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### **David Bohm from Christopher J. Ash (McLean)**

Christopher sent me this link to a 1990 article intended for Beshara Magazine: <https://besharamagazine.org/metaphysics-spirituality/david-bohm-wholeness-timelessness-and-unfolding-meaning/>

From the website: This conversation between Professor David Bohm and two editors of Beshara magazine, Jane Clark and Michael Cohen, took place in August 1990, just two years before his death. It never appeared, as the original Beshara Magazine ceased publication early in 1991. Returning to it now, it is a pleasure to be reminded of the scope and continuing relevance of this remarkable man, who was without doubt one of the most original thinkers of our time. Here he talks about his insight into the essential unbroken wholeness of the universe: the timeless order which lies behind physical phenomena, and the importance of the imagination for giving a meaningful understanding of reality.

From my reply to Christopher:

I only just got around to the Bohm interview. A very timely refresher and I'll make sure the link goes into the next NOWletter. Bohm is one of my favourite people. I find his version of 'God' as 'the self ordering principles of the universe' as a reliable stand-by. I have extracted a few paragraphs which stood out for me but, the whole interview is great.

Bohm: ... Secondly, there is the phenomenon of wave-particle duality: that an electron going through two slits behaves like a wave, and yet it arrives at the detector like a particle. So it appears to have a nature that depends upon its context, and this again suggests that the particle does not have its own separate nature entirely, but is internally related to the whole, or at least to its environment. And a third thing is quantum non-locality, in which under certain conditions you can find a close connection between things which are physically distant. This violates classical ideas, and provides another way in which a system of particles unites into a whole which has an objective feature of wholeness, meaning that it is not reducible to actions of parts.

(Alan : This is analogous to the individual and the undivided which is at the heart of the Krishnamurti message).

Bohm: When we look at what we call ourselves, we are looking at a rather explicate image of something which is very, very different, and there has to be a searching movement to feel out what is happening. Then the image becomes valuable as a reflection of the deeper reality. But otherwise, the image can become a source of confusion and we begin to value it too highly; it becomes ego, and we have worship of the self-image, etc.

( Alan: I think the Harding story offers a helpful remedy for that particular aspect).

Bohm: Einstein, of course, used the creative imagination extensively. He did not get his main ideas from experiments, but rather from his whole perception and experience of life. Einstein was a mystic in his own way, on the cosmic side of things, and he was deeply interested in that. This is another similarity to Krishnamurti, who was also most interested in the cosmic side of things. He thought that the cosmos was intelligent and compassionate, and he believed that it could speak through the individual.

(Alan: I didn't know that about K but feel that he was right).

Bohm: So, beauty can be sensed as coherence, and it can also be perceived in certain ways with the senses. This goes very deep in what, in my terminology, I call the enfolded order: the sensing of beauty – perceiving it through the senses, I mean – probably goes deeper than the intellectual grasp of beauty as coherence. I think that people who are creative have always known this – Einstein and Poincaré and so on. I think in modern times we have become more hard-bitten and people are always asking about getting value for money and so on; they don't want to give things like beauty importance.

This is the link to the complete interview:

<https://besharamagazine.org/metaphysics-spirituality/david-bohm-wholeness-timelessness-and-unfolding-meaning/>

Christopher's websites: [wholebodymindfulness.com.au](http://wholebodymindfulness.com.au) and [ayeartolive.space](http://ayeartolive.space)

## **Meditation as participation A few examples.**

**Jill Dobson.** In a recent Traherne Association newsletter it was suggested we look at some thing, and nothing else, for 15 minutes every day. This was intended to provide an opportunity to experience what Traherne called ‘Capacitie’ and what we refer to as the 1st person perspective. It came at a time when I was looking at meditation again and beginning to see it as something that was going on rather than something I was doing.

**Jennifer Matthews.** Just this week, thanks to Oliver Burkeman, I came upon this: Radically Condensed instructions for Being Just as You Are. Counselor and meditation instructor at CASPAR.

Every experience points to the truth if you look at it closely enough. And to give my favorite example: one crystalline fall day not long ago, I looked intently at my writing desk. Now, I don’t want you to think I’m a lunatic, but I would be remiss not to tell you that my writing desk was saying “hi” to me. It was greeting me. It was not jumping up and down; writing desks do not generally jump up and down. But it was clearly saying its own kind of “hello.” Nowadays I would probably use the term self-luminosity. My writing desk was shining in its own self-luminosity. But “saying hi” works just as well. When we start to lose our hard-and-fast sense of self, we may feel that we are losing touch with objective reality. But we need not worry. There is no such thing as objective reality! There is only experience. And the whole point of experience is to be intimate with us. It is us. Saying ‘hi’ to us is all it does. Experience is nothing other than a continual acknowledgment. My writing desk’s very existence is a kind of greeting. Hello!

