



Monthly Musings — September 2018

An uncommon Collaboration from Graeme Wilkins

At our September Greville Street meeting Graeme Wilkins provided us with a commentary based on two books, a recent publication, *An uncommon Collaboration – Jiddu Krishnamurti and David Bohm* by David Moody and with reference to the 1994 edition of David Bohm's book *Thought as a System*. This is my summary of Graeme's talk based on his notes and after listening to a YouTube presentation, dated 11 April 2018, in which David Moody talks about his book. (See web address below).

The Uncommon Collaboration was published in 2017. As an educator at the Krishnamurti Ojai school in California and with intimate understandings of both men, Moody provide portraits of both. The book is well written, entertaining as well as lucid and heartfelt in the truth it holds.

How did it come about that two apparently antipodal thinkers end up establishing such a close collaboration and establish such a close cooperation which is now recorded in over one hundred recordings of their dialogues. One thing they had in common was unconventional approaches to their respective fields which provided them with the freedom to extend their thought and experience beyond the confines of the commonly accepted norms within those areas of knowledge and expertise.

Krishnamurti (1895 –1986) was discovered by the theosophist Charles Leadbetter on the Theosophical Society estate in Adyar, India where it is said he saw an aura of selflessness in the young Krishnamurti. He was taken to England with his brother Nitya where he was educated and groomed to be the messiah sought by the Theosophists. In 1929 Krishnamurti, at the age of 34, dissolved the organisation of Order of the Star in the East that had been created to promote him as the world teacher saying that "truth is a pathless land" and his consequent teaching was that of an individual free of any traditional trappings. One of the early Krishnamurti books was titled *Freedom from the Known*, which is possibly the best short summary of his teaching. He spoke about 'The Other', – something outside of ordinary experience which was functioning in or through him. Asked what exactly he was he replied on one occasion "Water can never find out what water is..." K had "an uncanny degree of order, presence and acute awareness about him that defied description". Moody explains that it is hard to define exactly what Krishnamurti was for and against and many people assume him to be an orthodox Indian guru. This is far from being the case so Moody provides his own analysis of what Krishnamurti approved of and what he denied.

AGAINST
 Nationalism
 Organised religion
 All psychological authority
 Fame, pleasure, ideas, seeking
 All methods of meditation
 Knowledge as a source of
 transformation
 Psychological achievement becoming

FOR
 Nature
 Intelligence
 Facts
 What is (not escaping)
 Inquiry—doubt, questioning
 Meditation (true meditation.
 Not knowing.

David Bohm (1917-1992) Bohm was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania to Jewish immigrant parents. After graduation his specialised abilities led him to a position within the theoretical physics group led by Robert Oppenheimer . This led to work related to the Manhattan Project and his socialist sympathies to a grilling by the House Committee on Un-American Activities where his refusal to do in fellow workers lost him his university position. He wrote a book on quantum theory which is still in use today and which followed the orthodoxy of the day, the Copenhagen Interpretation. Essentially, as explained by Moody, this involves the acceptance of non-causality at the sub-atomic level. In writing the book Bohm began to have doubts and subsequently came up with theories which indicated causes ‘not yet apparent’ to science. His theorising was rejected by his peers, even by Oppenheimer who said “If if we cannot disprove Bohm we must ignore him”. There are signs of increasing interest in the Bohmian view and I mention it here as it illustrates that ability to operate outside the conventional, which he shared with Krishnamurti.

Some elements of their respective contributions to their long-running dialogue of about 144 recorded sessions.

Krishnamurti:

- The observer is the observed.
- Thought introduces fragmentation into the perception of the individual and the collective.
- Awareness of the movements of the individual and the undivided.
- Can the man-made mind liberate itself completely from itself?
- No method
- The mind is essentially free of the distorting bias that is inherent in the conditioning of the brain and that, through insight arising in proper undirected attention without a centre, it can change the cells of the brain and remove each element of the destructive conditioning.
- Thought creates the centre, then ‘thinks’ itself separate from its creation.

