



Monthly Musings — July 2018

Life in the Passing— Trisha English

There is no doubt that we live in a world of exponential social change. Not everyone has the time or the inclination to cover everything, so I thought I would pass on news of a documentary which readers might have missed, but would otherwise be interested in watching.

It can be found on YouTube and the video is entitled “Down the Dark Web”. I recommend viewing this video with a caution. YouTube is a great place for exploration, but it is also a place of fake news, alternative news, and propaganda. One needs to exercise discernment otherwise you will fall into a black hole. Think of it as a tool for exploration. Look, listen and make up your own mind!

“Down the Dark Web” is quite terrifying, whether you are 15 or 85 +. It may be less traumatic if you are under 20, because young people are very laid back about technology in general. But for most people, a viewing of this video, will be an awakening. The universe we live in is extraordinarily dangerous and dark. The darkness is not just outside ourselves, but inside us as well.

Just how dangerous is outlined in this video. Have you watched the news at night and wondered how massive crowds can turn out for a protest meeting, or political demonstration? Have you wondered how and why fake news can so easily manipulate people? Do you really understand, for example, what is meant by the “deep State” and how you and your friends are controlled, manipulated, and conditioned to produce desired behavioural outcomes? If you are in any doubt, or unsure, then this video needs your attention. Our civilization, may depend on our being aware and informed.

It is true that we have made tremendous advances in technology, but emotionally and psychologically, we are still primitive life forms, capable of so much more, but limited by our images, conditioning and imperfect self-knowledge.

Down the Dark Web reminds us that what rises can fall, what creates can also destroy, and without insight and wisdom and an understanding of history and what has gone before, it may well mean that we have to live it all over again. Shakespeare once wrote, “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet”. It may also be said, that darkness by any other name, would still be as dark.

Trisha English

“Down the Deep Dark Web” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oslnoIWh_Q

Metzinger's Kitchen—Alan Mann

(This is a modified and slightly expanded version of the talk notes from the Greville Street meeting on 1st July. I mention this as those of you on the meeting list will already have received a copy of the original version as an email attachment. However, note the postscript. Alan)

Thomas Metzinger is a German philosopher and professor of theoretical philosophy at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, and from what I have understood about him from listening to his talks he is a very secular oriented scientist and an unlikely source of anything that could be regarded as supporting views that involve mystical interpretations. This note is inspired by remarks he made whilst discussing meditation in an interview with Michael Taft on Deconstructing Yourself Podcasts—"Consciousness, Spirituality and Intellectual Honesty".

At 55 minutes into the tape. Metzinger says:

I was in a hurry and washing dishes, extreme hurry, had to clean kitchen and had to get into that car and get out. And while I was mindlessly washing dishes and was nervous and anxious I thought 'Oh shit! you haven't even done your evening meditation yet'. How am I going to fit that in, there's no time for it. — The moment I had that thought I suddenly realised the whole room is already meditating, the cupboard, the shelves, etc., the room— was meditating. It sounds very mystical it isn't — but imagine if the room was meditating all the time and I was ignoring it by practising mindfulness.

I was impressed by his cheerful expression of what, on the surface, seems to be an absurd claim and intrigued by my reaction. This was a sense that he was saying something fundamentally true which is not accessible to everyday consciousness and, perhaps, meaningful only at the level disclosed by the meditative mind. I knew Metzinger had been influenced to some extent by two of my favourite philosophers, Krishnamurti and Harding, so I decided to dig a bit deeper.

We have recently been looking at the poetry of Emily Dickinson who is reported to have said or written on one occasion, in an 1863 letter "*I was thinking, today – as I noticed, that the "Supernatural," was only the Natural, disclosed, going on to add, – Not "Revelation" – 'tis – that waits, But our unfurnished eyes –*"... And more to the point, in this case, her poem 1563:

*By homely gift and hindered Words
The human heart is told
Of Nothing—
"Nothing" is the force
That renovates the World—*

Here she is pointing, in my interpretation, both to the homeliness of Metzinger's kitchen experience and the impossibility of adequately representing such experiences in words. As to the 'nothing', understanding of that also requires the meditative insight and Traherne claims in one of his poems *That greatest is which nothing seems*.

