



CONTENTS

Loving Country	Dave Knowles	2
The Wider View 2	Various	4
Extraordinary Awakenings	New Book by Steve Taylor	5
A Working Model for Inner Work	Stephen Haran	10
David Bentley Hart on Traherne	Alan Mann	13
CEF Foundation – Vietnam	Linda & Graeme Burn	15
Social Media, a story	Margot Mann	16

Greville Street Gatherings

Our monthly gatherings continue as Zoom meetings on the first Sunday of the month. At the September meeting Graeme Burn gave us a fascinating coverage of the programme of educational support of girls, he and his wife Linda have created and operated for 13 years in Viet Nam. I have copied the introductory note from their website together with the link to the full story on page 15.

This will be followed on Sunday October 3rd with Alexey Feigin telling us about his input into the founding of the Future Party in 2013, now called the Science Party, plus a number of additional items, if time allows.

All welcome, but it is necessary to be on the meeting list in order to receive the email notice of meeting, carrying the passcode, etc. If you are not already on the list but interested to receive notice of these gatherings please let me know and I will add your email address to our list.

Thanks to our contributors for their input and to our readers for their interest.

Loving Country from Dave Knowles

As I am auditing “THL225: Aboriginal Cultures and Spirituality” I do not have to do Assignments but last week’s lecture on “Kinship” and the discussion on ‘where we felt connected to’ stirred up a lot of thoughts in me and I felt I wanted to document them. [Note: the textbook for the course is “Loving Country: A Guide to Sacred Australia” by Bruce Pascoe & Vicky Shukuroglou. The first 2 chapters are: Gulaga & Biamanga—(Yuin country), Namadgi—(Ngunnawal country)

I was born in London in WW II amidst bombs and air raid sirens and I do not know where I was conceived so I don’t feel connections there. I think my “spiritual birth” came when my father took a job in the North Midlands of England and established our family (father, mother, my sister and I) in the small market town of Leek, North Staffordshire, known as “Queen of the Moorlands” when I was 7 years old. Leek is close to the boundary of the Peak District National Park a most beautiful area of moorland and scenic valleys on the backbone of England. As I grew older, I became a cyclist, joined Leek Cyclists’ Club and spent every weekend touring with them exploring this challenging terrain and getting very fit. There was something very special about spending all day in the saddle, feeling the contours of the land as my tyres rolled over it. Besides coming to love the Peak District and exulting in the fitness of my body my mind was very calm after such a day at peace with all the world and Nature itself. The long steady climbs to the high points like the “Cat and Fiddle”, the highest public house in England, and the long exhilarating descents at high speed back into Leek or valleys like Dovedale or the Manifold Valley were a rich part of my teenage life and could occupy several days of the week in holidays. I truly came to love this moorland park and feel part of it in my mind and in my body (and in my spirit?).

On a recent weekend as I walked up to Hanging Rock in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in the ACT, close to Namadgi National Park in Ngunnawal Country, and was awed by the huge shelter, I harked back to my love for the Peak District and, I think, felt a taste for what the Aboriginal feels for Loving Country.

Loving Countries

A not-so-obvious advantage of working in the Information Technology field, aside from its intrinsic interest, is the opportunity to move between countries with multinational computer companies. So besides coming to love the country I grew up in, the Peak District of England, (as documented in Loving Country) I have also had the opportunities to explore parts of Canada, South Africa and Australia. While motor vehicle touring opens up large areas of these large countries, it is only by long-distance walking or cycling that gives the true feel for the contours of the land rolling under the explorer’s sole (or through the explorer’s soul).

In Canada my first explorations with the Winnipeg Cycling Club took me across the vast expanses of the Prairies where the locals said you could see tomorrow in the east and yesterday in the west and where the club’s destination was marked on the horizon by a grain elevator some 40 miles away. This was a vast change from the Peak District I had loved but later I was mollified by four days riding

through the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia, toiling up Mt. Royal at the heart of Montréal and a week riding round the rugged country of Newfoundland. Even the Prairies seep into the soul after a while, especially cross-country skiing through the winter woods protected from the wind. Swooshing along the trails at -30°C under a startling blue sky and feeling warm all over is splendid! And the winter sunsets! Driving back into Winnipeg from the Whiteshell Park the colours in the sky were almost unbelievable - washes of apple-green over all the other colours of the rainbow.

