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A note on the book—The Politics of the Common Good by Jane R. Goodall

The fundamental message is about dispossession. We have lost our connection to the common good. There is no common wealth, wealth is concentrated at the elite level, poverty is on the increase nationally and worldwide. Early in the book we are reminded that dispossession of the Aboriginal people of their traditional lands was done by descendants of colonisers from a land whose ancestors had themselves, from as early as the 12th century, been progressively dispossessed of land rights, formerly held in common

There is also extensive coverage of our loss of meaningful work, craftsmanship and trades, items formerly requiring complete manufacture by skilled specialists replaced first by production lines, factories replacing cottage industries etc., and many specialised skills made redundant by machinery and finally automation.

The well-being of society is not measured in terms of a healthy society but with regard only to the state of the budget. There is an ongoing, progressive reduction in public facilities and services, and erosion of fail-safe, social support systems. The market has become a new form of totalitarianism.

The book includes some good news about current Australian developments which are designed to restore the common good, some examples in endnote¹, it made me

aware of things vaguely apprehended but not clearly understood and maybe that was because I was pushing them aside. I don't think there is much prospect of really substantial change until we have a collective awakening from the dream of individuality and perhaps that will be the hard-earned lesson of the climate crisis

In reading I suffered a degree of discomfort about my personal failure to respond to the challenge which I tried to offset by telling myself that the aim of the NOWletter has been a contribution to the realisation of this aspect of our shared being. The book diagnoses the material symptoms of our condition and the progression to the present level which I think many of our readers see as concerned primarily with a very deep identification with individuality, the 'I', to the exclusion of a broader identification with the 'We'. We have been dispossessed of our awareness of ourselves as expressions of the whole.

I think this is an important contribution to the present debate and an excellent follow up in my case to Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*.

Alan Mann

Pâté and Toast—a story by Margot Mann

Toby ordered a flat white and some pâté and toast from the waitress he had been watching for some time. Actually, he couldn't take his eyes off her. She was small with big blue eyes and looked as if a strong puff of wind would blow her away and whenever Toby came to the restaurant and she was on duty, he always had an urge to snatch her up and take her away with him; such a delicate creature should have someone like him to protect her from a harsh world. It was late morning, too early for the regular lunchers, and although he came to this restaurant nearly every day, he didn't recognize any of the other patrons who were mostly alone, drinking coffee and checking their smart phones. The waitress finally served him and he sighed as he realized he was making no headway with her at all; she was her usual cool, aloof, ethereal self. Some days when the restaurant wasn't busy she would pause for a moment and say hullo, acknowledging their slight relationship, but mostly she was efficient and monosyllabic, even when Toby tried clumsily to engage her in conversation. Sometimes she didn't even smile.

Toby sipped his coffee slowly and wondered again about her life beyond the restaurant. He didn't even know her name although once he had heard someone call out "Stubbsie, it's for you," and she almost ran to the phone, her pale skin suddenly pink. Probably a lover wanting to know when to pick her up, Toby thought glumly, or maybe a childcare place wanting her to collect a sick child. No, that couldn't be it, she was too young and had no rings on her fingers, but that didn't necessarily mean anything these days. It could be a girlfriend wanting to make arrangements to meet. Toby brightened at the thought. His head felt terrible. He shouldn't have stayed out drinking so late in the middle of the week,

but things had been going from bad to worse since Julie left and at least there was someone to talk to in a bar.

Two elderly women entered the restaurant and sat at a table for two beside him. Stubbsie gave them menus and Toby listened as they discussed what they would order. After a moment, he leaned across and said to the women, "I insist that you help me eat this pâté, there's far too much for me." He pushed the plate with the remainder of his order onto their table, turned to the hovering waitress and said "Some more pâté and toast for the ladies, and three iced coffees please."

Stubbsie lifted an eyebrow but said nothing. As she handed the order to the kitchen staff she said, "It's Cow-eyes. He's at it again. Scraping the bottom of the barrel this time - they must be 70 if they're a day." She blew the cook a kiss and sauntered off to have a cigarette before the restaurant got busy.

The younger woman, not wanting to attract attention by making a fuss, muttered "No, really, you mustn't" in response to Toby's offer. Her companion, finding the situation more than she could cope with, started eating the toast and pâté Toby couldn't finish. "Delicious," she murmured, pushing the plate towards her friend. "Have some, Beth."

"Isn't she gorgeous?" Toby was staring at Stubbsie's departing back. With an effort he turned to the two women and said, "I work in that building over the road. I'm in finance. Had a really heavy night last night and now I'm paying for it." His laugh was a snort. "Still, you're only young once. What brings you ladies here?"

