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Greville Street Meetings now online. Please advise me if you want to receive email notification if you have not already signed on.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY 4th October 11am

Strawson on Self or Story – Alan Mann

A recent review of a book by Galen Strawson described him as a leading analytic philosopher, which I always understood to be a very materialistic branch of philosophy, however the review writer went on to mention that Strawson was also a phenomenologist. The book, *Things that Bother Me* is a series of essays outlining the Strawson perspective on life. I thought the marriage of analytic philosophy and phenomenology might reflect some of our recent dialogues and bought the book.

I found his comments on the nature of the self particularly interesting. He explains the differences between those of us who see life as a narrative, identifying with our story, and those who have a more immediate sense of identity, represented by our direct

experience of the occasion. Much of his essay on this subject is dedicated to demonstrating how so much of life-story identification is based on half remembered events and even imagined inventions.

He describes the narrativist view as the story we tell about ourselves and with which the narrativist identifies. This reminded me that some of our early dialogues were to do with the question of ‘what am I without my story?’

The non-narrativist view is expressed in the following description of how he regards his own ‘self’:

I’ll use the ‘I’ to represent that which I now experience myself to be when I’m apprehending myself specifically as an inner mental presence or self, rather than simply as Galen Strawson the human being. ‘I’ comes with a with a large family of cognate forms — “me”, “my”, “you”, “oneself”, “themselves”, and so on. The assumption built into these terms is that they succeed in making genuine reference to an inner mental something that is reasonably called a ‘self’. But it doesn’t matter if there really is such a thing. The terms can mark out a form of experience that builds in the assumption that there is such a thing even if it is false. P. 51.

He goes on to say that events in his remote past did not happen to ‘me’, by which he means they did not happen to the ‘self’ of the immediate experiencing he describes in the quotation. He acknowledges they happened to Galen Strawson, his name, and that this name amounts to a label for his historical past. The ‘me’ self is defined as that which the individual organism experiences as the immediacy of being.

He acknowledges the objection that arises to this claim by recounting his memory of falling off a punt which provides an inside character of the experience unlike seeing a film of the event, which would provide an outsider view. However, he claims, it certainly doesn’t follow that it carries any feeling that what is remembered of the punt accident happened to the thing that I now apprehend myself to be when I’m apprehending myself specifically as a self.

He gives a range of assumptions that underpin the narrativist view with which he can not agree:

- We are the stories we tell about ourselves.
- We make sense of our lives on the basis of the stories.

- ‘What I call ‘my life’ is a constantly rewritten autobiography.
- The self is dependent on this narration.
- Life is not what one lived but what one remembers.
- A meaningful life is dependent on a successful life plot.

I have paraphrased his list which can be read in more detail on pages 176-177.

In an attempt to summarise the narratavist position he offers this provisional definition:

...where to be a narratavist is to be naturally disposed to experience or conceive of one’s life , one’s existence in time, oneself, in a narrative way, as having the form of a story, or perhaps a collection of stories and—in some manner —to live in and through this conception. P.178.

The debate continues with Strawson offering examples, both for and against, and for combinations that fall somewhere in between. It is an interesting debate but particularly so for me as I found that I had assumed what seems to be the common narratavist view of my self whilst promoting what I believe to be the alternative non-narratavist perspective. In wondering how I could reconcile this position I came to the obvious conclusion that it is not a matter of either one or the other but of both.

In his definition of the narrativist position he talks of one’s existence in time, as if that was a given,beyond question, but in the definition of his own non-narrativist view, the self as mental presence involves a reversal of context where time appears as an aspect ‘the self as mental presence’.

Alan Mann

Haiku and Poems by Colin Oliver

*over the river
my friend returns
in a curlew’s lilt*

We received news from Colin Oliver that he won a haiku competition for which the prize is publication of the ebook containing the verses, which is available for free on the Snapshot Press website. See link below. It's called Wild Strawberries, a collection

of 18 haiku and 3 short prose-poems. Click on the link below, then click on the Wild Strawberries picture on the website and you're there.

Colin explains that Amazon is selling Incredible Countries, his selected poems, which contains a good number of haiku but he is really pleased that the eBook is free.

We got to know Colin and Carole as the result of our visits to see Douglas Harding in the 90's and later at some of the headless gatherings Margot and I attended.

Congratulations to Colin on his award and our thanks for keeping us up to date.

<http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk/ebooks.htm>

<http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk/ebooks.htm>

Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies

“And we, spectators always, everywhere,
looking at, never out of, everything!
It fills us. We arrange it. It collapses.
We re-arrange it, and collapse ourselves.