The Republic of South Africa is a beautiful and warm country, the only ugly thing during our stay was the politics and the violence it engendered. From the majesty of the Drakensburg Mountains to the rolling vineyards of the Cape Province we explored and savoured on car trips. The contours of the hi-veldt of the Witwatersrand could be explored by bicycle from our home in Johannesburg, either solo or with the old-timers of the Cresta Wheelers but the most vivid African cycling memory is cycling through Swaziland with the brilliant hedges of bougainvillea almost hanging over the road. The fact that the next day I wore the yellow jersey in the Tour of Swaziland as race leader just cements the memory in place.

I have never met so many people as in South Africa who struggled to reconcile their love of their country with their conscience due to living with apartheid.

After we were repatriated to Canada in winter, we wanted to live in another warm Southern Hemisphere country with a calm conscience and safety for our daughters. At this point an old friend who worked for another multi-national IT company provided the answer - Australia! An interview at Boston airport went well and we flew from a wintry Toronto airport to land in Sydney summer and were welcomed to our first hotel in Australia, which was shrouded in orange bougainvillea! Was this Australia or was it Heaven?

To be transferred to the most beautiful capital in the world with more cycle paths than I had ever seen seemed to be a suitable introduction to the country that would become a loved Home to all 10 of our tribe (now).

And for all Australians I would have you know that Canberra in winter is tropical compared to Winnipeg in winter!

And all my friends know that I am exploring my love for this country with the aid of its original inhabitants who love it deeply.

I have 3 citizenships now but would happily take on world citizenship, were it available, as I am ready to embrace and love the world.

[Historical Note: I wondered why The South American Handbook was on our bookshelves in England; it turns out my father had applied to every rail company in South America for a job. A simple twist of fate has me speaking English rather than Spanish or Portuguese to you now.]

Dave Knowles

The Wider View 2

We had a few notes in response to the 'Wider View' edition. First from Colin whose poem Thought-Bees was included and to whose poetry we have referred in past

Hello Alan, I have been reading your wonderful collection of gems, The Wider View. How lovely to find Thought-Bees included.

Rilke took his place, of course, and I thought I would share these lines which I was looking at this morning:

"Once on Capri, while I was standing under the olive trees in the garden one night, a bird call... was at once inside me and outside, as if in a single, undivided space of absolute extension and clarity!"

In a letter to a friend, 19th January, 1919 (translated Ulrich Baer).

With love and appreciation to you and Margot, from Carole too, Colin

Colin shares my admiration for Douglas Harding and in this connection, but not a response to The Wider View, Sam Blight sent me a quotation by Virginia Woolf, he said:

I know you like finding references to headlessness in literature and philosophy and I came across this Virginia Wolfe quote in a recent New Yorker article:

"The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughness a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye." From her essay "Street Haunting".

The article is here: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/08/30/is-the-digital-age-costing-us-our-ability-to-wander>

Back to The Wider View responses: From Dave Knowles: Wonderful! - the September NOWletter - I've now savoured it once but will go back for more - an unexpected pleasure - like a note from the Cosmos, and a titbit for you:

The Wider View 10 reminded me of:

I said to the almond tree, "Sister, speak to me of God."
and the almond tree blossomed. - Nikos Kazantzakis

Dave added this tip: By the Way I have learned from Pierre Hadot that "Like Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, the literary genre of my *Notes on YtA* is *hupomnêmata* (notes one takes for oneself). Pierre Hadot: "The Present Alone is our Happiness: Conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold I. Davidson (2011)" p.57

He also pointed to a mistake:

And another question: what does the interposed line in The Wider View 3 mean; Delmore Schwartz is "Seurat's Sunday Afternoon along the Seine. It should have been 'Delmore Schwartz's'.

Artificial Intelligence - A personal perspective from Trisha English,

When approaching a topic like artificial intelligence, it is necessary in the first instance to explain what I understand by those two words. Artificial, as I understand it, is something that is not real; fake; designed to appear authentic by imitation of the real. Intelligence is much more difficult to define because it is linked to consciousness and also human conditioning. For most people it is related to knowledge acquired by humans and stored in memory to be processed and applied to changing situations. General intelligence can be thought of as the ability to apply common sense to any situation. People classify intelligence according to the social and cultural milieu in which they have been brought up. In the Western World, and possibly much of the Eastern World, we tend to think of people who are specialists in a particular area of knowledge be it science, physics, the humanities, or law, to name but a few areas.

