That's Moving Theories That Matter

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The following analysis of why some theories seem to matter more than others is part of an ongoing conversation between myself and Peter Frost about which ideas have helped us most over the years. Leading candidates include ideas such as active listening, commitment, and action. What is striking to both of us in our nominations of powerful ideas is that emotion seems to play a central role in all of them. This is all the more striking because emotion is also something we find lacking in many of the theories that dominate organizational studies. We find this same pattern in our current work as well. Frost (1998) has been reflecting on the meanings of narratives of illness and developing an appreciation of compassion, and I have been reflecting on the meanings of fatalities among firefighters and developing an appreciation of contingency. In both cases, emotions continue to play a major role. Thus, in the most general sense, both of our papers claim that the theories that matter most are those theories that have emotional resonance. Frost argues that emotional resonance in theories comes from the inclusion of feelings such as compassion in the substance of those theories and from

the inclusion of materials that evoke the feelings that are portrayed. My analysis complements Frost's by suggesting that emotional resonance in theories also comes from the way those theories are structured.

The nature of this structure is foreshadowed in S. Kierkegaard's famous comment: " 'It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards' " (quoted in Gardiner, 1988, p. 127). Kierkegaard's observation locates an important disjunction for theorists—the gap between living forward with flawed foresight and understanding backward with equally flawed but mischievously seductive hindsight. This same gap is mentioned by James (1975):

We have to live to-day by what truth we can get to-day, and be ready to-morrow to call it falsehood. . . . When new experiences lead to retrospective judgments, using the past tense, what these judgments utter *was* true, even though no past thinker had been led there. We live forwards, a Danish thinker has said, but we understand backwards. The present

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I am grateful to Catherine Augustine and Kathleen Sutcliffe for their comments on a preliminary version of this manuscript and to Joshua Margolis for comments on the version presented in San Diego at the Academy of Management meeting. Portions of this discussion have been drawn from a longer unpublished manuscript titled *Understanding Forward: Practical Theories as Theories of Engagement*.

JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT INQUIRY, Vol. 8 No. 2, June 1999 134-142
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sheds a backward light on the world's previous processes. They may have been truth-processes for the actors in them. They are not so for one who knows the later revelations of the story. (p. 107)

Thus, what stands out for James as part of everyday life is also something that is underrepresented in theory; namely, that people believe ahead of the evidence. Things that seemed truthful at the time later, seen retrospectively, seem only relatively true; the truth we live by today may be tomorrow's falsehood, and the earlier "story" keeps changing based on later revelations. But these later revelations never get it completely right either. At best they are relatively true, which means that "experienceable reality . . . and the truths men gain about it are everlastingly in process of mutation" (James, 1975, p. 107). Geertz (1995) comments on Kierkegaard's gap this way:

The after-the-fact, ex post, life-trailing nature of consciousness generally—occurrence first, formulation later on—appears in anthropology as a continual effort to devise systems of discourse that can keep up, more or less, with what, perhaps, is going on. (p. 19)

DEPICTIONS OF LIVING FORWARD

I want to argue that one reason we theorize poorly about what matters most is because we use discourse that makes it hard to capture living forward. Living forward is a blend of thrownness, making do, journeys stitched together by faith, presumptions, expectations, alertness, and actions—all of which may amount to something, although we will know for sure what that something may be only when it is too late to do much about it. Unsettled, emergent, contingent living forward contrasts sharply with our backward-oriented theoretical propositions that depict that living as settled, causally connected, and coherent after the fact. The compact causal structures that epitomize our theories are artifacts of retrospect rather than narratives of prospect. And that is part of the reason those theories fail to move us. Theorists who are able to narrow the gap between understanding and living, or between the present-to-hand stance of the spectator and the ready-to-hand stance of the agent, are more likely to generate work that is judged to be moving.