**Delmore Schwartz.** 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.

**Sylvia Plath.** 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.

**John Wren-Lewis.** I had written to him to check my understanding of how he had described to me how he saw the world after awakening from his NDE. 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.

**Alan Mann.** 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. 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”.

**Wm Shakespeare.** Banished to the Forest of Arden Duke Senior ... 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)

***David Whyte***

Your great mistake is to act the drama  
as if you were alone. As if life  
were a progressive and cunning crime  
with no witness to the tiny hidden  
transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny  
the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,  
even you, at times, have felt the grand array;  
the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding  
out your solo voice. You must note  
the way the soap dish enables you,  
or the window latch grants you freedom.  
Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.  
The stairs are your mentor of things  
to come, the doors have always been there  
to frighten you and invite you,  
and the tiny speaker in the phone  
is your dream-ladder to divinity.  
Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the  
conversation. The kettle is singing  
even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots  
have left their arrogant aloofness and  
seen the good in you at last. All the birds  
and creatures of the world are unutterably  
themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

***From Nick Morris.***

CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD 7.6.1. "The earth is meditating as it were. The intermediate space is meditating as it were. The heaven is meditating as it were. Waters are meditating as it were. Mountains are meditating as it were. The gods and humans are meditating as it were."

***Judith Wright:***

Judith Wright wrote of Traherne's ability to move, and to be moved, from love to Love. From what she described as lower case to upper case LOVE in her poem *On Reading Thomas Traherne*.

## On Enlightenment by Nancy Neithercut

(Thanks to whoever sent this in, I have lost the covering note. Please remind me. Alan)>

"The idea that there are chosen ones who are enlightened  
Who are selfless  
And have escaped their humanness  
And death  
Is very compelling

These gurus are sought out as examples of what can happen to the very human seeker if they just  
surrender to this figure and does what he or she says.....

Enlightenment is knowing that there is no one who becomes enlightened

And no one who escapes their humanness  
It cannot be taught or learned or given away

It's not an attainment

The dream of separation is seen to be imaginary yet most marvelous

Seekers may spend their lives seeking some magical other place or state  
And miss the simple joy and awe of this wondrous dream  
Where love and beauty flourish...

After the shift  
The character remains somewhat the same  
Same preferences some of the same beliefs  
But none of it is believed  
I think the greatest change is lack of hope and fear of what's next  
And the no regret thing  
And the lack of neediness of longing for other  
A lot of habitual thought and emotional patterns stop  
Like the constant self judgement and self correction

The self continues  
Like reactive machinery  
Self still looks out for itself  
That's its job"

Nancy Neithercut

Nancy's website: Posts and Poems <http://nancypoems.blogspot.com/>

## **Nitya — A Tale of Two Brothers — By Mahesh Kishore**

This book has to be one of the most extraordinary books ever printed. In many respects, it unravels a mystery at the heart of J. Krishnamurti's life, the World Teacher and spiritual philosopher of the 20th century.

Historically speaking, the book covers the period from the time the two brothers were discovered playing on the beach at Adyar, India, until Nitya's death in 1925. It is not about the teachings of Krishnamurti per se for these need to be left uncontaminated by human conditioning. On the other hand, the events which led up to Krishnamurti's separation from the Theosophical Society and his development as a separate entity makes for compelling reading.

The most significant relationship in Krishnamurti's life was with his brother Nitya. They were twin souls and the love between them has never been fully documented until now. Undoubtedly the author had many conversations with Krishnamurti about the contents of the book and perhaps that accounts for the important perspectives which the book presents and for understanding the role that Nitya played in Krishnamurti's life.

People will be fascinated with this story. It traces the lives of the brothers through the establishment of the Theosophical Society by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky to the moment the boys were discovered playing on the Adyar beach in India, by C.W. Leadbeater and Dr. Annie Besant. The book opens the door to a thousand questions and paradoxes. Were there actually spiritual Masters who directed the course of the world at this time? If so, to what degree did they influence the life history of the two boys? How did Theosophy influence the teachings of Krishnamurti and how did these teachings change direction after he left the Theosophical Society following his brother's death in 1925? What may Krishnamurti have known about himself that he never disclosed?

