between Aspergers logic and Neuro-typical pedantry

One year in 2004, a household name company decided to champion a different cause – they chose the National Autistic Society. They put out the call through the company for anyone who'd like to participate who likes in the autistic spectrum, or lives with someone who lives within the autistic spectrum to be interviewed to create a booklet to encourage awareness ...

I was mentioned and asked if I'd like to participate and I said, 'of course'. They wanted to do a feature on me called, 'living with a beautiful mind', which I thought was really nice. To do this, they had hired what I can only describe as an in-house journalist, or at least, someone was delegated the task. She asked Reena if I'd be free to talk on the phone for half an hour one particular afternoon and was told,

'yes, though you'd better clear your diary for the afternoon'.

'Oh, great. Though it will only be a short ...'.

'Yes, I know - so you'd better clear your diary' ... the journalist's puzzlement was itself short-lived ...

The appointed moment came and the phone duly rang. We said, 'hello', and got chatting and she asked, 'So, what's it like living with an autistic spectrum disorder?'

I heard the word 'disorder' and began to feel a need to either educate or encourage deeper thought.

I replied, 'Well, I wouldn't call it a disorder – I would say I have an Autistic Spectrum Perception',

J – ‘oh, right, sorry. Well, I called it that because that’s what it says on the web National Autistic Society web site. Do you have a problem with the words people use? ... you probably take words literally don’t you ... ?

Hmmm ... I heard, and not for the first time, ‘... you probably take words literally don’t you ... ?’ and inwardly sighed ...

Because:

She asked the last part of her question with a tone that implied I am to be pitied because I take words literally and that literalism is some kind of problem. I decided deeper thought was required ...

D – ahh .. ok, here’s a quote for you. Can you write this down verbatim ?

J – of course ..

D – ready ...

J – full of anticipation, ‘yes’ ...

D – ‘anyone who doesn’t take words literally ... is a Wanker !

J – ‘oh my goodness, what .., I , I can’t writer that into the piece, I’m sorry but ...

D – ‘that’s the quote, write it down, “anyone who doesn’t take words literally is a wanker” ... ’

D – ‘really, they are ... because wanker means, “highly attractive and intelligent individual” ... doesn’t it ... ? ... :)’

J – ‘what ?...’

D – ‘wanker – means highly attractive and intelligent individual .. in the world of a person who doesn’t take words literally ... doesn’t it ? ... :)’

J – ‘I’m not sure I follow ...’

D – ‘ok; there aren’t two Oxford English Dictionaries really, are there ? It’s not as if there is the section that holds the words with relevant fixed meanings that we all refer to in a sense of shared reality, and there is the other section that holds the words with irrelevant meanings to which we randomly attribute whatever meaning we happen to feel like at the time. No, there is one English dictionary that states the agreed shared meaning of every word in the English dictionary. Either the word, ‘Wanker’ is offensive because we all agree that that is, because of it’s defined meaning in the body of literature we call a dictionary, or, the word ‘wanker’ means anything you only people who fix meanings to words are people who takes things literally, and they have a disorder.

Either, you take words literally, or you don’t; and if you don’t, you really are a wanker ... :)’

J – ‘ahhh ... I see. Ha ha, though I still can’t print it’

D – ‘that’s a shame, because I am told I have a disorder because people who are doing exactly the same thing as me. Really, if anyone talks about someone as if being literal is a problem, just call them a wanker and they’ll soon realise their offended feelings are revealing that they are doing exactly the same thing – responding to words as if they have a shared and defined meaning’.

'Honestly, if you wanted me to communicate in a way that wasn't literal I could draw a picture or dance or play some music but really, since words are both the tools and product of a literal medium and I can only use them in a literal way ...'

J – 'you think deeply don't you?'

D – 'now, that is a trait of being Aspergers ... :)'

J – 'and you seem to have a sense of humour, which the web site say's you shouldn't have'

D – 'oh goodness, that one as well. Ok, journalist person, to me, it seems to be like this: if a comedian was playing at the comedy store in London and went out, did his act, and then shuffled off the stage to absolute silence, not even a slow clap or a boo, it would be totally unrealistic for the bad comedian to then announce, 'what a terrible audience out there tonight. I was really very not one of them laughed – not one of them has a sense of humour ...'

Of course, this would be daft. It is not the audience lacks a sense of humour, it the comedian who lacks the ability to inspire laughter within them. That's right, isn't it?'

J – 'well, yes ...'

D- 'So, I can only assume that one day some psychologist sat in front of someone with aspergers syndrome and told bad jokes so badly that he didn't even raise a smile and like some deluded bad comedian announced, 'the patient does not laugh – conclusion: Anyone with Aspergers Syndrome does not have a sense of humour'. This announcement is taken literally by other non-aspergers people as being a statement of truth and is even written on Aspergers websites as a guide to symptoms ...'

She was on the phone for two and a half hours and I have a copy of the booklet, 'Living with a Beautiful Mind'.