To specify the nature of the gap and to suggest possible remedies, I need to add nuance to Kierkegaard's depiction. This can be done in at least two ways, first through Heidegger's three modes of engagement and

second through Thorngate's (1976) postulate of commensurate complexity. It could be argued that Kierkegaard's insight is actually a compact version of Heidegger's three modes of engagement, a formulation that is becoming increasingly important in social science (e.g., Dreyfuss, 1997; Packer, 1985; Stenner, 1998; Thatchenkery, 1992). The basic idea is this: When people act in the world, their circumstance may be one of projects, action in context, and concerns that shift as their needs shift. What that world does *not* consist of is a separation between subject and object. Heidegger refers to "absorbed coping" as a ready-to-hand mode of engagement. When people act in this engaged mode, they are aware of the world holistically as a network of interrelated projects rather than as an arrangement of discrete physical objects such as tools. If one of those projects is interrupted, then their experience changes into an unready-to-hand mode. Problematic aspects of the whole situation stand out, but people still do not become aware of context-free objects. Instead, the object remains situated, but we discover in our dealings that it has become temporarily unusable (e.g., tool is damaged or materials are unsuitable), that something is missing (e.g., set of materials needed is incomplete), or that there is some obstinate obstacle that does not belong and stands in the way of resumption (e.g., space in which to work is too cramped). As Heidegger (1962) puts it,

The modes of conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, and obstinacy all have the function of bringing to the fore the characteristics of presence-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand. But the ready-to-hand is not thereby just *observed* and stared at. Such equipment still does not veil itself in the guise of mere Things. It becomes "equipment" in the sense of something which one would like to shove out of the way. . . . *When an assignment has been disturbed*—when something is unusable for some purpose—then the assignment becomes explicit. . . . The context of equipment is lit up, not as something never seen before, but as a totality constantly sighted beforehand in circumspection. With this totality, however, the world announces itself. (pp. 103-105)

It is only when people step back from the project in a present-at-hand mode and reflect on it using analyses that are general, abstract, and context-free that tools, artifacts, and objects emerge as independent entities, removed from tasks, endowed with distinct measurable properties of mass and weight, and manipulated by distinct subjects.

Another way to add nuance to Kierkegaard's depiction is by means of the argument that no explanation can be simultaneously general, accurate, and simple (Weick, 1979, pp. 35-42). When one achieves any two of these three criteria, the resulting formulation maximally lacks the third criterion. Thus, a simple-accurate theory lacks generality, a general-accurate theory lacks simplicity, and a general theory is neither simple nor accurate. What is interesting is the possibility that this limitation may hold true for present-at-hand theories but *not* for implicit theories associated with ready-to-hand engagement. A present-at-hand explanation, by definition, is stripped of context, situation, configuration, relational meaning, and particulars, which means it has some combination of generality and simplicity but lacks accuracy. These explanations fail to move us because they misrepresent the world of involved actors. They miss the fact that reason takes the form of choices and justifications rather than explanations in a ready-to-hand mode. Ready-to-hand reasoning tends to consist of reasons that are simultaneously plausible (general), accessible (simple), and consensually valid (accurate). Thus, the gap between living forward and understanding backward may be created by theories that are insensitive to context and situational particulars. If a theory incorporates more context, then it should be seen as at least either general-accurate or simple-accurate. Theories that incorporate some measure of accuracy should be seen as closer to ready-to-hand patterns found in absorbed coping. Finally, theories that reflect ready-to-hand patterns should be judged as more moving.

LIVING FORWARD IN WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING

These conjectures can be illustrated by applying them to the problem of firefighter fatalities. The specific problem I have been wrestling with is this: When a wildland fire explodes and threatens to overrun a crew of firefighters, the crew's ability to outrun the fire improves if they drop their packs and tools so they can run faster, cover more ground, and escape to a safety zone. Given this relatively clear means to mitigate the risk of being burned, why is it then that, since 1990, 23 firefighters in four separate incidents¹ refused to drop their tools when ordered to do so, were overrun by fire, and died with their tools beside them? They died within sight of safety zones that they could have reached had they been lighter and moved faster. For

example, at the South Canyon disaster outside Glenwood Springs, Colorado, 14 firefighters were killed on July 6, 1994, when they failed to outrun a fire that exploded through a flammable stand of Gambel Oak just below them. At the time the bodies were being recovered, a site and thermal analysis was written for each person recovered. Part of the analysis for firefighter #10 reads "was still wearing his back pack. . . . Victim has chain saw handle still in hand with chain saw immediately above right hand. Saw blade is parallel to firefighter #9's left leg." The body of firefighter #10 is approximately 250 feet below the safety of the ridge above, a distance that could have been covered had this person exerted the same amount of energy but dropped his pack and saw 5 minutes earlier.

