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Red is for Danger a story by Margot Mann

I bumped into Kirsty at the supermarket the other day. Well I didn't exactly bump into her because I shot out of sight behind a product display when I heard her speak to the woman at the check-out. That's when I knew for sure it was her: the low, musical voice unaffected by the passage of time was the real give-away. I was surprised to see that she was still in the carpark when I got there and I didn't plan to approach her, but then she looked up and saw me. We exchanged hugs and glad cries, and in the next awkward pause, decided we could spare half an hour for a coffee. She was wearing a high-necked blouse and her hair was quite long and loose, so I couldn't see the scar. With our lattes in front of us (Kirsty ordered a double shot), we talked a bit about our respective families and exclaimed at the smallness of the world, that we should meet in a supermarket after all these years, but neither of us spoke about the time in our lives when we were really close. Not friends exactly, but close. In fact if I remember correctly, I don't think I liked her much but I loved her house and especially the garden. I used to go there every day after school while my mother worked before Josh was born. They lived a few doors down from us in Fothergill Street in a big old house

with wrap around verandas and very old trees on a block which was obviously a fraction of its original size. Ancient camellias and azaleas leaned against each other in their struggle for light and there were a few patchy hydrangeas, but any flowerbeds were long overgrown and grass and weed seeds blew into neighbours' gardens.

It was a perfect playground for a couple of eight year olds: we had a special secret place behind the old shed where we kept our little bottles of chemicals – that's what we called them but they were just coloured liquids. Every afternoon after school until I walked the short distance to my home at five, we would rush to our secret place and enter a different world, each of us keen to show the other our latest find. Occasionally Kirsty and I would speak to each other in the school yard, especially if one of us had made a spectacular discovery for our game, but we really didn't have much to do with each other during school hours because although we were the same age, we were in different groups.

At first we were simply engrossed in seeing how many different colours we could make and in finding tiny bottles of different shapes and sizes. We did experiments with berries, flower petals, different coloured chinks – anything that would give us colour. We were alchemists in the magic space behind the old shed, grinding, adding water, squeezing, grating and mixing. We may have even cast spells, I can't remember now. I do remember the first occasion that we lit a small fire and stewed some purple berries in an old saucepan. The resultant sticky brilliance was so spectacular that we sat back on our haunches and I could see at once that Kirsty and I had the same thought; we needed to put these beautiful colours to some use. It was all very well to have a large rainbow collection, but that part of the fun was beginning to pall and we now had to refine our ideas and move to the next stage of the game. We looked at each other and burst out laughing.

A couple of days later, Kirsty sidled up to me in the schoolyard, and after making sure no one was watching, she slowly uncurled her fingers to reveal some small scarlet berries. I had barely time to see them before she whipped her hand away and sauntered off. After school that day, with barely suppressed excitement, we strolled nonchalantly down to the old shed. Even Kirsty's mother, who mostly didn't concern herself with our welfare, sensed that there was something in the wind and said, "What mischief are you two up to?" but she didn't wait for an answer.

We used half a box of matches getting a small fire going and then we tipped the red berries into the old saucepan, added a small amount of water and waited for the mixture to boil and the berries to soften. We looked at each other. Kirsty spoke first. “Do you want to taste it?” she asked, and then added, “what if we’re poisoned?” This aspect of the game was definitely a drawback and we sat there for a couple of minutes, taking it in turns to absent-mindedly stir the mixture. “I know,” Kirsty said suddenly, “let’s give some to Boofy and see what happens.” Boofy was the family dog, a big ancient golden labrador who wouldn’t hurt a fly but who had the reputation of eating without too much discrimination, even for a labrador. We must have convinced ourselves that this would be a good idea because Kirsty disappeared and returned a few minutes later dragging a reluctant Boofy by the collar. “Come on Boofs,” she said to the dog, “here’s something yummy to eat.” The dog obligingly licked the spoon Kirsty proffered and we sat down to await developments, if any. After what was probably a minute, but seemed much longer, the dog began to shake. After another minute, he began to froth at the mouth. I think we were screaming at this point, I don’t really remember, but I do remember Kirsty, her face stony with fear, running to get her mother. Halfway to the house, she slipped on wet grass and as she fell, a broken branch scraped her neck and the wound bled profusely.

I didn’t go to Kirsty’s house after that. It was nearly the end of the year and I went to after-school care for the last few weeks of school. Perhaps it was my mother who told me that the vet said that Boofy must have eaten something poisonous and was lucky to be alive.

