

Statement from Neil Dunaetz to be read at Gendlin's Memorial Aug 12 2017

"Carrying Forward Gene's Legacy in Philosophy." Hmm...

Saying it this way makes it sound all so nicely contained and packaged. As if Gendlin's thinking is safely within the category of human activity which we call "philosophy," where it cannot be anything *too* challenging or disruptive.

But philosophy is not a categorical enclosure--it is a doing in the world which actively displaces familiar and seemingly sure categories.

A major new philosophy like Gendlin's *A Process Model* deliberately under-cuts much that we, as members of our culture, take "as given." It shakes up deep habits of thinking and priority, challenges established norms and institutions, rouses us out of assumptions to which we are mostly blind, with which we have become complacent, and in which we have become collectively trapped.

A major new philosophy is more rupture than narrative. What makes something "philosophical" is exactly that it enacts such creative rupturing in the epistemological fundamentals of everyday life. If you imagine tectonic plates shifting, you are close to imagining what a major new philosophy does. Except that with a new philosophy, the change may happen within a few short generations, not eons. *Philosophy does not happen in a category called "philosophy!"*

As for carrying forward Gene's "philosophical legacy," *A Process Model* is itself a fundamental re-conception of "legacy." For those of you who have read APM, I am referring of course to the "environment#3 past" which is conceived as functioning novelly in the forming of implying and occurring. Gendlin's explication of functional "legacy" is far more advanced and useful than our vague everyday concept "legacy." So, let us not abandon Gendlin's *actual* "legacy" in the same breath in which we proclaim that we wish to carry it forward.

From quite early in my reading, it has been my understanding that Gendlin's philosophical "model" *is* living process itself. Gene has said several times that in *A Process Model* he does not mean the concepts *per se*. Therefore I assert that our goal in reading should be to grasp Gendlin's meaning as *reflexively identical* with our living.

Today we know, or at least we *should* know, that we humans are in the midst of causing a massive extinction of life on this planet. Our fast-developing symbolic capacities have enabled us to alter and destroy terrestrial and oceanic habitats, to change the planetary climate, to engineer life in laboratories, and, potentially, to instantly crater and irradiate the earth's surface with nuclear weapons. All this has become everyday-normal for us. It is as if we are incapable of distinguishing between what we can *do* and what actually *matters*. It is striking to me that modern Western societies have almost no structures for incorporating *experienced meaningfulness* into decision-making, policy and action. *Felt* significance is deemed "only subjective," and thus "not real." In response to this situation, Gendlin shows how the *experience* of something as meaningful is as *bodily real and functional* as is respiration and digestion.

As a farmer I want to say something about our extreme anthropocentricity. We assume, as a matter of course, that our human capacities are *the* measure against which other life may be judged. *We* developed language. *We* have interiority. *We* create art. *We* build libraries—and fill them. Aren't *we* *smart*? Blah, blah, blah.

It does not occur to us that we have completely rigged our stupid, one-player "who-is-most-evolved" contest so that no matter what other life we compare ourselves to, we will *always* see ourselves as the most advanced. With a smugness found nowhere else in nature, we unilaterally crown ourselves "*the most important*" of the millions of species on this planet. We conveniently ignore the fact that even lowly bacteria and plants do hundreds of things which we humans cannot--and that we could not live even a day without their "primitive" functions. It is all so...in a word...*Trumpian*. The combination of our hubris and our over-the-top capacity to reshape the biosphere threatens everything we care about—and perhaps everything we could *ever* care about.

In *A Process Model*, Gendlin twice criticizes what he calls "a city philosophy, just people and stones." By thinking systematically in terms of both occurring and implying, Gendlin offers new entry into the differentiation and

intrinsic relatedness of life on this planet. Remarkably, impossibly even, Gendlin has made a systematic way to think that *does not begin with identities* and that *does not drop out intrinsic complexity, relationality and meaningfulness*. In my opinion, this ranks up there with our ancestors' mastery of fire. What we do with it is up to us. My personal commitment is to help Gendlin's *Process Model* come into the world whole and with its full integrity.