Traditional Meditation & definition

The usual understanding of meditation conjures up images of watchful sitting with attention focused on the breath and careful attention to the arising and falling of sounds, thoughts, etc. The aim is usually to achieve increased levels of mindfulness, stress relief and general well-being. More ambitious aspirations might aim at the annihilation or suspension of ego and the rescue of 'Now' from imprisonment in time.

Definition

Seeking a definition of meditation and its etymology I found the expected roots, Latin *meditatus*, past participle of *meditari* ("to think or reflect upon, consider, design, purpose, intend"), in form as if frequentative of *mederi* ("to heal, to cure, to remedy... I was very pleased to find the heal, cure, and remedy bit which supports my conviction that meditation is about restoring an aspect of ourselves, ever present and accessible but obscured by everyday consciousness which is fully engaged in explanation at the expense of experience. (A cure for the obscure). Thus, meditation could be the cure for this sleep of explanation, the foundation of our awakening and the necessary mending Traherne refers to:

All things were well in their proper places, I alone was out of frame and had need to be mended. Centuries. 3/62

Before testing this proposal here are a few notes on what a range of experts have to say about meditation.

Examples

Traherne is one of many people who've attempted to express the level of our being which can be uncovered by meditation, whether or not meditation is the word used to describe the necessary process. There are endless examples of this possibility and I list a few here:

Heidegger. "Existence is the being of those beings who stand open to the openness in which they stand by standing". Heidegger also stresses the importance of 'waiting', not waiting *for* but waiting *on*.

That quotation is hilariously Heideggerian but it stands close examination.

Basho: "Sitting quietly, doing nothing, Spring comes, and the grass grows—by itself."

This is one of our family favourite sayings, it has been rolling around in my head for decades and seems to be a good match for the Metzinger kitchen revelation. Andy Puddicombe gives a ten-minute TED talk on our inability to do nothing.

Shakespeare: Banished to the Forest of Arden Duke Senior holds forth: Sweet are the uses of adversity; Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, Wears yet a precious jewel in his head; And this our life, exempt from public haunt, Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything. (As You Like It/Act II)

Including, presumably, the pots and pans of Metzinger's kitchen.

Osho: Meditation is not a result out of your efforts, meditation is a happening. When your efforts drop, suddenly meditation is there, the benediction of it, the blessedness of it, the

glory of it. It is there like a presence, luminous, surrounding you and surrounding everything. It fills the whole earth and the whole sky.

Another version of 'It is always and already the case and only I am out of frame'.

Franz Kafka: You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait, be quiet, still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.

I'm not sure about rolling in ecstasy but the unmasking can be demonstrated.

Emily Dickinson: This is *Verse 4 of Poem 280*

*As all the Heavens were a Bell,
And Being, but an Ear,
And I, and Silence, some strange Race,
Wrecked, solitary, here*

Virginia Woolf—From the Lighthouse

Everything seemed right. Just now (but this cannot last, she thought, dissociating herself from the moment while they were all talking about boots) just now she had reached security; she hovered like a hawk suspended; like a flag floated in an element of joy which filled every nerve of her body fully and sweetly, not noisily, solemnly rather, for it arose, she thought, looking at them all eating there, from husband and children and friends; all of which rising in this profound stillness (she was helping William Bankes to one very small piece more and peered into the depths of the earthenware pot) seemed now for no special reason to stay there like a smoke, like a fume rising upwards, holding them safe together. Nothing need be said; nothing could be said. There it was, all round them. It partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity; as she had already felt about something different once before that afternoon; there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again to-night she had the feeling she had had once today already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that remains for ever after. This would remain. 'Yes,' she assured William Bankes, 'there is plenty for everybody.'

'Andrew,' she said, 'hold your plate lower, or I shall spill it.'

D. H. Lawrence—Sons and Lovers

This is similar to but not quite as compelling as the Virginia Woolf example.