Who's turned us round like this, so that we always,
do what we may, retain the attitude
of someone who's departing? Just as he,
on the last hill, that shows him all his valley
for the last time, will turn and stop and linger,
we live our lives, for ever taking leave.”

This is one of my favourite quotations

Following the Cherokee quotation in the September issue I received another Native American contribution during the month, this one on Facebook posted by Jim Clatfelter.

I am blind and do not see the things of this world; but when the light comes from above, it enlightens my heart and I can see, for the Eye of my heart sees everything; and through this vision I can help my people. The heart is a sanctuary at the center of which there is a little space, wherein the Great Spirit dwells, and this is the Eye. This is the Eye of the Great Spirit by which He sees all things, and through which we see Him. If the heart is not pure, the Great Spirit cannot be seen. ~ Black Elk

Time, a poem by Peter Lim

Time is but a metaphor
 nothing exists but the now
 silence banishes every error
 tranquillity rests on the brow-

the non-attaching, the non-wishing
 the self in deepest peace it does anchor
 how abundance does abound in nothing
 the rose in bud knows when it should flower

Peter Lim

Hypnotic Mindfulness Series—Joanna Malinowska

Joanna wrote to let us know about her online programme of Hypno-Mindfulness sessions recently made available as an internet course:

I wanted to share something with you. I just published on YouTube some audio which I call Hypnotic Mindfulness Series. I recorded that originally for my clients during COVID lockdown, to help with anxiety and overwhelm. It is difficult if not impossible to be anxious or worry when you are fully relaxed and mindful.

Mindfulness meditation became a popular term for a mental training practice which has the strange reputation of being difficult. I will not comment on that too much, but if you start learning something and you are expecting it to be difficult, you will make it difficult.

The goal of mindfulness meditation is mindfulness. So what is mindfulness and who says it is so difficult to practise? It is just a natural state of mind, calm and peaceful, free of judgment, open and relaxed. The mind which stays in reality and the current moment, the mind which is free of fear and connected with the heart.

I had very enthusiastic feedback from my clients. It could be that it worked so well for them because they are my clients, but it was this feedback which made me improve and record it again, and to publish it on YouTube as a free gift to everybody. It is hypnosis, not that boring as mindfulness meditation and much more effective. So please enjoy.

There are five audio records. They need to be listened to in order, step by step, as each part builds on the skills and experiences from the previous one. The best time to enjoy it is when you want to relax - perhaps at the end of the day.

Please feel free to share the Hypnotic Mindfulness Series with your friends.

Here is the link to the playlist on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMsUX-6wiTsAc5ZPMqI1wRfHXA7Ao_cjy

All feedback and comments welcome.

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Organ Harvesting: A Blind Eye to Mass Atrocity by Mal Mitchell.

Another UK friend, Mal Mitchell sent us an article he wrote for Bitter Winter magazine on one of the aspects of life under the Communist Party in China that we tend to overlook. It is entitled, *Organ Harvesting: A Blind Eye to Mass Atrocity*. Mal is a writer, campaigner and researcher. Author of the “The Hog’s Wholey Wash”, he is especially focused on psyche-based, cultural and ecological dynamics in the multifarious challenges of today. He is on the Free Tibet campaigns team and the UK Committee of the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China (ETAC).

Mal’s Met(t)aforce website: <https://newmotility.wordpress.com/>

He reminds us that ‘For the CCP, removing and selling organs from prisoners of conscience is a huge business. Democratic countries should stop looking the other way’. This is his article.

An atrocity going on today, which is relatively little known of or believed as actually happening, is state-sanctioned mass murder, torture, and money-making from forced organ harvesting in China. It is imperative that the realities of this become widely known, and that effective international action be taken urgently in response.

The primary victims are prisoners of conscience, Falun Gong practitioners in particular. A second major group evidently being readied for harvest is Uyghur Muslims. There is evidence too that Tibetan Buddhists and some Christian groups are among the victims. Whether for their ethnicity or beliefs, these groups have been ruthlessly targeted for the ideological challenge they represent to the Chinese Communist Party, especially in the case of the swelling numbers of Falun Gong followers. What these people with different spiritual and religious focuses have in common is a dedication to ideals such as compassion and truth—to human values, as distinct from CCP-style nationalist expansionist materialism. As victims, these people are killed in the process of having their organs removed, and their remains are subsequently incinerated.