Margot Mann

It doesn’t make sense! Alan Mann

Our October meeting followed, and enlarged on, themes of recent GrevZooms. During the following month Graeme Wilkins sent me a link to a conversation between Iain McGilchrist and Jordan Peterson in which Peterson puts a number of questions to McGilchrist which extend and clarify the Master-Emissary analysis of how our brains work, and which I think have relevance to the question of why the headless experiments are seen by some of us as life-changing and by others as crazy nonsense.

Link below¹. For those who remain doubtful about the McGilchrist approach we drew on the Einstein version for some independent support— *The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.*

The perennial philosophy holds that we are sleep walking and missing out on an important aspect of our being. My interest in this possibility is fairly typical. I had some spontaneous ‘openings’ leading to a lot of reading and listening to the leading proponents. In my case Krishnamurti and Bohm were the main players. The relevance of this interest and activity to the McGilchrist message is that it is possible to spend years listening to experts and sages of all traditions and intuiting that ‘here lies truth’ yet failing to actually experience it. I interpret the McGilchrist explanation of this as my left brain resisting anything that challenges the framework it has established over many years. The dependence on explanation, including the words of the most wise, tends to reinforce rather than break down the barriers, particularly that of my personal, separate identity. It seems that no amount of saying will do the trick.

My first port of call was Ken Wilber’s book “No Boundary” and we ran a little experiment at our meeting to see whether, relying on our direct experience, we can locate a boundary between the sounds we hear and the hearing of them. In 1991 Douglas Harding came to Australia and his simple experiments enabled what seems to be the necessary step from saying into seeing. There is considerable resistance to the Harding story on account of the simplicity of what is revealed, notwithstanding that the sages of the ages have always urged us to realise that what we seek is already the case. The second level of resistance is to find, in an immediately available practical action, what is often wrapped up in mystical obscurities.

We talked about the poets again as they seem to be the ones who come closest to capturing the essence of ‘that which is overlooked’ and I said I would send a few of my favourite Emily Dickinsons. I concluded by mentioning the remark made by one of our friends to the effect that the Harding experiments ‘don’t make sense’. I thought that particularly helpful in getting the message across as the one thing they do is ‘to make sense’ as they rely on what we actually see, hear, feel, etc., rather than what we know about what is giving rise to the sensations. It would be better to say that, from the left

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtf4FDlpPZ8&vl=en&ab_channel=JordanBPeterson

hemisphere perspective, they don't fit into my framework. Or maybe it is a matter of not making reason rather than not making sense?

Somehow, the left hemisphere has to realise it is the servant not the master and 'waking up' might simply involve me stepping aside.

***Bohm also outlines how suspension and proprioception can function at the collective level, particularly the manner in which the physical body—both group and individual—can be utilised as a mirror for the activity of values, assumptions and meanings. This leads into Bohm's "vision of dialogue" in which a common, participatory consciousness can emerge from the group, giving rise to a quality of impersonal fellowship which does not depend on typical conventions of familiarity. Such a consciousness is seen by Bohm as essential for true communion, which extends beyond the individual collective Dichotomy to the unlimited ground—the holomovement—from which these both arise. Page 301 The Essential David Bohm by Lee Nichol*

I regard this as a natural extension of or possible consequence of what can follow from the perspective revealed by the experiments. As an illustration of this possibility the circle experiment provides an example of a shared perspective.



We touched on the significance of a possible progression: saying, seeing, feeling, through to being—food for future gatherings.

Alan Mann

Gerotranscendence Again — Alan Mann

In the January 2018 NOWletter ² I wrote about my discovery of Lars Tornstam and his research into gerotranscendence³. At eighty-five I am in an ideal position to see for myself whether his theory holds water. Gerotranscendence is the name given to some of the positive effects of aging, the word was coined about 25 years ago by Tornstam (1943-2016) a Swedish Professor of Sociology at Uppsala University. These effects, established by several surveys, reveal a number of developments in older people with an interesting correspondence with results similar to what is often regarded as the outcome of ‘awakening’ as defined by various spiritual disciplines. I have put the link to a paper which describes the theory in some detail at the end of this note⁴.

So, what do I make of gerotranscendence, how does it feel? It is hard to describe for the reason that by its nature it is a sea change in being, it involves a shift from an explanatory to an experiential perspective, consequently words, however carefully chosen, don’t do the job. I have to be it rather than know about it.