Mrs. Morel leaned on the garden gate, looking out, and she lost herself a while. She did not know what she thought. Except for a slight feeling of sickness, and her consciousness in the child, her self melted out like scent into the shiny, pale air. After a time, the child too melted with her in the mixing-pot of moonlight, and she rested with the hills and lilies and houses, all swum together in a kind of swoon.

Actualising – But how?

The hypothesis is that meditation, in the sense of surrendering to what is, provides a transformation of consciousness and an awakening to a wider perspective than normally prevails. Looking longer might be a useful alternative to sitting with eyes closed.

On 16th October 1976 I tried meditating on a green pottery vase. After 10 minutes - very aware of effect of light reflected from glaze and depth of glaze. (I had started to meditate on the vase when I noticed the carpet colour seemed unusually golden) A sense of depth to the pot I hadn't felt before, an unusual vividness of experiencing and a cause of gladness. I had a strong feeling of affection for the pot and a sudden sense that this feeling was being reciprocated or, rather, common to us both. I was thinking "what sentimental rubbish" when a thought came into my head, as in a dream and as of a person talking – it said "no it is not it is love".

Once revealed examples of similar experiences start to appear:

*If you look long enough at anything
It will become extremely interesting;
If you look very long at anything
It will become rich, manifold, fascinating:
If you can look at anything for long enough,
You will rejoice in the miracle of love,
You will possess and be blessed by the marvellous blinding radiance
of love, you will be radiance.*

Delmore Schwartz from 'Seurat's Sunday Afternoon along the Seine'

*A certain minor light may still
Leap incandescent
Out Of kitchen table or chair
As if a celestial burning took
Possession Of the most obtuse Objects now and then—
Thus hallowing an interval
Otherwise inconsequent
By bestowing largesse, honour,
One might say love.*

Sylvia Plath from her poem Black Rook in Rainy Weather

Emily

*The lassitudes of contemplation
Beget a force
They are the spirit's still vacation
That him refresh -
The dreams consolidate in action -
What mettle fair*

Poem 1592

John Wren-Lewis— From NOWletter 144.

I wrote to John to confirm my understanding of what he had told me about how he experienced the world after his wake-up experience. I said, as a result of your NDE you experience all manifestation as a vibrating energy be it coffee tables, books, visitors or whatever. Furthermore, this energized 'glow' of so-called objective reality is reciprocal, there is a two-way apprehension, a mutuality of seer and seen.

He replied saying I hadn't got it quite right and a further entry in my diary reads:

...You (John W-L) told me later that you would not have used the words vibrating energy to describe your experiencing of the world. You said it was a much more gentle business, rather as though the world around is saying 'Hello' in an atmosphere of love. You then asked me how I would describe my own experiencing of what I thought to be similar events in my life. I found it to be quite beyond me at the time you asked the question. I was amazed at your choice of the words 'the world around is saying Hello', yet I understood what you were saying and how appropriate a description that is.

What is the point?

Waking up. Restoration of our first nature by rescuing it from the grip of our second nature. Freeing the NOW from the trap of time.

Gebser's thesis is encapsulated in the opening paragraph of the preface. *Origin is ever-present. It is not a beginning, since all beginning is linked with time. And the present is not just the "now," today, the moment or a unit of time. It is ever-originating, an achievement of full integration and continuous renewal. Anyone able to "concretize," i.e., to realize and effect the reality of origin and the present in their entirety, supersedes "beginning" and "end" and the mere here and now.*

What he describes in his final paragraph of the opening chapter as follows: *"Our concern is with a new reality – a reality functioning and effectual integrally, in which intensity and action, the effective and the effect co exist; one where origin, by virtue of "presentation," blossoms forth anew; and one in which the present is all encompassing and entire. Integral reality is the world's transparency, a perceiving of the world as truth: a mutual perceiving and imparting of truth of the world and of man and of all that translucens both.*

T. S. Eliot—Four Quartets

*Time past and time future
 Allow but a little consciousness.
 To be conscious is not to be in time
 But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
 The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
 The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
 Be remembered; involved with past and future.
 Only through time time is conquered.*