On a personal and social level, the label of intelligence hardly applies. Great minds are capable of extreme levels of stupidity, when carrying out the functions of their personal life. This applies to politicians, world leaders, and so forth. Intelligence in one field, is no guarantee whatsoever, that in personal affairs the same intelligence will apply. Something called “free will” seems to get in the way.

One thing can be said with some certainty. Artificial intelligence is so far advanced throughout the entire world, that our life on Earth is already undergoing irreversible change.

In the Victorian era a housewife was little more than a domestic servant, whose primary goal was to keep house and bear children. Over thousands of years, through hundreds of cultures, this was the case and is still the case in many countries today. A wife was a possession, even her wealth was not her own. A woman was defined as not having the same level of intelligence as her husband. She was an emotional creature, without the level-headedness needed to take responsibility for her own life and those of others.

The idea that a woman could join the Armed Forces, become the leader of her country, become an astronaut, an engineer, a financial adviser, a doctor, was out of the question. At best she might be a novelist, an artist, a teacher, or an actress - but these professions were something of a compensation. Marie Curie, who discovered radium and polonium was perhaps the exception rather than the rule. She is the only woman to be awarded two Nobel prizes. The first in 1903 along with her husband for their contribution to physics and in her own right in 1911 for the discovery of radium and polonium. It was not until 1963 that another woman won a Nobel prize in the area of physics and chemistry.

All that has changed, but the balance of power is still awry. Overall, women are still in a subservient role with little real influence in the world. Perhaps Angela Merkel, the first woman chancellor of Germany is an exception.

Artificial intelligence has been pioneered by men, not exclusively perhaps, but sufficiently to be regarded as the dominant force. The invention of the computer, the mobile phone, the Playstation, the internet, the television, the digital world itself, is predominantly the area of male creativity and intellectual achievement. Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft, Google, Twitter, Instagram, and so on are all the creations of male “intelligence”.

The stealth bomber, the drone, the face recognition apparatus, the automatic cars, the advanced military hardware, the space shuttles, the telescopes, and space stations and space probes like Voyager, all came into being as a result of collaborative effort, but that effort has been largely dominated by male intelligence.

Wars have historically been fought by men and machines. That equation has now been altered and women are being encouraged to participate in an activity that has dominated human lives since time immemorial. Whatever we are, whether the outcome of divine intervention, alien intervention, or natural selection, we are a warlike, aggressive, acquisitive and devious species. The Jews have a saying: “If you want to investigate anything, follow the money.” Money, is one of the essential ingredients for success and promoting massive social change.

I believe in human achievement and the pursuit of wealth, because without it one cannot provide food, shelter and clothing and where possible the means by which human life can be made bearable and manageable. I understand that humans need to defend themselves against oppression and subjugation, but it seems to me that the “might is right” brigade has a disproportionate advantage in influencing world outcomes.

Personally, I don't want to be manipulated by capitalist or socialist agendas, and I question the “profit motive” which appears to me to govern the entire world of education, though I am sure that some people will disagree with this view. The overriding fault of humanity, if I can put it that way, is that we have been discouraged, by contemporary education, from learning to think for ourselves. We have outsourced the human capacity for thinking to our politicians, to our financial institutions, and our so-called religious leaders.

So it is any wonder, that we are now entering the world of the android; a programmed robot who will take the drudgery out of human existence and thereby free usfor what? Lately, I have viewed dozens, and dozens of videos, conferences, world science forums to do with artificial intelligence. Anything before 2000 is already outdated, so don't waste your time looking over your shoulder, unless it is to see how far human intervention has progressed. Intelligence - as information gathering - is escalating at an exponential rate, but “wisdom” is as elusive today as it has ever been. The rate of progress is seen by some as threatening, as irrelevant to their own personal world view, and they lump it into some kind of conspiracy basket. Very few have researched the entire area for themselves. In the first place, it is time consuming, and above all it requires a degree of discrimination and evaluation which many people do not have.

Nor do they want to acquire the skills, because they already have “made up minds”.

Elon Musk when asked in 2017 what knowledge students might find essential for future life on this planet, replied : -“physics”. I agree with him. Science, mathematics, physics, critical thinking, and the ability to “enquire into every aspect of human existence” without bias, prejudice, or preconceived conceptions will be essential. When I first began my research into this topic, I held the view that the young people, glued to their mobile phones and laptops were wasting valuable time. I’ve changed my view. Instead of the social agenda being superimposed upon primary students today, I would teach them computer programming. I would encourage them to become more proficient in these areas so that androids and cyborgs will not overtake human capacity. I would encourage them to remain in control of artificial intelligence and not be controlled by it. It may come down to whether humans keep control of the androids, or the artificial creations come to dominate us and impose a new form of subjugation on the planet Earth.