However, I’ll have a go. Those of us familiar with the Harding experiments will find it easy to take the initial step but first a word about belief. In recent exchanges we have considered how susceptible we are to belief. This tendency is most evident in religious systems of various kinds, political perspectives, trust in certain people—the guru factor, and in chosen beliefs about medical, social or other leanings. Yet we overlook the almost universal belief system that involves an understanding of self as entity. Even the most enthusiastic deniers of religious belief rarely include their belief in

² <https://www.capacitie.org/now/January%202018.pdf>

³ Theory of Gerotranscendence: An Analysis by Fahreen Rajani and Hena Jawaid. From the Journal of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences
<https://austinpublishinggroup.com/psychiatry-behavioral-sciences/fulltext/ajpbs-v2-id1035.php>

themselves as a 'thing' rather than an accumulation of memories and tendencies: a construct that comes together, to face up to whatever the occasion presents.

I find myself using a term 'face up to' a clear example of the problem, an example of description and explanation of what is happening, thus underlining the natural response which assumes separation between the observer and whatever is going on. The occasion itself is never experienced in that way. I do not experience a face here, there is just whatever is on show: the trees, buildings, river, clouds, no face in the aware space unless I see yours or others within range. In addition to the various sights, sounds and sensations there are thoughts drifting in and out and perhaps the most persistent is the thought of an observer, Alan. Which, combined with bodily sensations, I come to regard as me, as a permanent entity rather than a convenient temporary construct.

It is possible to overcome this habit and come upon immediate direct experience of the occasion. It sometimes happens spontaneously, it can be a result of meditation practices or as a result of turning awareness upon itself.

The starting action involves a reversal of the polarity of perception by first becoming aware that what I am looking out of is free of any constraints imposed by what is looked at or what is 'known' about what is happening. The customary understanding of perception, as an observer engaging with whatever is observed, is seen to be a secondary, explanatory reduction of the experience. The experience itself is of a unity in which the observing awareness is what is observed, and the observer, Alan, is seen to arise and fall away like any other constituent of the occasion.

The words don't do the trick, the shift must be the result of direct experience. To sit watching and waiting can create an opportunity in which the transformation can arise. It is more a matter of the occasion, freed from separation, drawing the sense of separate selfhood into the wholeness of the moment. It is felt as a reversal of agency, a reversal in which the undivided first embraces then assimilates the individual.

Someone once said of this shift that it is as though what is normally regarded as experience is resurrected as 'inexperience'.

Alan Mann

Disinformation — Alan Mann

I am reading *The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* by Thomas Rid at the same time as working on notes for the NOWletter about how we prefer rest in our beliefs rather than relying on direct experience. The book is about the Fake News with which we are showered these days but its main aim is to show how this has been the case for generations and in particular the trickery of the intelligence agencies during the cold war and into the present. Thomas Rid makes a point about our false belief tendencies that reflects my present NOWletter effort with this:

But there has always been another truth, one that corresponds to belief, not facts. Something is true when it is right, when backed up by gospel, or rooted in scripture, anchored in ideology, when it lines up with values. This truth is based in some distant past or future. Truth, in this sense, is relative to a specific community with shared values, and thus inherently political. This truth is preached from a pulpit, not tested in a lab. The style of delivery is hot, passionate, and emotional, not cold, detached, and sober. Changing one's position is a weakness. It tends to confirm and lock in long-held views, and to divide along tribal and communal lines. These two forms of truth, of course, are exaggerations, ideals, clichés." (from "Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare" by Thomas Rid)

At our November 1st Zoom meeting Doug Lloyd gave us an interesting example of how climate change denial fits this description of an adopted 'truth' undisturbed by any objective analysis. Relating this to our left/right hemisphere studies I think we can claim that the left hemisphere has planted the belief 'your self is a thing' and nourishes it daily and even hourly so that it seems to be the obvious, essential and only perspective. It strikes me as the psychological equivalent of physical self-preservation.

Alan Mann

Chuang Tzu from Peter Lim

Chuang Tzu, Lao Tzu's most eloquent follower had more wit than Lao Tzu and is quoted as such, he expanded his Master's ideas as follows:

“Lizard chirping on the ceiling up there, and down here I am dying---these are the only two things you need to know”.

Also

In reply to his disciples as to how he wanted to be buried:

“Above the ground, the birds would have me, and underground, the worms”.

Peter Lim

(Editor’s comment. What is it about this that engenders laughter rather than gloom?)

