

# Students comment about smartphone privacy

May 1, 2016, By Daniel J. Bauer

I occasionally lob a ball of sorts here in the direction of local English teachers, hoping that here or there a couple of them (perspicacious colleagues as they are) may grab onto something I say, and bring it to their students for discussion, or contemplation, or both.

I happen to see the two activities as essentially different.

Discussion for me is some form of active dialogue between people on one or more topics of mutual interest. By definition, dialogue is a social act, and an active, often lively one.

Contemplation as I see it refers to the solitary activity in which a person ponders a topic on a deep level. We may discuss all manner of topics, light, serious, or somewhere in between. When we contemplate, however, we are wrapping our imaginative hands around heavy timber. We sink slowly and very consciously into our inner juices when we contemplate. Sometimes, as contemplators, we are struggling with our spiritual selves, and perhaps our souls.

I do not deny that people can contemplate together. Dialoguing and contemplating are not always mutually exclusive. Speaking for myself, though, the most satisfying of contemplations occur within the quiet recesses of my inner self.

You are picking up the hints, I trust. Some readers may find words in this space useful for sharing with others in their lives. Some may receive the words, and process them, in a somewhat more thoughtful, more personal fashion. May there be a little bit of good available here for everyone who may happen by.

Now, some weeks ago, I shared some strong views about psychological abuse, privacy, and respect, especially toward girls and women. The context was human and, in a particular way, romantic relationships. ("New survey on relationship abuse worth our worry," CP 3-6-16 p. 4).

In the weeks that followed, I invited two groups of students (approximately 45 all told) to review that column on abuse and respond to it anonymously. The students were juniors and seniors, about a quarter of them males.

I wanted to know how students might differ from me in their definitions of psychological abuse. I wondered if, like me, they look askance at desires of a friend or

romantic other to scrutinize the histories of their high-tech "machinery," tracking phone calls, videos watched, and other information of a private sort. I was curious how they felt about pressure to engage in acts of unwanted intimacy. These were among the touchy topics I had explored on March 6 here on page 4.

On the question of definition, here is what a few of my students wrote: "I think abuse is to be forced to do something we are not willing to do, and the circumstance may cause harm physically or mentally." A female student commented, "It's rather hard to define 'abuse', as some people are psychologically fragile these days. Yet as long as one side of a relationship feels uncomfortable, then something must be fixed . . . Demanding to see the 'history' that a high-tech tool offers might be a form of abuse. To some extent it is. If we make another person feel not secure, or if they are cheating on a partner, that is also a form of abuse."

Personal experience guides us all. One student for example referred to her boyfriend. "My ex-boyfriend seldom checked my cell phone. The last time I checked his, however, I found him cheating on me. Thus, it is a good Q how much privacy couples should share with each other."

Wisdom is often linked with moderation. A female student wrote of people unconsciously causing pain for another. "I do believe people have to leave some personal space for others so they will not get too stressed out." Temptations can be strong. "I have to admit the temptation to check someone's phone is hard to resist," said a classmate. "I confess I did check my ex-boyfriend's phone secretly. I know I was wrong." Another female says couples nowadays "lack trust . . . they check each other's phones very often. Sometimes 'smart phones' put more distance between people."

The quotations above were among the best that emerged in my anecdotal survey. Give students the opportunity to analyze behavior and values, and you may be happily surprised. These results may only be a beginning, but beginnings in deeper understanding of life are always important.

Thank you, my Fu da students, for offering my readers (and your professor) a barrel of "the right stuff" to contemplate. (Father Daniel J. Bauer SVD is a priest and associate professor in the English Department at Fu Jen Catholic University.)

## Talking points

- 1) This column opens with thoughts about "dialogue" and "contmplation." "Dialogue" may be an easier word to use than "contmplation." What Chinese words could you teach a foreigner for these words?
- 2) This column allows Fu da students to use their voices to express views on abuse, cell phone privacy, and trust in romantic relationships. About "voices of students" - - When students make reports in class, do you listen to their voices with MORE care or LESS care than you offer your professors? Why?
- 3) Do any of the students' words here surprise you? Which of the student quotations is your favorite one? Why?

\*\*本文章僅供讀書會參考使用，非經原作者同意，請勿任意轉載。

師生互動與社會關懷  
專欄讀書會