Bohm:

- Observable reality is on the surface, that is the the explicate order and appears to exist independently but quantum mechanics suggests a deeper reality—the implicate order—which indicates that, in fact, everything is connected and whole.
- Method—Bohm developed a version of dialogue.
- The observer is the observed.
- Thought runs you. Thought however gives false information that you are running it. That you are the one that controls thought. Whereas actually thought is the one that controls each one of us.
- We never truly see, perceive or even experience time – it is inferred.
- Thought is not aware of itself. it does not have proprioception.

David Moody's assessment is of two friends on a journey, a journey with no beginning and no end—into intelligence and love.

Graeme Wilkins

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlGCaD6B530>

*"Nature" is what we see—
The Hill—the Afternoon—
Squirrel—Eclipse— the Bumble
bee—
Nay—Nature is Heaven—
Nature is what we hear—
The Bobolink—the Sea—
Thunder—the Cricket—
Nay—Nature is Harmony—
Nature is what we know—
Yet have no art to say—
So impotent Our Wisdom is
To her Simplicity.*



Bobolink

Emily Dickinson_668

Epicurus meets Douglas Harding from Alan Mann



Opening the Door to Ataraxia

There is an article in the current issue of *Philosophy Now* by Maria Karvouni. It is entitled *The Ultimate Tranquiliser* and sub-titled *Introduction to an Epicurean state of mind*.

Maria tells us that ataraxia was defined by the Pyrrhonian sceptic Sextus Empiricus as a state of robust equanimity characterized by freedom from worry and, I find more recently, by the OED as a state of serene calmness. Another Greek angle on this arises from consideration of the word *persona* which is understood as the aspect of someone's character that is presented to or perceived by others. In Latin, literally a mask as used, for example, to represent the character played by an actor and a common prop in Greek plays, as illustrated by the Zeus mask above.

The aspect which I present to others and which they perceive as my face, is my mask. I overlook the simple fact that whilst they see my mask I never see my self in that way. Nevertheless, I identify strongly with that mask, I take their word for their view of what I am. I become strongly identified with my mask.

So, can I take it off?

If for a moment I can be an honest phenomenologist and, putting aside what is not revealed by my direct experience — if I pay attention to what I see where others see my mask, I find that it is not to be found. It is not 'on' — it never was, I am not wearing it at all. If I pay close attention to what is going on where others see my mask I find an aware space, open for whatever the occasion presents.

Could this be the doorway to ataraxia.

Alan Mann

Mind and Cosmos from Dave Knowles

Mind and Cosmos: why the materialist neo-Darwinian conception of nature is almost certainly false by Thomas Nagel (2012) Oxford University Press.

[A presentation to the Canberra U3A group: 'Enjoying Literature']

First, I should apologise for introducing such a potentially deep subject on our first full presentation and I should explain why.

You see, Thomas Nagel is a respected modern philosopher and I became a follower of his for 2 pieces of writing: the first was in the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, which I subscribed to for a while having by a wonderful coincidence come across an advertisement for its launching.

This piece was the now famous “What is it like to be a bat?” Despite its immediate catchy appeal it explores in depth the unsolved problem of consciousness and it became so influential that it offered a new definition of the consciousness of a creature, namely “what it is like to be that creature” (for the creature, that is).

The second piece was a short introduction to philosophy called “What Does It All Mean?” which resonated so much because the title was a cry one of my good Canadian friends was likely to burst out with during moments of perplexity! It is wonderfully written and clear and is an excellent introduction.

The first piece is widely anthologised and you can find a copy on the internet, (URL below), the second is only \$11 on Kindle.

So that’s the background and so when I heard of his “*Mind and Cosmos*” - being highly interested in mind, particularly consciousness - and in astronomy, particularly cosmology, how could I resist especially when it’s a slim book and only \$13 on Kindle?

The added spice was that I had long thought that all neurologists supposedly explaining consciousness were largely waffling and that Daniel Dennett’s famous book “*Consciousness Explained*” would have been better titled “*Consciousness Explained Away*.” And now here comes Nagel saying, as his subtitle indicates, “you guys are *never* going to explain such things within your current materialist paradigm!”

No wonder that shortly after publication Nagel was depicted as a heretic being burnt at the stake on one magazine cover - the *Weekly Standard* - a scientific heretic for daring to say that the scientists’ favoured materialistic paradigm was not going to answer all the hard questions.