‘You are Nothing; — Krishnamurti

The following piece is clipped from the latest Krishnamurti Kinfonet Newsletter. It is an extract from the books — Commentaries on Living — which I have found to be the most compelling of the Krishnamurti writings, possibly because their clarity owes much to the editing by Rajagopal. I must have read the following long ago myself, probably before I met Douglas Harding, but this time round I was tickled to find J. Krishnamurti giving us this short sermon in support of headlessness but without any of the necessary means of testing his claim that “I am nothing” and certainly without realising he was endorsing the Harding heresy. Alan

Krishnamurti: Why do we store up flattery and insult, hurt and affection? Without this accumulation of experiences and their responses, we are not; we are nothing if we have no name, no attachment, no belief. It is the fear of being nothing that compels us to accumulate; and it is this very fear, whether conscious or unconscious, that, in spite of our accumulative activities, brings about our disintegration and destruction. If we can be aware of the truth of this fear, then it is the truth that liberates us from it, and not our purposeful determination to be free.

You are nothing. You may have your name and title, your property and bank account, you may have power and be famous; but in spite of all these safeguards, you are as nothing. You may be totally unaware of this emptiness, this nothingness, or you may

simply not want to be aware of it; but it is there, do what you will to avoid it. You may try to escape from it in devious ways, through personal or collective violence, through individual or collective worship, through knowledge or amusement; but whether you are asleep or awake, it is always there. You can come upon your relationship to this nothingness and its fear only by being choicelessly aware of the escapes. You are not related to it as a separate, individual entity; you are not the observer watching it; without you, the thinker, the observer, it is not. You and nothingness are one; you and nothingness are a joint phenomenon, not two separate processes. If you, the thinker, are afraid of it and approach it as something contrary and opposed to you, then any action you may take towards it must inevitably lead to illusion and so to further conflict and misery. When there is the discovery, the experiencing of that nothingness as you, then fear - which exists only when the thinker is separate from his thoughts and so tries to establish a relationship with them - completely drops away. Only then is it possible for the mind to be still; and in this tranquillity, truth comes into being.

Commentaries on Living Series I | 'Self-Defence'

Artificial Intelligence The Challenge of the Future from Trisha English

The challenge of artificial intelligence is already here, but for many of us the intricacies and potentials are unknown, or not fully appreciated. The place to “catch up” is obviously the internet, arguably the single most revolutionary thing to have happened in the lives of human beings whether engaged in the work force, employed in the armed forces, or part of the huge bureaucracy which surrounds daily life. To children in the Western World, technology is part of their daily life. It is the “great communicator”, the god of all things, as their mobile phones will attest. The advances in technology are so far-reaching, that by the time the youngsters reach the teenage years, parents will be redundant.

The wonderful thing about childhood is that there is a certain innocence about it. Children do not understand what the dark web is, or why it is inadvisable to take pictures of themselves and their friends and paste them on *Facebook* or whatever. They do not understand that no amount of deleting will ever erase the images. But they are not the only ones. There are many adults who constantly take pictures of their family and friends and do not mind the intrusion. Google and other apps are

constantly asking me for permission to have access to my photographs, or documents, or viewing history. And why not? I am not doing anything wrong, and besides if I agree, I get further access to the delights of the internet. It may be in the form of extra security, or a speed app that will give me faster data downloads. But I have always refused. I remember the fable about Adam and Eve eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge and what transpired.

Programmers, hackers, code writers and others, are all collecting the data on your phone, computer, google gadgets, or other technological devices because they are gathering information about you. What you watch on TV, who you call on your phone, what is the nature of your employment, what books do you read or order on Amazon - or the like, what on-line purchases do you make? What are your religious beliefs? or your political affiliations?

From this data, profiles are created. I think it was Buddha who said: *You are what you think*. And if you know what I think, what I like, how I spend my time, then you have data that gives you predictability of my behaviour. You can influence what I buy, you can influence my political leanings, you can organize me into a protest march, all with the minimum of fuss.

If you know, or think you know, what I believe, then you will know how to manipulate me. The purpose of artificial intelligence is to create a machine that is like me, or like you. But it will have the advantage of not requiring food or drink, or holidays or recreational activities, it will never go on strike or cause disruption to the economy or fabric of society. In short, it will have all the attributes of human beings but none of the problems. Human beings ultimately will become redundant – at least in their present form - and that, of course, leads to the idea of a “basic human wage” which will be given to everyone and which is already being talked about in some economic circles. To make this happen would require us to move to a cashless society, but that is already happening. If you want to work you can, but you don’t have to, and this idea may appeal to many people.

