

# Disability charity's snub to man for being disabled

A DISABILITY charity has been ordered to apologise and pay a job seeker €8,000 in compensation for discriminating against him . . . because he is disabled.

The Workplace Relations Commission found that a job application by a man with dyslexia and autism had been treated inconsistently by the charity, and that the selection process was 'bereft of transparency'.

Neither the charity nor the complainant were named in the WRC's decision.

The man had applied for a supervisor position in March 2016, submitting his CV and disclosing in an attached statement that he had dyslexia and Asperger's syndrome.

By Darragh McDonagh

He told an adjudication hearing of the WRC that he was 'shocked' to learn he had not been shortlisted for interview as he believed he possessed the requisite experience.

He subsequently made inquiries and was informed by telephone that there had been a miscalculation in the assessment of his application, which overlooked some of his qualifications and resulted in him not being called for interview.

The complainant did not accept this explanation and sought an investigation under equality legislation in order to ensure that the disability dis-

closed in his application had not been a factor.

He said he raised the issue before the WRC because he did not want the same thing to happen to anyone else.

In its submission to the WRC, the charity maintained that the error resulting in the complainant's exclusion was not intentional, and the paragraph mentioning his disability had not been read by those involved in the selection process.

In its decision, the WRC found that the charity had discriminated against the complainant on grounds of disability as a prospective employee, contrary to the Employment Equality Acts.

# Dr Mark Dooley



## MORAL MATTERS

# The book of life continues after we die

**Y**EARS ago, the late French philosopher Jacques Derrida announced the 'end of the book'. He was vilified because Derrida spent his life writing dozens of books. In the very act of writing that sentence in a book, he had shown it to be false.

Why would an intelligent man write such a silly thing? Derrida, who was a close friend, had many virtues. However, one of them was not clarity.

When he spoke of 'the book', he didn't mean an object like Great Expectations – something you can pick up and read repeatedly. No, he had in mind something like a biography which claims to provide a comprehensive portrait of a life. The idea that a biography could somehow provide a full and perfect picture of a life was, to him, a myth.

No life can be reduced to what is recorded in a diary, in records or in an archive.

Even when, unlike our ancestors, we possess a visual archive of our lives, there will always be gaps which only memory can fill. And, even then, we have to contend with memory loss.

No life can, in other words, be fully resurrected from the ashes of history. We are left with only traces and fragments of a life upon which we impose a structure. That structure usually takes the form of a story with a beginning, middle and end.

But, as Derrida said, the most interesting parts of any life are those bits that lie 'between the lines'. It is what you cannot see, what cannot be recalled or recorded, that provides the full picture of a person. 'The work of mourning' begins when history falls silent.

So much of our lives is hidden from view. We spend a lot of time alone with our thoughts and with our ghosts. Such moments are never recorded in any biography, family records or history.

They are unique and singular to me and can only be guessed at by future generations.

We perish and with us dies so much besides. And, once we fall silent, the stories begin. In the very moment of death, we become the subject of stories.

Funerals, eulogies and memorials are all occasions for storytelling. They seek to fill in the gaps or disclose the secrets hidden from pub-

lic view. Take, for example, what I am doing now.

I am sitting alone in my study writing this column. There is nobody here to bear witness to these events. Until I press the 'send' button, I may as well be writing to myself.

But now you are reading these words. You have something before you which testifies to the fact that I spent some hours composing this column.

It confirms what I did at a certain time on a particular date.

However, as you read it, you can imagine me sitting here writing. The picture in your mind may or may not resemble the facts. That you can imagine me typing in my room means, however, that I cannot be reduced to the sum of my words.

This is what makes the imagination so central to who we are.

We meet and reminisce about lost loved ones and friends. We raise a glass and say: 'Do you remember the time...?' And then we laugh and love because, in our mind's eye, we can picture them doing just that.

**M**OURNING is far less about memory than about imagination.

In imagination, we see people alive again, see them smiling and laughing and loving. Where memory breaks down, imagination rises up and permits us to see what the traces of history cannot reveal.

Imagination is not fabrication. It is that unique human ability to go beyond the limits of time and touch eternity.

It is a gift which allows us to draw back the drapes to see what lies on the other side. Without it, we would be condemned to a brute factual existence.

The book of life does not end with the last chapter.

There are always the bits and pieces that lie scattered here and there – the little scraps that we only discover when we think the story is complete.

There are the anecdotes we have never heard before, the good deeds that went unremarked, the little things that were said – but not aloud.

All lives are works in progress which never come to an end. They can be continually reimagined, retold and replayed.

And while this can never compensate for the real thing, aren't we blessed to have it?

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