There is growing talk these days about how artificial intelligence will replace human beings and rob them of their employment. This is a legitimate concern. China is by far the leader in the wholesale application of artificial intelligence. I have seen entire fleets of trucks already crossing vast distances powered completely by AI. No driver required. I have seen huge containers in various ports, loaded and unloaded with only a handful of human supervision. I have seen huge skyscrapers built in three weeks or even less.

Already some economists, and others, are talking about the establishment of a universal wage. You will not have to work if you don’t want to, or if you have been replaced by mechanisation. Already car factories are moving swiftly to employ artificial intelligent machines to replace human workers. Medical diagnosis is being outsourced to androids who can diagnose complicated diseases in a fraction of the time it takes a human being to do so. Androids will replace nurses and carers in the aged care industry and, at least in theory, will provide humans with artificial companions. These carers will never get tired, never require lunch breaks, or long service leave, or salaries of any kind, though upkeep and maintenance will require new levels of expertise. Problem solved? Not really, because nothing can ever truly replace human interaction or solve the problem of loneliness. But I have no doubt that the innovators are looking into it. In the same way that Netflix monitors the films you watch, and Google monitors the things you buy online, and phone companies keep track of who you talk to and how often, they will make decisions for you.

Remember before the advent of television? Families used to sit around the dinner table talking about the experiences of the day. Children used to ask their parents about world events, and homework problems were a family affair. Very occasionally children were taken to eat out, or to go on holidays. In those days the emphasis was on “caring for others”, being kind to the less fortunate, and working towards something called “the common good”.

Covid 19 has proved beyond any shadow of doubt, that earthlings are not interested in the “common good” however one defines it. They are interested in the most superficial things, a kind of political “Big Brother” narrative, in which critical thinking appears to be absent completely. A young twenty-year-old was interviewed last night on the Euronews channel. She claimed that Germans were superior social beings and that the world needed to stop driving cars, cease taking overseas holidays and stay at home. These kinds of statements give rise to all kinds of philosophical problems.

Nostradamus once said that having conquered the Earth, humankind would go out and explore the stars. I don't really know if he said this, but that is the direction we are headed. I don't know if there are aliens in outer space observing us, but some people claim that this is so. They might want our resources, but if they are superior intelligent beings, my guess is that they will keep their distance. We are not sufficiently evolved in my view to entertain visitors from outer space.

Well, I must conclude. My avatar is waiting for me. It has promised to clean my house from top to bottom; prepare a feast for my friends, and organise appropriate entertainment. It has promised me security and freedom from fear. I can watch the flowers grow and the fruit trees blossom. But will it be enough? That is the question. And what do we really mean by “enough”?

Trisha English

Extraordinary Awakenings by Steve Taylor

I first came across Steve Taylor in an edition of Philosophy Now, an article he wrote on Panspiritism. It is an essay offering a perspective we would have found helpful during our debate on Carlo Manzotti's Spread Mind theory last year. I then subscribed to Steve's podcast and, shortly after signing up, I responded to a request for readers to provide a review of his latest book 'Extraordinary Awakenings' sub-titled 'When Trauma Leads to Transformation'. I volunteered to contribute a review of this book prior to the publication date in September 2021, and received an advance, online copy. The book is now released and available from Amazon in paperback and Kindle format. I haven't checked other sources.

The book examines the phenomenon of suffering as a cause of spiritual awakening. He calls this transformation through turmoil with an acronym TTT to save space and repetition. He offers a series of 'case studies' demonstrating examples of transformation which have occurred spontaneously in the most unlikely circumstances such as imprisonment in harsh conditions, war situations in the face of imminent death, suicidal depression, near-death experiences and serious addiction.

The gradual appearance of shifts towards transformation, or its sudden manifestation, can be interpreted by the subject as either a welcome awakening or resisted as a fear of going mad. In what might be considered positive outcomes, the experience carries with it an assurance of a much more authentic sense of being than everyday consciousness assumes.