According to the AI nerds, you will have all the time in the world to play, to be creative, to indulge in whatever your heart desires.

The truth of the matter is that robots will replace us in every field. As yet there is no plan to produce children in factories, but Huxley foreshadowed this in his book “Brave

New World”. And George Orwell set out the dangers of government control in his book “1984” and this will be an essential part of the function of artificial intelligence as it moves forward.

Why do we need expensive Universities to spread knowledge (and propaganda) when we can use artificial intelligence to process and deliver information? Schools are also costly and inefficient. Once programmed in the basics, artificial intelligence (robots) will become self-learning units. The protest that machines will never replace emotions and ethical behaviour is false. Decisions will be made according to logic, not according to belief systems. The drones that today can demolish an entire village, almost vaporize it, do not need to ponder about collateral damage. Humans do not appear to do so, so why should we be concerned? We have this image of human beings towering above all other animal species in intelligence, empathy, concern, love and so on. But these traits are not particularly evident in the life of human beings, so why should we consider them essential for robots? Just a glance at human history over thousands of years, shows that psychologically human beings have not evolved into these loving beings that we imagine, or are taught to imagine by religious and social organizations.

Human beings **do** have a distinct advantage over other species. Our brains hold thousands of neurons which enable us to do all sorts of wonderful and fantastic things. Clustered together in a certain way, they have enabled us to create, to programme, and produce something superior to ourselves. Just as primitive life was transformed into more sophisticated living forms, so artificial intelligence will produce a better and more adaptive model of ourselves. That’s the theory anyway.

Space exploration will almost certainly rely on robotic transformations. Perhaps in the days to come, instead of having to slowly, and some may say painfully, educate our young people, we will be able to implant a chip into the brain of the newborn which will facilitate at great speed all the collective advanced knowledge of our planet. This will enable us not only to replace human limbs with artificial ones, to give sight to the blind, to enable the lame to walk, which has to a large extent already happened, but also enable us to immediately speak or understand all the languages on the planet. (Computers already have this capacity).

By now you will see some of the possibilities or be in the mood to reject everything I have written. I am not an expert, but I have anticipated your objections, so at the end

of this paper I have listed some of the TED talks on YouTube which may answer some of your questions, or encourage you in further exploration. If you do not have access to YouTube, then enter the title into your web browser.

In the world of the future however, you will just have to adjust the chip in your head, and all the relevant information you need to solve a problem can be downloaded. You will “know” almost everything, without having to go through the process of “knowing”!

Trisha English

Artificial Intelligence Will Kill Us. – Jack Tuck. (Hamburg)
 True Artificial Intelligence Will Change Everything – Jurgen Schmidhuber
 Where AI is today and where it is going – Richard Socher.
 The Truth Behind Artificial Intelligence – Andrew Zeitler
 Preparing for the Future – Robin Winsor (recommended)
 A New Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence – Kriston Hammond
 And for those who have already left the planet, and may be working in Quantum Physics or some other rarified discipline....
 Can We Make Quantum Technology Work? – Leo Kouwenthoven

Haiku — Colin Oliver



over the river
 my friend returns
 in a curlew's lilt

Free to read and download at <http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk/ebooks.htm>

The Curlew is one of my best bird friends. In my youth I wandered the moors which rose behind the house where I lived and which rolled on into the Yorkshire Dales, it was often the only bird I came across on my walks. Now I quite often hear it again on the coastline of New South Wales. Alan

Emily Dickinson

I promised, on a recent Zoom, to circulate a few of my favourites.

959

A loss of something ever felt I-
The first that I could recollect
Bereft I was-of what I knew not
Too young that any should suspect

A Mourner walked among the children
I notwithstanding went about
As one bemoaning a Dominion
Itself the only Prince cast out-

Elder, Today, a session wiser
And fainter, too, as Wiseness is-
I find myself still softly searching
For my Delinquent Palaces-

And a Suspicion, like a Finger
Touches my Forehead now and then
That I am looking oppositely
For the site of the Kingdom of Heaven-

668

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

280

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading – treading – till it
seemed
That Sense was breaking through –

And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum –
Kept beating – beating – till I thought
My Mind was going numb –

And then I heard them lift a Box
And creak across my Soul
With those same Boots of Lead, again,
Then Space – began to toll,

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

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down –
And hit a World, at every plunge,
And Finished knowing – then –

1129

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant---
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind---

1563

By homely gifts and hindered Words
The human heart is told
Of nothing
'Nothing' is the force
That renovates the World