It is only recently, in evaluating several possible explanations for the failure to drop tools, that I have stumbled onto what is clearly for me the most bizarre explanation of all. This explanation is simply that the reason firefighters refused to drop their tools is that they did not have any. I had assumed all along that tools and people are distinct, separable, dissimilar entities without realizing that this subject-object split is a liability of a detached, present-at-hand analysis. Fire suppression, viewed as an ongoing ready-to-hand activity, intertwines what we call identities, capabilities, and equipment into a project beset with risk, contingency, and chance. The fusion of tools with identities means that under conditions of threat, it makes no more sense to drop one's tools than it does to drop one's pride or one's sense of self. Tools and identities form a unity, a unity that Maclean (1992) found palpable in the Mann Gulch disaster made famous in his book *Young Men and Fire*. In Maclean's words, "When a firefighter is told to drop his firefighting tools, he is told to forget he is a firefighter and run for his life" (p. 273); "When fire fighters are told to throw away their tools, they don't know who they are anymore, not even what gender" (p. 226).

When I have interviewed firefighters concerning how they respond to these deaths and what they think it would take to get people to drop their tools, they often frame these questions much differently than I do. A common thread in their responses is the idea that it is better to die as a firefighter with your tools in hand than to die a fleeing anonymous victim. The image of fallen heroes with their tools beside them, people who die with their boots on, one's finest hour in the face of what looks like failure to everyone else—all of these redescriptions may sound like nothing but macho bravado. There may be some truth to that. But there is also

some truth to the fact that these images may be explanations that lie closer to the ready-to-hand experience of firefighters.

I worry that in trying to understand these fatalities, I have missed what it means to be actively engaged in and holistically aware of a wall of fire that singles out a different set of relevancies than I imagine. Thus, when I ask why firefighters keep their tools and lose their lives, I may be posing the issue in a way that precludes a meaningful answer. My question fails to address their ready-to-hand mode in which tools disappear into equipment defined by its use and availableness (Dreyfuss, 1991, chap. 6). If I want them to drop their tools, then I need to understand what *their* project is and then intervene in a manner that changes that project convincingly. If they are unable to see beyond their project of fire suppression, then perhaps the leader has to stop that project cold, create a defining moment, confirm that they face an exploding fire, and reset the project clearly and firmly as a race. And if the project of a race replaces the project of suppression, then speed and lightness and rapid movement toward a safe zone become the new relevancies, and anything that interferes with the project of a race now becomes visible and is discarded. Tragedy may occur when projects lose their form and relevancies disappear from the ready-to-hand. After all, in the case of the Mann Gulch disaster, it was the author Maclean who framed the firefighters' project as "a race" to outrun a wall of fire, not the firefighters themselves. Some holdover from their prior project of suppression, or some inability or unwillingness to shift projects under pressure, may constitute absorbed coping in the world of a wall of fire.

To get a better feel for what I may be missing, what ready-to-hand may mean under these conditions, and what it means to bring emotion back in, pay careful attention to this comment by an experienced investigator who does on-site inspections of wildland fire fatalities:

There was a time [in investigating wildland fire fatalities] when I always believed a mistake had been made. As I get older and I suppose more spiritual, I'm not sure anymore. In other cultures, death is accepted as a very natural process. Here in the U.S., we have a tendency to hide death and be embarrassed by it. So whenever we lose a firefighter here, we almost always say, "Hey, that person screwed up." What we are saying, in part, is we don't believe that this could be something spiritual. Therefore, we will attach our own label to it. We will call it a mistake, because we are

dealing with death, and death is something we don't understand. Whenever I go to fire-line fatalities now, I look at them on two levels. We go to the site and do a thorough analysis. Everything is gone through with tremendous care and attention. And then there's another level, when you're out on the site and you're saying to yourself, *Maybe there was something that pulled these people together. Maybe this was their time to leave, and because they were firefighters, this was the way they decided to check out.* (Delsohn, 1996, pp. 177-178)

There is something disturbing in the candor of this investigator. Although we may like the abstract idea of "requisite variety" (it takes variety to control variety), when it confronts us up close in the form of a complex investigator attuned to both the rational and the spiritual, it can be unsettling. This feeling of uneasiness is visible in the comments of one person who read an early draft of this article:

The quote by the fire investigator struck me yesterday when I saw it. Don't we say things like that when we come upon too many things that we can't explain, resignation that we don't have control over everything. If the guys had dropped the tools and survived, they would have been touted as heroes, as smart, as savvy, as experienced, as lucky perhaps. We would have taken their dropping the tools and surviving as evidence that dropping your tools is a good thing. If they die with tools we say they were heroes—who were they without their tools. If they die without their tools we have no clue what they were doing and we say they were stupid. It's a no-win situation. The kind of quote by that fire investigator is a quote by someone who can't deal with the inexplicable. I think you're painting yourself into a corner of resignation.