This is a theme we have considered ourselves over the years. In particular, transformation due to crisis, e.g., Jack Geddes experience at Dunkirk, which subsequently led him to Traherne and Wren-Lewis on the consequences of his NDE, which kicked off our regular meetings and the NOWletter in 1993. The latter so named several years before the Power of Now became a best seller, which I refer to here as the author mentions Tolle on a number of occasions. This on account of Tolle's transformative experience resulting from serious mental anguish and his subsequent writing, teaching, and in particular, his referencing of the 'pain body' to which we are all subject in varying degrees

If transformation is possible, under some of the desperate circumstances recorded in the book, then it implies that it is perhaps more accessible than we thought. Or, maybe, the turmoil of suffering is a necessary condition for transformation. Is turmoil really necessary? I didn't find that Steve Taylor proposes either of these to be the case, as his comments on the causes of both spontaneous and progressive transformation make clear.

He suggests that opening provides a better description than awakening:

Spiritual awakenings are also spiritual openings. They open us up to a wider and more intense vision of reality. This is an invigorating experience, but if the opening occurs suddenly and dramatically, it may also feel overwhelming.

This response to the book coincided with another bit of research I'm engaged in at the moment, a collection of poems that present what I call 'the wider view'. One of my examples was a slice from The Prelude where Wordsworth speaks of 'the eye of love'. Opening the 'eyelid' which is almost constantly closed, is that a possibility?

In considering possible explanations for transformation through turmoil, Steve Taylor points out that isolation and inactivity provide a sound basis for transformative experience, hence the relevance of incarceration. Meditation in its many forms is the most common preparation. I favour the form of meditation preferred by one of the examples detailed in the book, a case study illustrating transformations on the brink of suicide, as explained in Donna's Story, Donna says:

It's nowhere near as difficult as it was. I'm much more integrated. The space is always there. People sometimes ask me, "Do you meditate?" And I don't, because life is the meditation, when you meet it from that space. You are that space all the time, not just when you sit down to meditate.

In a book like this there is always a background question of relevance, how can these descriptions of undoubtedly authentic experiences be of help to someone who him/herself hasn't fallen into them. The author deals with this aspect in a chapter entitled 'Explaining Transformation Through Turmoil'.

I found his answers very much in line with our coverage of this question over the years, in particular the debate about sudden or gradual transformation, his

explanation of the shift in identity, in which he speaks of the new self rather than no-self and which, for me, echoes David Loy's comments on the duality of non-duality. There is mention of the recovery of connectedness, immersion in the occasion — a participatory rather than a detached presence in the world. He also considers the degree to which particular personality types are prone to transformation and finds that 'people who have the trait of openness — in that they are curious, creative, and imaginative — are more likely to undergo post trauma growth'.

The consequences, as I interpret his conclusions, can be summarised in the words of Traherne as 'enjoying the world aright'. However significant this may be for the individual it does not solve the problem of our collective slide into oblivion as we carelessly destroy our environment. As approaching death can lead to transformation of the individual, can a collective awareness of impending doom finally awaken us as a whole? Steve Taylor thinks this is a possibility and suggests that the increasing incidence of individual transformations might be an indication of the most necessary awakening, a collective transformation arising from our approaching, collective NDE. This perspective is an interesting contribution to the ideas of Gebser and Wilbur on the proposal that we are currently in a transitional phase from the mental to the integral. This best expressed, from my point of view, in George Schloss's commentaries on the work of Douglas Harding, in revealing a means of moving from the saying of it—to the seeing of it—to the being of it.

Alan Mann

Extraordinary Awakenings is the thirteenth book by Steve Taylor. Details of all publications at: <https://www.stevenmtaylor.com/>

He was recently interviewed by David Lorimer on his Imaginal Inspirations podcast:

[The Imaginal Inspirations Podcast – David Lorimer – The Galileo Commission](#)

Lorimer always asks his guests about their favourite books. I was amused to find that Dr. Taylor mentioned, as his favourites, many of the volumes that set me off on this enquiry.

The Steve Taylor website: <https://www.stevenmtaylor.com/>

A Working Model for Inner Work from Stephen Haran

Firstly can I thank Alan for allowing me to present my views in this newsletter.

I set out some time back to construct a working model for the inner life. Obviously this work was restricted to my own inner experiences, although it is also one contribution to a larger social and educative task. Such a basic model of the mind and our inner experience is totally lacking in the common culture.

The incongruity of this fact is even more apparent when we drop down a fundamental level and consider the question not just at the level of human beings, but at the level of our species, *homo sapiens*. Our species is itself the single

outcome of a larger homo genus pool. Its *defining uniqueness* is the creative human brain.

The human brain has created all human civilisation, all religions and gods, all political and social traditions, science and its applications, everything of human culture. All of human history is a product of the human brain.