Make no mistake, this is an exhaustive analysis of all the influences that impinged upon the boy who was to become the World Teacher. His beloved brother, Nitya, by his death, may have enabled Krishnamurti to fulfill his destiny as one of the most enigmatic, and spiritually profound teachers of the 20th century.

This book is beautifully written and meticulously researched. It must rate beside the authorized biographies of Krishnamurti as one of the most enthralling expositions ever written dealing with the relationship between Krishnamurti and his brother Nitya.

The views of the author are never presented dogmatically, but with great insight and gentility. Readers are given the freedom to make up their own minds, but beneath all the words written about these two boys the question of who or what Krishnamurti was will remain with many readers and perhaps, more importantly, lead them to an investigation of "the teachings" for which both Nitya and Krishnamurti gave their lives.

[https://books.google.com.au/books/about/Nitya.html?id=ZvyqywEACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.com.au/books/about/Nitya.html?id=ZvyqywEACAAJ&redir_esc=y)

## **Waking From Sleep" by Steve Taylor**

From page 252. "At the moment evolution seems to be impelling us to wake up. For a vast and ever-growing number of people nowadays, spiritual development is not a conscious choice but an impulse from the deepest part of their being. These people – including you, no doubt, since you're reading this book – have an instinctive sense that ordinary consciousness is limited and an instinct

to expand and intensify it by following spiritual paths or practising spiritual technologies such as meditation or Yoga. This is as instinctive for them as the instinct to have sex or to find a life partner.

At root, this is an evolutionary impulse. The impulse that we feel to intensify our life-energy is the *élan vital* itself, the same drive towards greater complexity and consciousness that has taken life from the first single-celled amoeba to human beings. It's the process of evolution manifesting itself inside us and impelling us to become more conscious and alive on its behalf.

But why should evolution be doing this? Why does it seem to be pushing us forward to a greater intensity of consciousness with so much urgency?

Perhaps this is because we are so close to destroying ourselves as a species and destroying millions of other species too. Perhaps evolution is urging us to wake up as a kind of natural check to stop this catastrophe occurring. It's impelling us to intensify our life-energy at least to the point where we can regain indigenous peoples' intense vision of reality and their sense of connection to nature.

And perhaps it's urging us further, to higher intensities of awakening, perhaps even to the point of absolute wakefulness. It may be that in absolute wakefulness we reach the culmination of the evolutionary process, when living beings become pure life and pure light and life itself becomes one with the unmanifest ocean of pure spirit from which it emerged. Life returns to its source, the universal spiritual essence which was canalized into individual life forms hundreds of millions of years ago.

But of course, we were always one with this universal spirit anyway. It was just that we fell asleep and forgot who we were. "

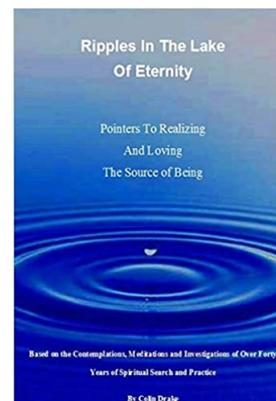
From the conclusion to "Waking From Sleep" by Steve Taylor)

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## **The Ripples of Eternity by Colin Drake**

Introduction. The main aim of this book is to act as a stand-alone guide to, and practices for, Awakening. It is composed of articles, resulting from my further investigations (and contemplations) into the nature of Reality and replies to questions since the publication of *The Simplicity of Awakening*. The thrust of the book is that beneath the surface appearance of thoughts (including all mental activity) and sensations there is a deeper level of being, which is the perceiver of these. The former are a flow of fleeting objects whereas the latter, which is the Awareness of these, is a constant conscious subjective presence. This is the only constant that has been (with) you since you were born and that which has witnessed your entire life. Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that this is what you actually are rather than the ever-changing body/mind in which these thoughts and sensations have occurred. In fact, the thoughts and sensations are the direct experience of this body/mind and the Awareness is how you 'know' them.