We are left with the question, Do we intervene and help the firefighters survive or do we resign ourselves to accept whatever fate seems to be their destiny? Whatever the position, it is hard not to be moved by the question. It is a question about gaps. It is a question that evokes feeling, a question that resonates. And one possible reason for the resonance is that understanding has inched closer to living. The felt ambivalence of the theorist toward the analytic and the spiritual begins to approximate the felt ambivalence attendant to the *experience* of being thrown into an unknowable, unpredictable world. The same thing happens when we wrestle with the absurd possibility that firefighters refused to drop their tools because they did not have any, and, in imaging this possibility, find ourselves reducing the gap between our understanding and their living. In both cases, the theorizing becomes more moving, both because feeling was included in the the-

ory and because the inclusion of feelings narrowed the gap between what is present to the detached observer and available to the engaged agent.

QUALITIES OF A THEORY THAT IS MOVING

The reasons why a theory may be judged "moving" can be understood in the context of prior efforts (Davis, 1971, 1986) to analyze why people judge theories to be "interesting" or "classic." The judgment "that's interesting" seems to occur when the theory disconfirms assumptions that are weakly held. Thus, the formula for an interesting theory is, "You thought this was true but in fact the opposite is true." The judgment "that's classic" seems to occur when the theorist asserts that there is a subtle but simple root cause for the disequilibrium and loss of vitality in society. Given this root cause, there is a way to mitigate its harmful effects. Thus, the formula for a classical theory is, "Your primary concerns are the result of a single novel cause whose effects are spreading but can be tolerated and controlled."

The claim "that's moving," which is the focus of the present analysis, seems to involve both a shift of target from the consumer to the producer and a shift of impact from disconfirmation to affirmation. We are likely to judge a theory moving when it says, "Despite our producer claims to the contrary, what you consumers thought and felt was true turns out to be closer to the truth than we thought." The affirmation does not assert that the consumer is right universally or forever, but simply right for an interval of time that matters. We are moved by the assertion that "compassion matters" because, as consumers, we thought it did matter in ongoing projects, yet the producers of theories we consumed skirted themes of emotion and relationships and implied that it did not matter. When theorists have second thoughts that affirm our original intuitions, we are moved.

To those who would say that any of these claims and assessments are merely the classic moves, games, and seductions of rhetoric (as Davis [1986] implies), we would only counter that rhetoric is pretty much all we have to work with. The relevant imagery comes from Batchelor (1997): "Life is neither meaningful nor meaningless. Meaning and its absence are given to life by language and imagination. We are linguistic beings who inhabit a reality in which it makes sense to make sense" (p. 39). Both disconfirmation and affirmation

are efforts to make sense. Affirmation of one's assumptions does not automatically lead to the judgment, "that's obvious," if the affirmation occurs against a history of claims that previously ran counter to those assumptions. When counterclaims are first advocated, we find them either "interesting" or "absurd." If counterclaims are later modified in ways that move them closer to the consumers' assumptions embedded in absorbed coping, then these modifications close the gap between forward living and backward understanding. It is that closing that leads to the judgment, "that's moving."

EXAMPLES OF THEORY THAT IS MOVING

Several bodies of work in organizational studies seem to close the gap between context-free entities made orderly in hindsight and context-rich interrelating made orderly in the moment through usage. Vaughan's (1996) discussion of NASA engineers living forward in a flood of weak, mixed, intermittent signals of O-ring problems, as well as investigative boards viewing those same signals backward as strong signals that were missed by inept or corrupt observers, epitomizes the several points being made in the present analysis. The disjunction between backward and forward views is clear, attempts are made to reconstruct the ready-to-hand projects of engineers, the explanation is heavily contextualized, and the resulting theory, although grounded in particulars, is seen to be generalizable to phenomena as disparate as close relationships, marketing campaigns, and early warning systems.