I had been oblivious to this fact for the whole 35 years that I have been interested in the inner work. During that time I used the methods and concepts arising out of the religious, spiritual and psychological traditions that I had studied and practised.

Despite this I remained a more or less dissociated mind, largely dissociated from my feelings and body, and with all the failures in life that this condition brings.

However, over the past period the inner promptings became more singular. This was to base myself more and more on intelligence received from my *feeling nature*.

This decision led to further inner promptings, that the process to a more unitive mind and body was *in and down*, not an ascent, rather a *descent*.

This led to a recognition that feelings generated in the body and its natures were at bottom *vibrational patterns*, and that my task was to *be with* those vibrational patterns, or how I felt, without projecting onto them moral qualities (good/bad, right/wrong).

This in turn raised the question of an inner platform, or inner centre, however configured, that would take responsibility for this work. The *naming* of these things always came *from within*, in this case *self-responsibility* and *self-governance*.

At that time, I was working with general and simple concepts such as Mind, Self and Body, and the relationships between them. I capitalised Mind and Self in particular to express the fact that both were expandable concepts, not fixed or rigid thought structures. I also discovered that general, abstract and absolute conceptions were often the enemy of further progress, and deconstructing these absolutes into their aspects, elements and parts, allowed things to become more real and easier to handle.

For example, I realised that the body is made up of its various *natures*, and is known internally through its natures. These included the physical nature, the feeling nature, the sexual nature, the vibrational or energetic nature, and the being nature. That is, the experiences of the body in the mind arose out of these natures. Once aware of them I was able to realise and recognise them.

In regard to the Mind the inner promptings were always to *allow*, almost a principle of Allowing. Allow what you may ask? The answer was always everything, all thoughts and all feelings, which immediately ran me into my own thought structures that prohibited this, censored, disallowed, ignored, trivialised and refused certain thoughts and feelings.

This in turn led to the demand for a *more democratic inner life*, where these thoughts and feelings had rights, were considered part of me, and were *owned* by me.

Thoughts and feelings had their own development once this was allowed and filled out to become *aspects* of my Self and self, full-blown personalities, high and low and all things in between.

At this time, I also had experiences of completely new ways of thinking about things, and my mind and concepts of Self, even in expanded form, had trouble incorporating them and even allowing them. This was particularly true with more *absolute* and demanding aspects.

I resolved this in my own mind by insisting that all aspects of my mind and being were *equal*. The principle of equality is powerful, and always appears to me at the strangest times. So too here, for it not only allowed the great as well as the small and pathetic in me, but it allowed all of my past life as well. After this my past life came to meet me more and more, people and memories, and always for the better.

In this way my inner life became more organised and structured, and my practical life became more effective, my relationships with others more strict and beneficial.

What I call my *personal discovery* of my own brain came only *after* all this, and almost by accident. We all know that the mind is creative, and I had concepts for it like the Deep Mind and Deep Self to hold those qualities. Then suddenly it clicked in my mind that the brain was the creator of all this, that our creative capacity came from the brain.

With this realisation came also a falling into place of the right relationships between things, at least conceptually. By all material and scientific knowledge, the brain creates our experience but how do we experience that knowledge?

From a logical standpoint the brain must create the Mind and sense of mind, as well as the Self and sense of self. That is, the Mind and Self, which is how we know ourselves, are themselves products of the brain, working projections of the brain in its never-ending curiosity to *know itself better*.

Why is the discovery of the brain in our internal life, and the being where the brain is the centre and conscious outlet of the natures and itself, *intensely materialistic*? On the face of it, looking only at the surface phenomena, it seems a contradiction. This contradiction is answered when we realise that the being and brain are *seeking to know themselves* through the materiality of the body, becoming conscious of themselves through the body, and its intelligences. This process reveals the true structure of internal life, its true foundations, and how everything fits together in actual reality.

Past methods have used thought, and thought structures, feeling-thought structures, in the mind, to approach the body, its natures, its living vitality, the brain and its capacities, *from the outside*. The new *paradigm*, if you will, *turns the old on its head*, so that the inner world and the inner sources, become primary,

seen in their causal and creative role, and not something acted on by the mind through thought structures, and various filters and controls.

As I have got used to these new ideas it is easier to be with. However, while my first reaction was that it reduced my experiences to only me, and was thus small, mundane and humbling in its nature, it also pointed to the fact that if the human brain had created the ideas of external gods and greater aspects, then these things were also in my own mind, and belonged to my own brain.