Gerotranscendence. A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging by Lars Tornstam. I included my reactions to this paper in the January 2018 NOWletter. It describes how aging, in a progressive weakening of the grip of ego and increasing shift in identity from that of my individuality to a more authentic sense of self as the undivided, results in many of the benefits associated with the outcome of effective meditation. I was surprised to find Bertrand Russell had written that the best way to overcome one's fear of death "is to make your interests gradually wider and more impersonal, until bit by bit the walls of the ego recede, and your life becomes increasingly merged in the universal life." He goes on: An individual human existence should be like a river: small at first, narrowly contained within its banks, and rushing passionately past rocks and over waterfalls. Gradually, the river grows wider, the banks recede, the waters flow more quietly, and in the end, without any visible break, they become merged in the sea, and painlessly lose their individual being."

Capacitie and David Robert Loy. Loy is an American scholar, author and authorized teacher in the Sanbo Zen lineage of Japanese Zen Buddhism. In his article *How Does an Awakened Person Perceive the World?* David Loy chose as his exemplar, not a Buddhist, but a 17th Century Anglican clergyman, Thomas Traherne. Traherne's writing in general deals with the question of what follows from or what is the point of meditation but his poem *My Spirit* is a particularly comprehensive encapsulation of his work. It can be read on the Traherne page of our Capacitie website at: <http://www.capacitie.org/traherne/articles.htm>.

Conclusion

Meditation, for me, involves becoming aware of aspects of reality I normally overlook. It seems to boil down to seeing clearly or apprehending life in a more comprehensive way than is customary. Bob Adamson's signature question of "What's wrong with right NOW" implies that there is an accessible level of being where everything is fine or at least 'as it is' compared with my customary state of mind where, in Traherne's words, *I am out of frame*. Meditation, in my experience, is a matter of coming to grips with this 'I' which seems to be the problem. Effective meditation, as demonstrated in some of the examples I have given, dilutes the ego to the point of non-interference and recontextualises time as the content of consciousness rather than the field in which consciousness arises.

Alan Mann

"To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for to-morrow or yesterday - must be my first concern.

And my second must be to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays."

Douglas Harding

Postscript

Following our meeting, Jenny Masters sent this link to an Adyashanti video which provides an experiential exercise to test the hypothesis outlined above. I was thinking that the passive type of meditation somehow enables the wholeness of life to encompass or embrace the meditator as opposed to the active form of meditation which implies an enhancement of the meditator and, possibly, reinforcing the sense of separate identity. At this point I clicked on the link Jenny sent and tried the Adyashanti method which I found to be a perfect fit.

<https://youtu.be/liEEHD-4vZc>

I then clicked on another Adyashanti talk which popped up and which, so far, I've been unable to find and retrieve. It opens with a comment to the effect that what I am calling passive meditation enables what he calls 'the greater reality' to manifest. I thought that a good way of putting it. It strikes me that what I am calling active meditation involves 'pushing' and passive meditation 'pulling'. Pulling in the sense of Traherne's question in *Centuries 1/2*, *Do you not feel yourself drawn by the expectation and desire of some Great Thing?"*

Notes

Mark Beardmore suggested we look at a Rupert Spira video which I thought very good. I like his gaps of silence which allow his audience to absorb and test the message. And, as Mark indicated, it offers a contemporary take on Capacitie. Spira's exploration is not unlike the Harding closed eye experiment, an open-eyed extension of it.

<https://youtu.be/uaa1O8mErus>

Barry Hora sent this snippet from a TED talk by Sir Ken Robinson.

"I heard a great story recently — I love telling it — of a little girl who was in a drawing lesson. She was six and she was at the back, drawing, and the teacher said this little girl hardly ever paid attention, and in this drawing lesson she did. The teacher was fascinated and she went over to her and she said, "What are you drawing?" And the girl said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." And the teacher said, "But nobody knows what God looks like." And the girl said, "They will in a minute."

(I looked up the URL and listened to the talk which is a very amusing commentary on creativity and well worth the 15 minutes it takes. Alan)

https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity/transcript?language=en#t-228422