Not that Nagel wants to advance theism, he is an avowed atheist. Nagel believes that most intellectuals cling to materialism because it “liberates us from religion.” The *Weekly Standard* suggests that:

“the positive mission Nagel undertakes in *Mind and Cosmos* is to outline, cautiously, a possible Third Way between theism and materialism, given that the first is unacceptable—emotionally, if not intellectually—and the second is untenable. Perhaps matter itself has a bias toward producing conscious creatures. Nature in that case would be “teleological:”—not random, not fully subject to chance, but tending toward a particular end. Our mental life would be accounted for—phew! —without reference to God.

I don’t think Nagel succeeds in finding his Third Way, and I doubt he or his successors ever will, but then I have biases of my own. There’s no doubting the honesty and intellectual courage—the free thinking and ennobling good faith—that

Index of past articles: <http://www.capacitie.org/now/Articles%20List%202005.pdf>

shine through his attempt.” (Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor of *the weekly Standard*)

It’s not just the Weekly Standard that has a lot to say about Nagel’s book. The Guardian awarded *Mind and Cosmos* The Most Despised Science Book of 2012 but then headed its article with “The Most Despised Science Book of the Year is ... worth reading!”

One of the more favourable reviews was in Prospect Magazine. It headed its review with **Thomas Nagel is not crazy** with a sub-heading of “The philosopher’s new book has been fiercely criticised, but he is right to doubt science’s ability to explain everything.”

So you can perhaps recognise the excitement I experienced encountering this book? - Someone’s started a revolution and the first hand-grenade has been thrown!

I await with further excitement where this will all go next!

I know in the past I have urged you all to read Ulysses and tried to convince you that it was well worth the effort! Well, has my excitement for this book got you itching to get at it? (At least, see the reviews! - URLs below)

Dave Knowles

Bibliography

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<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/arts-and-books/thomas-nagel-mind-and-cosmos-review-leiter-nation>

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Index of past articles: <http://www.capacitie.org/now/Articles%20List%20205.pdf>

Andrew Hilton is giving a talk at the Theosophical Society rooms on Wednesday 3 October starting 1pm. Very handy to St. Leonards Station. All welcome.

J. Krishnamurti

We translate in terms of the old, thereby unwittingly preventing the new from disclosing itself.

1pm—3rd October

Theosophical Society

8/599 Pacific Hwy ·

St., Leonards

(02) 9267 6955

Future Greville Street Meetings

Sunday 7 th October	Dhamma Study Group experience — Garry Booth
Sunday 4 th November	The Master & His Emissary — Dave Knowles
Sunday 3 rd February	Self-deception — Don Ross
Sunday 3 rd March	Bohm & Dialogue Plus — Christopher Mc Lean
Sunday 7 th April	Nagel and Darwin's Doubt — Alan Mann

A last Minute Note from Mal Mitchell

Thanks for the latest NOWletter Alan—have just partaken of it. As usual, some notable chimings-in with things in recent focus for me. Leaves me keen to share something which I think you'd find of interest. Here to kick off is an interesting quote of Gurdjieff (from 1938):

“Real love is the basis of all, the foundations, the source. The religions have perverted and deformed love. It was by love that Jesus performed miracles. Real love joined with magnetism. All accumulated vibrations create a current. This current brings the force of love. Real love is a cosmic force which goes through us. If we crystallize it, it becomes a power—the greatest power in the world.”

For all that this may chime in easily/powerfully with, surely many would have a hard time with the likes of *“It was by love that Jesus performed miracles. Real love joined with magnetism”* ... I've recently been looking into the work of Joe Dispenza, who's integrating and working with ideas from neuroscience, epigenetics and quantum physics to apply to healing, 'mystical' experience and everyday psychology... I recommend checking out this [fascinating interview with him](#) in which he discusses some of the striking findings of his work (eg. about the variability and impacts of the heart's magnetic field). To hear the full interview, you'd need to sign up to London Real, but that's pretty much as easy as supplying an email address. Certainly worth it to hear this interview in full. Amongst other things, you may resonate with its tie-ins with points in your discussion with Katie, such as about gratitude.

Went to a lovely concert last week of works by Michael Price inspired by and recorded in different National Trust locations, which I think you and Margot would have enjoyed. Here's a link to his beautiful [Shade of Dreams](#) - a piece written also in connection with the birth of his daughter. All the best to you and Margot,

Mal