Why do I believe this realignment, this new model or approach to inner knowledge and functioning, is significant?

It takes human equality to a new level. All members of *homo sapiens* have this creative brain, the prototype of the human brain that has created all human life.

It means that the *individual* (with that brain) is now the primary focus, which starts with a focus on the inner life as central and not secondary.

This turn inward, to our own natures, to our own source in being nature and brain as its centre, also turns us towards nature, and the necessary realignment of that relationship.

That in its generalisation it represents part of a Second Great Enlightenment, a continuation and deepening of the First Great Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries which brought us reason and scientific knowledge.

Despite all these hopes and projections, if this attempt at a working model is to mean anything at all, it must become the project of the *many*, all of them *individuals*, who will *each* find their own way to the inner knowledge, and in so doing, enrich the project for all of us.

Stephen Haran

David Bentley Hart on Traherne from Alan Mann

I stumbled on a lecture by Rupert Sheldrake entitled ‘A Conscious Universe’ and decided to listen for old times sake. Rupert was a member of a quartet, to which I listened many tears ago, comprising himself, David Bohm, Jiddu Krishnamurti and David Shainberg, During this recent lecture Sheldrake referred to a book by David Bentley Hart entitled, *The Experience of God – Being, Consciousness, Bliss*. It sounded very interesting, so I downloaded it on to my Kindle. The value of Kindle reading is the ability to take, make and recover notes and to search for particular words. So, about a quarter of the way into the book I thought I’d see if he mentioned Traherne. And to my surprise and delight he is mentioned twice.

The experience of sensible beauty provokes in the soul the need to seek supersensible beauty, says Plato; it is, in the words of Plotinus, a “delicious perturbation” that awakens an eros for the divine

within us. All things are a mirror of the beauty of God, says the great Sufi poet Mahmud Shabestari (1288–1340); and to be seized with the desire for that beauty, says Gregory of Nyssa, is to long to be transformed within oneself into an ever more perspicuous mirror of its splendor. Kabir (1440–1518) says that it is divine beauty that shines out from all things, and that all delight in beauty is adoration of God. For Thomas Traherne (c. 1636–1674), one of the sanest men who ever lived, to see the world with the eyes of innocence, and so to see it pervaded by a numinous glory, is to see things as they truly are, and to recognize creation as the mirror of God's infinite beauty. (from "The Experience of God" by David Bentley Hart)

I read that David Bentley Hart is a contemporary Greek Orthodox theologian. His book is a defence of a definition of God which, in my view, is much the same as expressed by Thomas Jackson, ca 1668.

He speaks more fully and more safely, that saith, God is being itself, or perfection itself.

Hart believes that both atheism and deism are belief systems and whatever the word 'God' is pointing to it must reflect experience not blind belief or explanation. The subtitle of, Being, Consciousness, Bliss is a Christian parallel with Sat, Chit Ananda of the Hindu tradition and he says that this understanding is shared by all major traditions and sums it up in the familiar 'that in which we live, move and have our being', which is what I have always assumed to be what Traherne condensed into the one word 'capacitie'. Back to the purpose of this note, his references to Traherne. The final paragraph of his concluding comments, the last words of his book are as follows:

"Finally, however, when all arguments have subsided and one must decide what it is one truly believes regarding God—or, at least, how one understands one's experience of the world in relation to the question of God—there are very few books that can properly prepare one for the contemplative task of making that decision. So, for my last recommendation, principally as an expression of my own sensibility, I think I should like to suggest Thomas Traherne's Centuries, which I regard as one of the most compelling and beautiful descriptions of seeing reality as it truly is, in both its immanent and transcendent dimensions. I might on another day have chosen another book, I confess; but I doubt I could choose a better one." (from "The Experience of God" by David Bentley Hart)

Rupert Sheldrake's, Weekend University lecture on YouTube Lecture 'A Conscious Universe'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqWbIVInmNM>

CEF Foundation – Vietnam Linda and Graeme Burn

Following Graeme Burn's talk to our September GrevZoom I lifted the following from their CEF website. I have added the link below.

Children's Education Foundation, a charity working in Vietnam, works to break the poverty cycle by helping girls from impoverished or marginalized communities complete school or receive further education or training, helping not just the young women, but also succeeding generations and their communities to have the possibility of a better life with more choice.