This Awareness can be likened to a backlit 'screen' displaying the thoughts and sensations, occurring at any given moment, that the mind views and then decides which of these it will focus on and 'process'. Or, for the purpose of this book, like a lake (of Consciousness) in which the



ripples are the thoughts and sensations which are occurring in Consciousness itself. Actually, this is nondual ('not two' or more ...) and thus all Awareness of thoughts and sensations is a facet of the lake of Consciousness itself, and thus not personal, although at the level of body/mind it may appear to be so. When one sees that this Awareness is the deepest level of our being and identifies with, and as, this rather than with the ever-changing flow of thoughts and sensations then this constitutes an awakening. For one realizes that the apparent separate self of body/mind and self-image is an illusion occurring in the common, constant, conscious, presence ... that is the 'lake' of Awareness – Consciousness at rest, in which ripples (movements) arise, abide and subside. These movements constitute the cosmic energy of which all manifestation is an 'expression'. For modern physics has shown that matter is energy, which is synonymous with, and entails, motion.

Then this realization needs to be established by repeated Awakenings due to the natural tendency to 'nod off' and re-identify oneself as a separate object in a universe of separate objects. When one is awake then anxiety and unnecessary mental suffering disappear, for these are caused by this misidentification which causes us to see each other, and the world, through a murky filter of self-interest, self-concern, self-promotion, self-aggrandizement, self-loathing, the list is almost endless. It is this world-view that causes the anxiety and mental suffering based on concern for the future and feeling we are bound by the past.

On Awakening one discovers that there truly is no separate self and so this filter is removed allowing us to see the world 'as it is' with no self-concern for the future or past. When one fully realises that there is no separate individual self then all the needless burdens of self-image, self-importance, self-promotion, self-interest, self-cherishing, self-hate, self-loathing, self-anything ... are lifted and remain so as long as one remains awake in this realisation. This gives a great ease and lightness of being which is (en) lightenment in the literal sense of the word...

The main thrust of this (and all of my) book(s) is that of self-identity – who, or what, are we in essence? What is it that is at the core of our being, deeper than the surface level of mind/body, thoughts and sensations? To discover this is vital, for without a clear idea of one's essential identity one cannot relate to the world, and others, in an appropriate way. For, if we believe that we are separate objects, in a universe of separate objects, then we will naturally treat ourselves and others as objects, which I think we can see to be an unsatisfactory arrangement. For this tends to lead to blatant self-interest and exploitation of our fellow beings, the outcome of which is apparent in the modern world.

So the quest is to inquire and discover that which is beyond objectification, the deeper level that is the perceiver, the subjective level in which objects (thoughts and sensations) come and go.

The easiest way to find out is to investigate our moment to moment experience, which reveals that our deepest essence is Awareness, and the framework for this investigation is given in appendix one. At this stage we need to become clear as to the meaning of the term 'awareness' which has two meanings which we must not confuse. The phrase 'awareness of Awareness' utilises both of these meanings and for this reason I have used a capital letter (when using this expression) for the second one so that they may be easily distinguished in what follows[1].

The first occurrence (awareness) is synonymous with mindfulness, that is 'seeing' with the mind, or keeping (something) in the mind. It also means 'becoming conscious of', noticing, or perceiving, as in 'I became aware of ...' This is the normal everyday usage as in the OED definition of 'aware' – having knowledge or perception of ...

So the term ‘awareness of Awareness’ means becoming conscious, or having knowledge or perception, of Awareness. We now need to define this Awareness which is simply the total ‘seeing’ and perceiving (or seer and perceiver) of everything detected by the mind and senses, whereas awareness (becoming aware of) is the partial ‘seeing’ of those thoughts/sensations on which the mind is focused, or which are noticed. So, these are not different, awareness just being a limited version (or incidence) of Awareness.

This is easy to directly experience by closing one’s eyes and seeing whether you can simultaneously be ‘aware of’ (notice) all of the thoughts/mental images and sensations that are occurring. This is found to be impossible and yet these are all there in Awareness, which becomes apparent when one focuses one’s mind on , or turns one’s mind to, any of them.... and there they are! I expanded on this in ‘The Problem’ chapter one of *Beyond the Separate Self* and, for the sake of completeness, have included it in this book as a prologue.

This Awareness is the constant conscious subjective presence in which our thoughts/mental images and sensations arise, abide, are spied and subside. Before every one of them Awareness is present, during each one of them they are ‘seen’ by This and This is still here after they go. Just check this out now – notice that before each thought/sensation there is Awareness of ‘what is’ (the totality of these at any given moment) , during each of these there is Awareness of them within ‘what is’ and after each of them has gone there is still Awareness of ‘what is’.