"We've been to the South Sea Island Sculpture exhibition next door. I thought it would be a nice outing for Bridget. I'll have to take her back soon." Beth paused. "Is that waitress a friend of yours?"

"As a matter of fact," Toby said, pulling his chair closer to the two women and lowering his voice, "She's my wife. We've been married for three weeks. It's quite convenient really because I come here nearly every day for lunch and she often does the lunch shift, so we get to see each other. We met in this very restaurant. Don't say anything to her," he added quickly with a conspiratorial smile, "we're keeping it a secret from the management."

Beth nodded and Bridget gazed at Toby with watery brown eyes. At that moment Stubbsie pushed through the swing door and shortly afterwards she came towards them, bringing toast and iced coffees. "Meet my friends," Toby said loudly. he smiled slightly, and executing the merest of eye-rolls, placed the order on the table with a clatter.

"Pleased to meet you will that be all then?" she said in one breath, already turning away from the table. "Yes thank you," Beth said quickly. "Congratulations," added Bridget. Stubbsie looked at her curiously, paused for a moment, and then walked quickly away.

Toby picked up the conversational thread. “They do pretty good food here. I should know, I was a head chef for twelve years.” He smiled deprecatingly as the women wittered in amazement. “Don’t know how I did it - nearly killed me. People think that being a chef just means you have a big white apron and a funny hat and someone else does the washing up, but believe me it’s not like that at all.” He paused for a moment and then said more quietly, “oh well, now I’m in finance, which is a complete change as you can imagine. Mind you, the pressure can be just as great as working in a kitchen but you can’t throw plates at people who annoy you.” Toby smiled at his little joke while Bridget shot Beth a look of alarm.

No one spoke for a minute or two and then Beth said, “Are you ready Bridge? We really ought to be going. I’ll get the bill.” Bridget wiped the last of the ice-cream from the side of her glass with her finger as Toby jumped up and said “Absolutely not, it’s my pleasure. It’s been lovely meeting you.” For the second time that day Beth said “no, really, you mustn’t.” Bridget beamed at Toby and said “oh thankyou.”

Beth hustled Bridget quickly from the restaurant and came back a moment later to collect a green hat hanging from the back of a chair. She waved as Toby walked across to the cashier. Stubbsie handed him the docket for the extra pâté, toast and three iced coffees, and said, not unkindly, “so who are we today, an airline pilot or the owner of the restaurant? And please stop telling customers we’re married.”

Margot Mann

Foundational Christian Nonduality from Colin Drake

The following quotes are from Pseudo-Dionysius The Areopagite, the father of Christian Mysticism who lived in the 5th and 6th centuries. Its resonance with the nonduality of Advaita Vedanta is astonishing and shows that he must have been influenced by this. My very brief comments, for what more is there to say, are in italics.

“The great paradox is that God combines perfect Rest and perfect Motion. Idealism has seized the first aspect, Pragmatism and Vitalism the second. A sense of both is present in the highest Mystical experience and in the restful activity or strenuous repose of Love.”

Consciousness at rest as Pure Awareness and in motion as Cosmic Energy, the manifest universe(s).

“In Its exceeding fullness and creative magnificence, and also in the bounties that well forth from It, inasmuch as these, being shared by all in that lavish outpouring, yet are totally undiminished and possess the same exceeding Fullness, nor are they lessened through their distribution, but rather overflow the more. This Greatness is Infinite, without Quantity and without Number. And the excess of

Greatness reaches to this pitch through the Absolute Transcendent outpouring of the Incomprehensible Grandeur.”

The fullness that is undiminished by whatever ‘part’ of it appears (exists and then disappears) as the manifestation.

“And Smallness, or Rarity, is ascribed to God’s Nature because He is outside all solidity and distance and penetrates all things without let or hindrance. Indeed, Smallness is the elementary Cause of all things ; for you will never find any part of the world but participates in that quality of Smallness. This, then, is the sense in which we must apply this quality to God. It is that which penetrates unhindered unto all things and through all things, energizing in them and reaching to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow; and being a Discerner of the desires and the thoughts of the heart, or rather of all things, for there is no creature hid before God. This Smallness is without Quantity or Quality; It is Irrepressible, Infinite, Unlimited, and, while com-prehending all things, is Itself Incomprehensible.

It is a Quality, not a quantity. Vulgarity consists in mistaking quantity for quality. This has been the mistake of the modern world. The Mystics often speak of “seeing God in a Point.” God is in all things as the source of their existence and natural life; and in us as the Source of our existence and spiritual life.”

Consciousness is beyond (and encompasses) time and space.