<http://www.childreducationfoundation.org.au/the-cef-team.html>

Note by Linda Burn—Founding Director and In-Country Manager - Vietnam

CEF spontaneously arose out of a need I saw in Vietnam to help girls receive an education and have the opportunity of tertiary education or vocational training. I wanted to see them have a life with choices, not the limited one I saw of poverty and the resultant grinding daily struggle with no obvious way out. Poverty sometimes leads to parents taking desperate measures, consciously and sometimes not. Daughters are sold off for a tidy sum, into arranged marriages where they are abused. Girls are tempted by well-paid jobs in China, and although promised a bright future, end up being a prostitute in a brothel or enslaved in a factory. A girl in school has less chance of this happening to her.

This desire to help females from impoverished or marginalized communities still exists for me today 13 years later, and maybe even more strongly than in the past, as I now have seen the difference an education makes here. We have the joy of seeing many complete school, and now we have 12 who have graduated from college or university. There is no turning back.



Social Media, a story by Margot Mann

All those talented women who died young. Harriet shifted in her seat and reached for her coffee.

She remembered seeing somewhere that it was originally thought that Emily Dickinson died from Bright's Disease, but more recently, experts think that untreated high blood pressure could have killed the reclusive poet. The Bronte sisters all died young from the effects of poverty. And so did Jane Austen, who some believe died in her early 40's from Addison's Disease. Her novels are better known in the twenty-first century than the nineteenth, when she wrote about English society. These women led sheltered lives but were keen social observers and had rich imaginations. Harriet sighed. She wondered if any 21st century young women writers would still be famous in another couple of hundred years; or, indeed, if there would still be such a thing as a novel you could hold in your hand. Maybe there would be other ways of telling stories. She sighed again and turned to the essay she was writing, to be handed in tomorrow: fifteen hundred words on "Jane Austen's comments on C19th English society are still relevant today. Discuss."

The previous night, Harriet had dreamed that she was answering an exam question on Jane Austen. She couldn't remember what she had written unfortunately, but her hands had flown around the keyboard. In the dream, Jess was leaning over her shoulder, trying to copy her answer. Jess was someone Jane Austen would have approved of, she was smart, lively and an independent thinker. She smiled, thinking of Jess, and reluctantly turned back to her essay.

She liked the way early novels had to rely on strategically dropped hand-written notes, overheard conversations and accidental meetings, to move the plot along. Mail took a long time to reach its destination, and even trusted servants riding well-cared for horses could meet with hazards preventing delivery of crucial messages. The epistolary form of the novel worked well, Harriet thought. It gave everyone time to gather their wits between messages, unlike modern social media. Harriet couldn't imagine that a text message from Mr. Darcy would be as romantic as the sight of Colin Firth climbing out of the lake with his wet shirt stuck to his chest. Everyone knew too much about everyone else these days. Jane Austen would not have approved.

Harriet texted Jess: "Dreamed u copied off me in an exam. xxx" Within a couple of minutes her phone buzzed. "Bet u were dreaming about Darcy. Did he like me best?" she read. Harriet laughed out loud, put her phone in her bag and slowly turned back to the essay again. She could smell the spring blossom outside the window and as she let her eyes travel around her parents' back garden, she thought how lucky she was to have a good friend like Jess. When you came to think about it, they were both loners. Harriet had been pleased when Jess came to live nearby and went to the same school, although it took a few months for their

friendship to become really strong. When Jess was in hospital with meningitis, Harriet visited her every day and they had been inseparable ever since.

Harriet groaned. She was beginning to dislike Jane Austen. She tried to remember what they had discussed in class and decided to google for some more info to pad out her essay. It was usually pretty clear which characters Austen endorsed; she liked rich intelligent people who were kind and generous to those less fortunate. If she made someone look foolish, it was usually to teach them a lesson, like Lydia Bennet, or to be an example to others, and it was important for every member of society to act appropriately, according to their station in life. You could tell that Elizabeth Bennet was one of Austen's favourites - and her father's. She was more intelligent than some of her foolish sisters who often acted without thinking, causing trauma and chaos, illustrating the point that instant gratification does not always lead to happiness. Emma was revealed to be an admirable person, and although a little hot-headed and judgemental, she redeemed herself by learning from her mistakes (which Austen always rewarded), before finally getting together with Mr Knightley. Harriet wondered if Austen had ever had a boyfriend. She definitely would not have approved of same sex relationships. Harriet thought about Jess again. She took out her phone and texted: "I'm the only one who likes u best."

"Jane Austen was a writer for her time", she typed. "Her special skill was in her ironic descriptions of social behaviour, especially between men and women..."

Margot Mann