Rumi described this as: the clear conscious core of your being, the same in ecstasy as in self-hating fatigue. That is to say the Awareness in which the ecstasy or the self-hating fatigue appears. Now generally you would just be aware of, and affected by, the phenomenal state. If, however, you become aware of the Awareness in which this state is occurring and can fully identify with, and as, this Awareness then the state loses its power to affect your equanimity. For Awareness is always utterly still and silent, totally unaffected by whatever appears in it, in the same way that the sky is unaffected by the clouds that scud across it or a lake is unchanged by the ripples that move across its surface.

It is this identification with Awareness that can be achieved by ‘investigation of our moment to moment experience’, see the appendix. When this is successfully accomplished and you can see that at the deepest level, you are Awareness itself then this is an Awakening. If this cultivated by remaining ‘aware of Awareness’ (and identified as Awareness) then this leads to full Awakening.

At this stage it would be advisable to carry this out by following the instructions provided in the appendix. When this is successfully undertaken one becomes aware of the constant, conscious, subjective presence – Pure Awareness – that is at the centre of our being. Following from this is the realization that, as That, we are instruments through which That can sense, contemplate, experience, engage with, act in, and enjoy the physical world. This realization is dealt within the second appendix and it would be advisable to consider that now.

These appendices come from previous works but are necessary inclusions so that the reader may approach this book with the requisite preparation, and also to make this work complete in itself.

Each chapter should be treated as an aid to your enquiry into the nature of Reality, and as such should not just be read and intellectually considered but need to be taken slowly, step by step, not moving onto the next step until one fully ‘sees’ the step that is being considered. This does not mean to say that one needs to agree with each statement, as any investigation is personal, but one needs to understand what is being said. Also, to get the most out of each chapter one needs to

spend some time contemplating it until one ‘feels’ what it is pointing to; if a chapter is just read without due attention then its significance may well be missed.

If the results of your investigations are that you discover the Pure Awareness that is at the core of your being and can identify with, and as, This then this is an Awakening. However, this Awakening will be readily veiled by one’s previous identification with the body/mind. To overcome this one needs to:

...be committed to completely identifying with the deeper level of Pure Awareness, for in this there is always perfect peace and repose. Before this complete identification with Pure Awareness is established one will flip/flop between identifying with Awareness and identifying with a mind/body. Awakening is an ongoing process with complete identification with Pure Awareness as the final goal. For it is in fact a series of Awakenings, which is very necessary due to our natural tendency to go back to sleep! Every time we ‘flop’ back to identifying ourselves as mind/body we have nodded off again; and so the ‘flip’ to identifying with the deeper level of our being is another Awakening. The author knows this only too well and makes no claim to ‘lack of sleep’. As one investigates and cultivates this deeper level, the periods of ‘wakefulness’ are prolonged and consequently one ‘nods off’ less. The period of time between one’s first Awakening and being completely awake is indeterminate and varies greatly from being to being. However, this is not a problem, for as the periods of ‘wakefulness’ (which are totally carefree) increase so will the commitment to identifying with the level of Pure Awareness. This will lead to more reflection and investigation, resulting in further Awakenings which will continue the process. To call it a process may seem a misnomer for when one is ‘awake’ there’s no process going on, but the continual naps keep the whole thing running.

This commitment to identifying with the level of Pure Awareness involves having faith in our body/mind to negotiate living in the world, for this is what it has evolved to do. This ‘complete identification’ will not happen all at once but is something that has to be cultivated. I would recommend doing this by spending three periods of at least twenty minutes, every day, totally relaxing into the recognition of Pure Awareness. For an example of a format for this see chapter one. The best times for this are between getting up and engaging in one’s daily activities, after the day’s work is over and just before going to sleep. The first ‘sets one up’ for the day, the second refreshes and re-energises one after the day’s toil, and the third aids in achieving a deep and peaceful night’s sleep. One may argue that there is not enough time available for this, but these meditations provide so much relaxation and recharging that one can easily recover the time by sleeping for an hour less.[2]

So Awakening is not for the dilettante, the dabbler, but is a full-time proposition.

A later theme of the book is to develop love of the Absolute, the source, by nurturing love of the manifestation by the Absolute and vice-versa. For we are expressions of the Absolute in a manifest body/mind and thus have the potential to achieve, or realize, this. In these discussions the Absolute, Consciousness at rest, is called ‘the lover’ and the manifestation ‘the beloved’. There is a discussion regarding the ‘ways’ of knowledge and love, followed by three simple practices to enable us to feel and develop this love in both directions, that of the lover for the beloved and vice-versa.