“And Sameness is attributed to God as a super-essentially Eternal and Unchangeable Quality, resting in Itself, always existing in the same condition, present to all things alike, firmly and inviolably fixed on Its own basis in the fair limits of the Super-Essential Sameness; not subject to change, declension, deterioration or variation, but remaining Unalloyed, Immaterial, utterly Simple, Self-Sufficing, Incapable of growth or diminution, and without Birth, not in the sense of being as yet unborn or imperfect, nor in the sense of not having received birth from this source or that, nor yet in the sense of utter non-existence ; but in the sense of being wholly or utterly Birthless and Eternal and Perfect.”

Consciousness Itself, eternal and unchangeable in which all things appear, are here and then disappear leaving It totally unchanged.

Colin Drake

(Editor’s note: Wikipedia describes Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, also known as Pseudo-Denys, as a Christian theologian and philosopher of the late 5th to early 6th century, who wrote a set of works known as the Corpus Areopagiticum or Corpus Dionysiacum. I wonder why, if there is such a refined understanding of immanence within Christianity and of what the word God is pointing to, does the Church persist in in the Sunday school Father Christmas version of God?)

Krishnamurti and me.

This is a letter to Andrew Hilton. It is the result of an email exchange between Andrew, Trisha English and myself which made me look hard at my relationship to the Krishnamurti teachings and why I have found them to be important.

Dear Andrew, I don't know how fruitful this is going to be, but we have both spent the best part of a lifetime with Krishnamurti and seem to have come up with somewhat different interpretations of his message. Not that we should necessarily expect a one size fits all outcome.

Since writing the following, Trisha has updated me on our recent consideration of Krishnamurti's early years and the various influences, in particular the disturbing presence of the supernatural. This is also a response to that material.

I think the only way to make sense of his message is to ignore his personality and influences and actually test whether I can see what he is trying to show me. This response was prompted by your comment about having a body in the last message you sent which I lost, and your copy disappeared in your hacking disaster. This is turning into a report on my life with Krishnamurti. Trisha's latest includes notes on Krishnamurti's claim to be the most recent manifestation of the World Teacher. I have always been mystified as to how anybody could make such a claim but reading the notes from Trisha I had a flash of inspiration which I will reveal in the course of this ramble.

Your body comment brings to the fore the heretical aspect of my approach to Krishnamurti. I found what he would describe as a method, which demonstrated the truth of much he had to say. That of course being my deep interest in the experiential approach of Douglas Harding. In your last message you pointed out that you have a body. I took that to be an unanswerable objection to the headless business. Harding wasn't trying to persuade me that I don't have a head, he was simply showing me what is possible if I stop screening perception through what I imagine into the occasion—to free the occasion from what I know about it. In one of those little white booklets, "Eight Conversations" was one of the titles, Krishnamurti talks about, the 'art of direct experience', it is his way of getting around the prohibition of method by labelling it art, he describes this art as attention without motive. It is not too much of a stretch to say this is exactly what the Harding experiments deliver.

Strange that Krishnamurti didn't see that he and Harding were on the same page. You remember Alan Rowlands tried to persuade Krishnamurti of the relevance of the experiments to the teaching but Krishnamurti, for the usual reasons, dismissed it out of hand whilst Bohm, who was introduced to the experiment a short time later, got it in one. Yes, there is a body, nobody is questioning that. The question is about the nature of the 'I' which knows it has a body.

Starting with Krishnamurti's question "Is there a field which is uncontaminated by the known" I wonder how I can expect to respond effectively by offering a piece

of knowledge. He has just proposed the possibility of a knowledge-free answer. This is comparable to the Zen koan business of only a non-conceptual response being acceptable, which I happen to think can be very tiresome and not really necessary, providing I understand the importance of shifting from my customary knowing into an experiencing mode. Krishnamurti's talk of the 'art of direct experience' offers a clue to what he might consider an acceptable response. So, what is the experiential response? It must be prior to any verbalisation, any concepts. Your "I have a body" won't do. There is the body and the sense of some entity or centre that is the me of the 'my'. However, that is all description. What is the nature of being, before that answer is formulated and expressed. I say there is no experience of body as a body but various sensations in different locations, appearances of shapes like, for example, what we label as legs and hands, thoughts and memories, sensations, etc., all of which provide the foundation of first the feeling of and then the description 'I have a body'.

In spite of listening to him for years we continue to seek understanding of his message in terms of knowledge rather than deeper being. Somewhere he says, "Seeing is the only truth, there is nothing else". (He might have said "The purpose of life is to see". The two quotations are by Krishnamurti and Hui Neng and I can never remember which is which).