The perpetrator of this atrocity is the machinery of the Chinese Communist Party, operating on an industrial scale. It is now thought that there may be something in the region of 60,000–100,000 such transplants every year, with hearts, lungs, kidneys, livers, and corneas for sale in an industry worth billions of dollars. This is über-big business for China, with its wealthier citizens besides rich people from the USA, UK

and around the world getting these transplants—some surely knowing, some less aware, where their donated organs are coming from. Some countries have taken measures against such “transplant tourism,” including Taiwan, Israel, Spain, and Italy. Others remain complicit in this crime against humanity.

Genocide? The 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” Last year The China Tribunal, an independent tribunal led by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, concluded that forced organ harvesting was taking place in China and had been doing so on a mass scale for many years, noting: “there is a duty on those who have the power to institute investigations for, and proceedings at, international courts or at the UN to test whether Genocide has been committed. They should act immediately to determine accountability for any acts contrary to the provisions of the Genocide Convention.”

The China Tribunal itself stopped short of concluding that “genocide” as such was taking place, given how the intent is not so straightforward, since the CCP’s forced organ harvesting is not just about wiping out Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs and others—it is also about economically exploiting, making vast sums from their organs. In other words, this “bonus” commercial component for China cunningly works to hinder the straightforward charge of genocide. In any case, the tribunal deemed China a “criminal state.” The question of genocide has yet to be determined by the UN.

Strategic Complicity. Keenness to continue and expand trade with China tends to make it too inconvenient for governments and the private sector to properly examine the available evidence of forced organ harvesting. Might they act otherwise if they believed history would duly see them come to shame on this issue? It seems they as yet continue to hope they will get away with wilfully ignoring the evidence—much as so many governments once branded Nelson Mandela a terrorist, and happily continued doing business with South Africa, supporting its apartheid regime. Such amoral self-interested styles of government and business naturally facilitate injustices and, ultimately, mass atrocities.

Given the lack of moral leadership on this issue from political quarters, could an international public outcry turn the economic tables and thereby change the course of this monumentally shameful situation? Surely so. But who knows how loud, how

effective, such a cry could get at this time, in a world where discourse and attention are so taken up with other concerns... We can only start with looking into this for ourselves, and duly calling it out to anyone ready to listen.

Mal Mitchell

Lunch at the Yacht Club a story by Margot Mann

The sun shone on the sea. Tina loved days like this, when there was just enough breeze to keep the yachts moving. She could see several small white sails, all running with the wind, as she stood on her balcony waiting for Jack.

She was nervous about this first meeting. Exchanging emails was no substitute for meeting people in the flesh and although she had been looking forward to this day for weeks, now that it had arrived she realised that she was also dreading it. She had told Jack what instructions to give the taxi-driver when he got off the train and now he should be here at any minute. Tina walked inside, closing the screen door behind her.

The thought of preparing a proper lunch defeated her so she had booked a table at the local yacht club where she ate several times a week, impressing on the receptionist, that she was bringing an important visitor and wanted to make a good impression. She giggled nervously. The receptionist looked curiously at Tina and assured her that her lunch guest would be really well looked after, and after they exchanged comments on the weather, Tina left. Weird old bird, thought the receptionist, idly wondering who the visitor might be: Tina always ate alone at the yacht club.

If only George were here. He had been looking forward to meeting Jack but the cancer had killed him quickly and when Jack rang to say that he was visiting New York on business and would like to meet her, Tina, feeling under some obligation to George, and not a little curious, agreed. She and Jack had exchanged phone calls of course, and several emails, and Jack had sent some faded photos, but the fact that George lived in New Jersey and Jack lived in Sydney, meant that it was some time before they could meet face to face. Jack certainly looked like George in the photos, Tina conceded. She had to acknowledge that she had a strange reaction to George's news, four years ago, that he had had a phone call from Sydney from someone called Jack, who told him he was his half-brother. At first George refused to believe it, but the evidence was

convincing and George finally accepted Jack's story that after their father had walked away from his American family he had lived in Sydney for most of the intervening years. There was also a half-sister but she died in a boating accident several years earlier.

Tina had gone to some trouble with her appearance for the big day. She looked in the long mirror in the bedroom she had shared with George and giggled at the sight of her freshly blow-waved hair and new blue dress, cut to flatter her figure. She twirled, waving her hands around and giggled again at the sight of her bright red fingernails. Bending forward a little, she clapped her hands at the reflection of red toenails inside new open-toed sandals. George would have been tight-lipped about all this unnecessary expense, she thought, suddenly overwhelmed by a wave of anxiety. She sat down in the big chair beside the mirror where George had spent much of the last few weeks of his life. Gripping the sides of the chair, she turned her head and saw the white sails on the water, the view that George loved so much. Tears trickled down her cheeks as she struggled for composure.