Other examples of moves away from present-to-hand theories toward those that are more ready-to-hand include Orlikowski's (1996) research on people in a computer help center who improvise responses in the face of unexpected requests and continuously changing technology; Isenberg (1985), Schon (1983), and Weick's (1983) analyses of acting thoughtfully through reflection-in-action; Rochlin's (1997) explanation of the ways in which technology envisioned by present-at-hand designers baffles, thwarts, and handicaps those who try to use it to accomplish projects; Thatchenkery's (1992) use of hermeneutics to understand what happens when people fold appreciative inquiry into their ready-to-hand action; Schein's (1993) reinterpretation of dialogue as an exercise wherein people shorten the feedback loop between re-

flection and conversing; Argyris's (1990) work on theories-in-use; Lewin's (1951) notion of contemporaneity and contemporary causation, which is a sophisticated integration of individual context and history with causal mechanisms similar to those invoked by detached analysts; Stacey's (1995, p. 490) argument in the context of chaos theory, similar to Lewin's, that every detail of an entity's history is reflected in its current "state"; Wildavsky's (1991) treatment of resilience as dealing with what is at hand; Frank's (1992) description of the sharp disjunction between present-at-hand interventions by medical personnel into very different ready-to-hand ongoing projects of medical patients; Mintzberg's (1990) and Homans's (1950) insistence that realized, emergent action from involved actors departs significantly and durably from required, prescribed stipulations for action conveyed by detached superiors; Brunsson's (1982) influential contrast between involved action rationality and detached decision rationality; Starbuck and Milliken's (1988) argument that accuracy is a necessary imperative for detached analysts, but merely nice although not necessary for those who are involved agents; and Klein's (1998) description of naturalistic decision-making processes that involve neither present-at-hand abstractions nor detached enumeration of decision options before decisions are made.

Moves in the opposite direction, away from ready-to-hand theorizing and toward present-at-hand abstractions, are illustrated by work such as decontextualized accounts of heuristics and biases in information processing (e.g., Bazerman, 1994); theories grounded in bodies of data (Stenner, 1998, p. 216) produced by people who speculate what they would do in practical circumstances or what they think fictional others would do in a hypothetical situation (e.g., Stevenson & Gilly, 1991); and theories that are informed mainly by reports from people who adopt a reflective, disengaged, present-at-hand standpoint to answer pencil-and-paper exercises (e.g., Turban & Dougherty, 1992). In general, explanations whose focus is thinking rather than doing, context-free entities rather than those that are context rich, piecemeal rather than holistic awareness, cognition to the exclusion of emotion, continuity instead of interruption, reflection isolated from activity, stand-alone rather than situated artifacts, knowledge built inductively or deductively rather than through action, activity without any time constraints, appraisal as a necessary precondition for action, and lay people who function much like social scientists may well be viewed as acceptable exhibits of

understanding. They also may have little to say about the experience of living forward in the world of organizations.

If common features among the preceding examples are induced, qualities such as the following are possible properties of "moving" theories that synthesize backward understanding and forward living:

1. Analysis is focused on what people do.
2. Context of action is preserved, and context-free depiction of elements is minimized.
3. Holistic awareness is attributed to the actor.
4. Emotions are seen to structure and restructure activity.
5. Interruptions are described in detail with careful attention to what people were doing before the interruption, what became salient during the interruption, and what happened during resumption of activity.
6. Activity is treated as the context within which reflection occurs, and reflection is not treated as separate from, behind, and before action.
7. Artifacts and entities are portrayed in terms of their use, meaning, situated character, and embedding in tasks rather than in terms of their measurable properties.
8. Knowledge is seen to originate from practical activity rather than from detached deductive theorizing or detached inductive empiricism.
9. Time urgency rather than indifference to time is treated as part of the context.
10. The imagery of fusion is commonplace, reflecting that activity takes place prior to conceptualizing and theorizing.
11. Detachment from a problem and resort to general abstract tools to solve it is viewed as a last resort and a derivative means of coping rather than as the first and primary means of coping (whatever else people may be, they are not lay social scientists).

TACTICS OF THEORIZING

There are several take-aways from my analysis, many of which are evident in Frost's (1998) analysis. To get a feel for how gaps between understanding and living can be narrowed, think about hindsight. Because hindsight is made more difficult if the observer does *not* look back at history with just one outcome in hand, then theorists should engage in retrospect only when they are aware of multiple contradictory outcomes of the history that they are examining or no outcomes at all. Furthermore, if people live forward in terms of projects, then looking backward in terms of project-sized units of analysis might narrow the gap between present and ready-at-hand. Also, if the structure of ready-to-hand action is meaningful and semantic rather than formal and causal (Packer, 1985,

p. 1091), then narrative forms are closer to living forward than are propositional forms. The question is "What's the story here"—not what's the principle here, what list applies, or which boxes and arrows summarize this life.