One other thing that should be noted is that this book is mostly composed of individual articles and replies to questions. They are given as pointers and aids for the reader’s own investigations into, and contemplations on, the problem of self-identity. There is necessarily some duplication

between them as what is being discussed is so simple. They are different ‘takes’ on the same simplicity, presenting the material in various ways whilst building upon what has been discovered, so some repetition is unavoidable. It should also be noted that each of these are, as far as is possible, stand-alone meditations or contemplations, thus needing to make sense by themselves. Therefore, some sections of each will contain similar passages, so that they are relatively complete when read in isolation.

Footnote: In general, throughout all of my books, whenever I use the word ‘awareness’ I am using this as Awareness (The Totality which is ‘aware’ of all) unless it is in the phrase ‘awareness of Awareness’ which the ongoing discussion in the book addresses.

Colin Drake

### **Light A Candle, Don’t Curse the Darkness by Trisha English**

We have entered the Age of Conflict and seemingly endless societal division. Right around the globe people are fighting with each other and fighting with their governments and fighting other countries. According to the group which calls itself the Atomic Scientists, the Doomsday Clock has been set at 100 seconds to midnight, indicating that some apocalypse is imminent.

The 100 seconds is not set in real time, but in spatial time. The clock was first established in 1947 to indicate to the world that it was teetering on annihilation because of the destructive nature of human activity. At best it served as a reminder that where there is “cause” there is also “effect”. The two main causes of the present warning relate to the possibility of nuclear warfare on the one hand, and climate change on the other. Unhappily, both causes give political powers the ammunition to keep people in a state of fear if not constant anxiety. Fear and anxiety are psychological weapons which allow people to be easily manipulated.

The forces of conditioning in a person’s life then give rise to expressions of frustration and anger. People take sides, and the media fuels the turmoil by promoting one side or other of a debate, frequently changing sides with a subtle or not so subtle bias. The media is never objective, its chief aim is to make money. When television channels for example, keep telling us that they are honest, that they pursue truth, that they can be relied upon for accurate coverage, we are justified in doubting their claims. We need to be on our guard, just as we would be if our bank manager, or broker, kept telling us that he is the most honest guy on the block. If he really is honest, why the constant need to say so?

Group discussions are venues for people to express their views whether it is about a book, or a scientific claim, or simply a discussion about current events. The conflict comes when an individual, or certain individuals, strive constantly to have one particular view accepted as the only viewpoint. Suddenly, group dynamics take a negative and sometimes destructive turn. Intolerance becomes the order of the day, and often as not the divisions which emerge signal the end of productive discourse and often the collapse of the group itself.

Why do people discuss things at all? Is it to share viewpoints, to listen to new or different perspectives, or is it to establish a climate of “like minds”?

When the “like minds” explanation prevails, people have a sense of belonging – which some experts claim is a human need. It can also lead to a denial of reality, a reluctance to explore, or to gather new information or trends in a particular field. This is because human beings have been

educated to compare, to compete, to vigorously debate and behind this approach lies the often unspoken need “to win at all cost”.

We can all think of certain governments who claim freedom of expression as a value, but will imprison or kill you if you don't agree with the dominant view of something. People in power set the agenda, set the terms of reference, and certainly employ you to achieve a certain end. This applies to all people in organizations as a whole. So if you join a newspaper, or television station, and you want to tell your version of the truth, and particularly if it is at odds with the management view, you need to look for another job because there are many strategies for terminating your employment! This is not my opinion. This is the way the world works. Don't like the world? Then what are you going to do about it? If you simply rant and rave with an endless “narrative” you will lose, and people will stop listening to you. On the other hand, in present day society, there are people who “rant and rave” because they love the power they feel when others are following them. They are not really listening, because there is nothing to listen to except unbridled accusations and relentless emotional outbursts.

Take for example the term “climate change”. Nothing divides a discussion like climate change. People will quote facts and figures without understanding how those facts and figures are calculated. People who have just survived a bushfire, or lost everything they possess in the recent catastrophic fires which have swept over Australia, can be forgiven for their angry outbursts when people start quoting statistics at them, or revert to mouthing the advantages or disadvantages of backburning. Chances are if you live in a big city, you probably are not even aware of what backburning entails or what it hopes to achieve or prevent.