When the doorbell rang, she snatched a tissue from the bedside table, carefully dabbed around her eyes, and walked quickly to the front door.

At the yacht club Tina ordered several expensive dishes, waving away her guest's objections, and proceeded to tell stories about George. Jack was a good listener. It was well-known that George was a bit of a tight-wad, Tina explained, her voice strangled with laughter as she told how they nearly froze to death in the new unit because George was too mean to pay for proper heating. And then there was the time they walked home through the snow and nearly caught pneumonia because George considered cabs were a waste of money. She was not aware of strange looks from other diners as her voice rose and her laughter became more hysterical. When she ordered yet another bottle of expensive wine, the receptionist whispered something to the head waiter. Tina smiled at Jack and then fell sideways in her chair as she lost consciousness.

The following day she had an email from Jack thanking her for lunch and saying he hoped she was feeling better. He added in a postscript that if she ever visited Australia to be sure and look him up. She quickly deleted the message and sat staring at her computer.

When she ventured to the yacht club for lunch a week later, she tried to slip into her usual place by the window without being noticed. The receptionist waved and walked across the dining room to her table. "No Australian lunch guests today?" she asked, one eyebrow slightly raised. Tina said quickly "Sorry about the other day - I forgot to take my medication." She lowered her eyes and said, "I've been invited to go and live in Sydney so I probably won't be coming here much more."

Margot Mann

Facebook and other Snips

Antonio Muñoz posted:

Just remain in the center; watching. And then forget that you are there. Lao Tzu

Kwan Haeng posted:

What seems like "a long time ago" on lookforyourself, i wrote something which i repeated several times, and there was a sense that people were tired of hearing me screaming about "the first axiom of Lao Tzu" ("the map is not the territory").

So since then, i got a brush, and a tanker truck full of ewallpaper paste, and have gone about plastering as much of the territory as i could with maps, disappearing rice paper, anything from anyone's glove compartment, old Atlas's, the schoolroom wall, any kind of a map at all, it really doesn't matter what, and at the same time, took a razor blade to a lot of stuff on the stuff on the subway wall, like the guy who comes along changing the adverts, because i am also a perverse idiot, and because it makes me laugh.

And the map is still not the territory, You Are, Anybody and Everybody Is, all this is.

Oh anyone, do have a look at it, its all always right here under all the maps and directions, just find a loose corner anywhere and pull gently, or spit on it and watch it dissolve, or better yet, you don't even have to, because everyone is already as free as a bird before any idea ever appeared.

Pure Awareness, unlike expedients, or teachings, which in and of themselves, like governments, institutions, or social conventions, all of the artifacts of thought, are not sentient, but only reflections of sentience, does not stop anywhere as near as i can tell.

It is not a medicine for this or that ailment, to be accepted or rejected, even if such medicines may offer a temporary value "if the shoe fits".

But i do think it "leads somewhere" ...sort of.

If Awareness of what is immediately apparent, prior to thought, is allowed and even encouraged, as with just plain Seeing, the arising of true compassion as function is both natural and inescapable, sooner or later.

(LookforYourself was an email conference which has recently migrated to Facebook. Kwan Haeng sees the upper-case letter 'T' as a contradiction in terms! Alan).

Douglas Harding on Cooperation-

Robert Penny sent me this extract from the book The Trial of the Man who said he was God.

By judicious picking and choosing, a far stronger case can and often has been made for co-operation in Nature than for cut-throat competition, for mutual aid than for exploitation. I wish I had time to tell the court about the marvellously intricate and improbable ways in which ruthlessly self-seeking creatures unwittingly support and promote the well-being of other equally ruthless and self-seeking creatures. A fast-evolving species probably owes more to its enemies than to its friends. Believe it or not, the organic unity of the myriads of creatures that constitute Life is at least as complete as the organic unity of the myriads of cells that constitute the individual life-form. In fact, John a-Nokes is less a whole than the Biosphere is, and the Biosphere is less a whole than the Cosmos is. All lesser things are incomplete, not self-contained, not all there, largely out of sight, and therefore not to be taken at face value. Only the Whole is whole. And only the Whole of things is in a position to appreciate itself in its unity, from the No-thing at its Centre. Which position is your position - exactly where you are and what you are right now as First Person Singular. Lucky you!