Whenever we become engaged in these exchanges you always remind me of the physical reality, of suffering and the mess the world is in, as if I was in denial about all that. I am not denying it, and neither was Krishnamurti. He was pointing to the possibility of seeing/being that in which what we label good, bad or whatever, all arises. And what is the point of that you may ask. Well not seeing 'that' has landed us in the mess you keep reminding me of. Actually realising what is at the heart of things might offer some hope of a cure.

He set out to set mankind unconditionally free. To make such a claim he must have been convinced that the means had been revealed to him. We are inclined to dismiss the nature of the revelation as traditional Indian mysticism or Theosophical indoctrination. I don't agree. I think what gave rise to these 'explanations' was a genuine experience, an experience beyond description and we tend to dismiss his enterprise as grandiose self-delusion rather than a description of an insight that cannot hope to convey the intensity of the revelation. So, what if the world teacher is the essence of this insight and that Krishnamurti saw himself as an expression of it; identifying with its undividedness rather than his individual self. We remember his insistence that 'you are the world'. I see this view reflected in the Vernon paper from which I clip this quotation.

...That term. He also recorded his famous statement about the immense energy, the intelligence that had been using his body for 70 years and which would not return to another body for many hundreds of years. This notion of a human being touching the source of enlightenment and thus embodying something which some would label divine, is close to Steiner's principle of the Second Coming, which was not a

physical reincarnation of Christ, but the potential in any one of us for mystical union with the Christ-principle².

So, I am giving Krishnamurti the benefit of the doubt and now offer a way of doing justice to his brave attempt to set me free.

As we've discussed, he suggested that there might be a field which is not necessarily empty of the known but free from its influence. In his words, uncontaminated by the known. On other occasions he spoke of the need to realise the undivided and not remain entrapped by the individual sense of separate identity to the exclusion of the sense of the wholeness of life. I remember printing out copies of all the material Denis Fey pulled together to demonstrate this aspect of the teaching for a Springbrook gathering. I thought they'd be snapped up, but I brought all but a couple back home.

If I analyse my everyday mind I find an assumed reality based on the 'not-now', on my recollections of yesterday and my concerns about tomorrow, plus all the other non-present movements in imagination. This awareness of what is not actually present to the occasion overwhelms the actuality of the moment, relegating the immediacy of being to insignificance if not completely excluding it from present awareness. Gebser coined the word 'presentiation' in what I think was his personal attempt to deal with this issue, presentiation engaged as a means of arriving at what he describes as 'verition'—which I interpret as 'making true'.

For me, the question is whether this context of the 'not-present' is an inevitable consequence of human being. It seems so when first considered. In fact, it is taken as a definition of human life, as what I refer to as my 'self'.

This, in my opinion, is the Krishnamurti challenge. That is, to see off this assumption as a secondary development, not to deny it completely but to recognise it as second nature, and to awaken to the fact that it obscures first nature, essence, in his words 'what is'.

We are at the ACM Festival in Townsville as I write, and I've been trying to think of an analogy which would illustrate my case. I thought of the difference between the musical score and the music. Have we fallen in love with the notation and completely forgotten what it reveals?

Alan Mann

A matter of Description

Can we please stop referring to Scott Morrison as a Christian? The man attends a Pentecostal church, full stop. This does not make him a Christian. I attend Melbourne Symphony Orchestra concerts, it does not make me a violinist. Morrison, like so many of his brethren and party hacks, is utterly selective in which Christian teachings he opts to follow. Real Christians do not hold innocent people hostage as a means of deterrence. Let's be more discerning in our choice of epithets.

Alan Whittaker, Kew East, Victoria

This letter appeared in a recent edition of the Saturday Paper. For readers unfamiliar with Australian politics Scott Morrison is our current Prime Minister and the hostages are refugees we keep in offshore detention centres.

Greville Street Meeting Programme

Our Greville Street meetings are under review. We have reached one of our periodic re-thinks. I will circulate some thoughts on 'what next' to the meeting list.

Byron Sophia Philosophical Group

Marvell Hall, 37 Marvell Street, Byron Bay, Beyond Sports-Fields
 Open Meetings: every Thursday from 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm
 Celia – 02 6684 3623 / byronsophia@gmail.com

¹ Gundaroo Village Plan. <http://www.gundaroo.info/gundaroo/gca/vision/index.htm>
 Planning: Wodonga & Wangaratta. Tiny Homes Foundation:
<http://www.tinyhomesfoundation.org.au/> and the present world wide youth protests.

² Richard Vernon. Brockwood Park talk for 2nd June 2019