And this is where the art of listening is so important. Hearing is one thing, listening is another. Listening leads to understanding, or we hope it does. Yes, you are right. Not everyone knows what “listening” actually means. It doesn't mean just paying attention to what is being said, but the meaning behind the words and ultimately the fear, or anguish, or emotion just beneath the words.

So instead of asking you what you personally are doing to prevent climate change, could I direct your attention to a wonderful video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/-4OBcRHX1Bc> .

This programme was made in 2018. I came upon it by accident. I had never heard the substance of this programme before and now that I have, I question why we are so ready to claim the “gloom and doom” tag, and so unready to hear genuine, intelligent, and positive viewpoints based on facts. Why are we so ready to trust in “theories” rather than trust in the human capacity to solve human problems?

If we look at the history of inventors we cannot help but be struck by the number of them who were forced into obscurity, for a long or short term, by the forces of money and power. What is it that we really fear? What would it take to change this trend? Perhaps more importantly, do we really want to change things? At present we can always blame the politicians for bad decisions. But ultimately it all comes down to us and that doesn't mean taking to the streets and destroying the livelihood of other people, it doesn't mean giving the police the power to brutalize people, and it doesn't mean resorting to naked outbursts of aggression of praise or blame.

Maybe it comes down to “sensitivity”, to actually caring about others and actually caring about the planet we inhabit and above all listening to one another. Nature too, needs to be listened to. As the poet Wordsworth once said: “Nature never betrays the heart that loves her”.

Trisha English

## **Easter Music, a story by Margot Mann**

Lisa fidgeted. She could hear Roger's voice, monotonous and flat for the most part, occasionally with a little more passion as he climbed onto one of his favourite bandwagons. She switched off long ago and had no idea what he was talking about up there in the pulpit, carefully avoiding her eye, and she could see that the worshippers in pews around her seemed to be in their usual semi-coma. Sunshine was coming through a small stained glass window and she wished she were outside enjoying it in her garden.

She had to admit that Roger tried very hard to make her happy. He was not just constrained by his uptight personality and highly developed need to "do the right thing", he also had to contend with the expectations of his flock and those above him in the church hierarchy, and although he gently encouraged her to become involved in some of the women's groups in the church and maybe even sing in the choir, he knew it was pointless to press her to participate in bible study groups, let alone facilitate one. Pastoral care was another area where Roger thought Lisa's wonderful people skills could be show-cased to great advantage, and he was quite mystified when she refused to visit any members of the congregation, either in their homes or in hospital. She knew that the church folk felt sorry for Roger, trying to minister to their needs without the help and support of a loving and committed wife and this made her feel even more rebellious. It didn't help to remember that before their marriage the previous year, Roger explained as well as he could what his job involved, but Lisa simply thought that there was nothing that couldn't be sorted out when they were married, and he looked so handsome in his black gown with the purple trim and the little bit of blonde hair that always stuck out just above his left ear.

She looked up and inadvertently caught Roger's eye, which seemed to destabilize him because he lost his thread and briefly floundered. The Sunday school children always left a biblical text on the pulpit and this week's offering was "Go to the ant thou sluggard", which Roger read out with a wry smile, and Lisa instantly felt a surge of tenderness for him. If only he were a lawyer or a plumber, or even a banker! No other wives had to sacrifice their own needs and interests to the same extent as a minister's wife, and although she had a part-time job working from home for an insurance company, Lisa felt that she was an easy target for the majority of the congregation who apparently believed that a minister's wife should be as available as her husband to deal with their trifling concerns.

The sermon was over and the congregation was struggling to its feet to sing the last hymn. Lisa looked around and saw Sam watching her. She smiled at him and was annoyed with herself when she felt the blood rush to her face. Dear, faithful Sam, always there for her, endlessly supportive and caring, ready to listen whenever the frustrations of being a minister's reluctant wife became too much. Roger himself was pleased that his wife had found a confidante who might lessen the ministering burden for her, and he encouraged their friendship, especially when Lisa, at Sam's suggestion, agreed to join the choir. Sam was the organist and he usually invited Lisa to his home for a glass of wine and a bit of a chat after choir practice. He lived alone with his cat Maximus in a ground floor unit close to the church and Lisa always watched, fascinated, as he went about filling sparkling glasses with wine from his capacious, temperature-controlled cellar. Everything Sam did was measured, his movements were invariably economical, and nothing was out of place in the tidiest unit Lisa had ever seen. Maximus matched the upholstery and equalled his master in economy and grace of movement, and with the perversity of his kind, would always try to climb onto the lap of the person who took least notice of him, in this case Lisa. After a couple of glasses of wine Lisa would find herself complaining about things she hadn't realized bothered her, such

was Sam's magic in allowing her to speak unrestrained, although she noticed recently that sometimes Roger would look wistful when she came home later than expected, still flushed with wine and having spoken about aspects of her married life that might have surprised her husband. Briefly, at these moments, she would feel guilty and silently vow to make it up to Roger, but these feelings would not last long and the next morning she would find herself wondering how she could see Sam before next choir practice.