Interruptions, which correspond to unready-to-hand events, are likely to be a more fundamental site for inquiry than people realize. Interruptions uncover the pattern of taken-for-granted relevancies that had been invisible in routine, ongoing action. This suggests that the growing body of work on organizational accidents (e.g., Perrow, 1984; Roberts, 1990; Sagan, 1993; Schulman, 1993; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, in press) is important for its ability to expose key interactions, processes, and routines that hold organizations together. A further implication is that theories built around what people notice when they are interrupted and how they cope with interruptions (e.g., Berscheid, 1983; Levy, 1962; Mandler, 1982, 1984) are not just commentaries on how people react to irritants and hassles. Instead, those theories point to fundamental properties of ongoing, involved, practical activity. In this sense, those who study problem solving, a prominent research topic in professional schools, have direct access to unready-to-hand engagement and indirect but meaningful access to ready-to-hand engagement (although there are also strong temptations to invoke institutionally sanctioned rational, present-at-hand interpretations). Problems are a common meeting ground for theory and practice because of their nearness to ready-to-hand engagement. When everyday projects suffer a breakdown of action, theorists and practitioners alike share a common vantage point from which they can glimpse thwarted potentialities embedded in networks of projects. This is not just warmed-over action research. Instead, it is basic research in which the workings of ready-to-hand engagement become equally visible to people with quite different interests. Furthermore, attempts to describe the common referent in a meaningful way encourage continuing dialogue dedicated to getting the account "right."

Frost's (1998) analysis of compassion exemplifies ways in which the gap between living forward and understanding backward can be narrowed. For example, Frost focuses on *projects* rather than entities (e.g., the project of restoring dignity), on *interruptions* that allow us to see what absorbed coping may consist of (e.g., the failure to provide inspired instruction), on *unfolding events* rather than hindsight, on the *provisional and contingent* rather than the settled and certain,

on *context and particulars* rather than the abstract and general, on people *oblivious to self* rather than self-absorbed, and on the *discourse of absorbed coping* rather than the discourse of detached representation. Another way to think about take-aways is to reflect on Geertz's (1995) flinty question: "What is objectivity supposed to prevent: passion, relativity, intuitionism, prejudice?" (p. 18). To exclude passion, relativity, intuitionism, and prejudice from theorizing may lead to more "interesting" theories that move the head by disconfirming assumptions, but it may also lead to fewer theories that affirm the heart and are judged "moving."

Maclean's (1992) analysis of young men and fire may well gain its power to move through its affirmation of Frost's (1998) conclusion that compassion counts. Maclean's entire book can be read as a deep expression of compassion toward young adventuring firefighters whose lives ended too soon. Maclean says as much in the frontispiece of his book:

As I get considerably beyond the biblical allotment of three score years and ten, I feel with increasing intensity that I can express my gratitude for still being around on the oxygen-side of the earth's crust only by not standing pat on what I have hitherto known and loved. While the oxygen lasts, there are still things to love, especially if compassion is a form of love.

Compassionate theorists of organizational life may be those who pay more attention to feeling and engagement.

I would summarize the take-away of these remarks using essentially the argument that Rorty (1989) puts forth. Vocabularies are constructed for coping, not for representation. There are no such things as "final" vocabularies, any more than there are real confirmed things out there that exist independent of words that call them into being. The most we can do is redescribe the world and, in doing so, handle it differently. Theorists should try the vocabulary of ready-to-hand, unready-to-hand, present-to-hand, engagement, equipment rather than tools, projects that fuse object and subject, approximations to simultaneous retrospect-prospect, and the silly certainty of hindsight to cope with problems they are trying to solve. The vocabulary may help. It may not. If it helps, stick with it until a better one comes along. If it does not help, then give voice to the vocabulary that gives you more help. But whatever vocabulary you choose, listen to the people who keep showing up everyday. Remember that their engaged world feels different than

your detached rendering of that world. Never fall into the trap of feeling that you know better than they do, what they are really up to. That's the sin of hubris. And when you commit it, we all sound like fools.

NOTE

1. Six died at the Dude fire, 14 at the South Canyon fire, 2 at the California fire, and 1 at the Buchanan fire.

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