In the weeks that followed, Lisa, with Sam's encouragement, decided to enrol at university to study law, a prospect that worried Roger more than he was prepared to admit. He had imagined that after a couple of years during which Lisa would become accustomed to the duties and obligations of a minister's wife, as light as he might be able to make them, she would have babies and they would be a family. He spent some sleepless nights wondering what to say to his wife, who meanwhile had cheered up enormously at the thought of getting out of the house and mixing with interesting people - she even offered to do the church flowers the previous Sunday when the rostered flower person was unwell. Roger didn't have the heart to say anything in the face of Lisa's improved mood, and he resolved to speak to Sam to see if he could offer any advice.

The following weeks were busy ones in the church calendar as they prepared for Easter, and Roger, warmed by Lisa's newly co-operative mood and her obvious enjoyment of the law course, decided he wouldn't speak to Sam, he would simply hope for the best and let things take their course. God works in mysterious ways, he reminded himself. Sam, for his part, was in charge of the music for the holy days of Easter, and regularly discussed aspects of the choral offerings with Lisa who was now an enthusiastic choir member. She was not an especially gifted singer but could hold a tune and often of an evening she could be found at Sam's unit, having chased a disgusted Maximus off his favourite chair, seriously discussing which choir members, from the rather small cohort, could be expected to handle some of the more demanding solos from the St Matthew Passion.

This sudden and unexpected musical interest did not go unnoticed among Roger's parishioners. Lisa was not universally well-regarded by her husband's flock and there were those who expressed the view that a good minister's wife would spread her talents more widely through the church community, instead of studying Law (they pronounced the word with a certain contempt) and having too much say in the choice of soloists for the Easter church services - indeed, one of the rejected singers who had sung the same solo for years was particularly bitter and even took his complaint to Roger. Alarmed at these signs of disunity in his congregation, and aware that Lisa rubbed many people up the wrong way, Roger soothed the repudiated chorister and promised to follow the matter up.

After dinner that evening, he decided to pay Sam a visit and sort things out. He ate alone for the third time that week because Lisa said she had to attend an important meeting at the university. These lonely dinners, which he was expected to make for himself with whatever he could find in the fridge, were becoming more and more common, but when he complained mildly to Lisa, she brushed his comments aside with a wave of the hand and told him not to be silly, she had dinner with him the night before last, and reminded him how busy they both were at this time of the year.

Feeling vaguely unsettled, he set out to walk the short distance to Sam's unit, cold baked beans with chili sauce sitting uneasily in his stomach. At least when Lisa ate with him she insisted on drinking red wine, and after some initial misgivings, he now enjoyed a glass or two of wine with his evening meal, telling himself that it helped Lisa to relax.

The first thing he noticed when he arrived at the unit was Lisa's car, parked out of sight of passers-by, behind the complex. Trying not to think of anything beyond the outrage of the soloist whose case he was coming to plead, he knocked on Sam's door and waited for some time. There was no response and Roger, inexplicably relieved, thought of several reassuring possibilities for Sam's absence. He knocked again, this time more loudly, and after waiting a few more minutes, was about to turn away when Lisa opened the door. She greeted him with some impatience and explained rather brusquely that Sam was on the phone, had been for ages, to someone moaning about being left off the soloists list for Easter, and why didn't he go in and wait in the living room until Sam managed to get rid of the wretched caller? Before Roger could shape his dry mouth into a reply, Lisa added that she couldn't stop and chat now, he knew she had a meeting at the university and she was already running late – she had just dropped in to return the Easter music CD she had borrowed from Sam, but he hadn't been able to get off the phone.

Still muttering about some people who weren't as good as they thought they were, she gave him a quick peck on the cheek and ran along the path to her car. Roger quietly entered Sam's unit and closed the door.

Margot Mann

