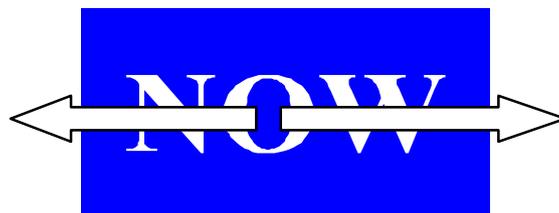


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Next Greville Street Meeting – Sunday September 3rd

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Thank to contributors to this issue, which reappears after a gap of several months due to our travels. I was hoping to include a personal response to Brexit in this issue, based on attempts to get to the bottom of ‘why’ by interviewing people we met in Europe and the UK, but it is not quite ready to go so I’m holding it back until next month together with other incoming contributions which are not quite ripe.

We are having one of our periodic reviews of our regular Sydney meeting, ‘what are we doing and why’, a feature of our gatherings which we undertake every two or three years. I came across a haiku by Issa which I adjusted slightly to fit our circumstances:

*Our monthly group: we few assorted cranks
Fogies and halfwits call the Name with thanks.*

The original reads: A moonlit night: we few assorted cranks...etc. It is by Issa and lifted from ‘A Chime of Windbells’.

“Unshakeable”: A Message of Inner Resilience — Mal Mitchell

In 2017 Freedom House once again determined Tibet as amongst the worst countries on the planet in terms of human rights and political freedom, second only to Syria. In a most extreme form of protest, since 2009 over 140 Tibetans have self-immolated – most of them have died in doing so.

A letter written by Buddhist monk and former political prisoner Jigme Guri a month after he was released from prison in October 2017, having served a five year sentence, emerged this year. Jigme Guri has been subject to a number of conditions following his arrest, including travel restrictions, tight surveillance and the monitoring of his communications. The letter, entitled ‘Survived Another Threat to Life’ and written under the name Labrang Jigme, voices a powerful spirit of hope. In it Jigme Guri refers to the harsh treatment experienced by Tibetans who stand up to the Chinese occupation, and how its aim of crushing them can be defied in mind and spirit.

(Extract from: "Survived Another Threat to Life")

“Once my courage and commitment, love for Tibetans, love for Tibet, hope and the spirit for survival have declined, then "their" wishes are fulfilled. So, they have various means and methods to defeat us, such as threatening and misleading, lying and deception. In a nutshell, showing threatening faces and cunning smiles are the methods they have become experts in.

“In this way, the general public have been fooled. As for us, major crimes have been manipulated and hats have been put on our heads - we have been made to face the law and admit to many things that we haven't done and, as a result, we have been tortured severely. Or, we have been continuously targeted to be destroyed from the world completely.

“But I can say that they could not have made any changes to my thinking and my innermost promise. On the contrary, for the sake of truth and justice, for the sake of fairness and loyalty, I gained strength, power, courage, patience and much more that I hadn't gained before. And I believe this is the power of the strength of truth and justice.

“My thoughts about my people, my love for my country, my hope for my fellow Tibetans are unshakeable like that of a rocky mountain, no one can destroy that. For the sake of world peace, the flourishing of the land and happiness for

sentient beings, I can sacrifice myself. This is the life promise created by truth and justice. When a butter lamp is extinguished by the wind, or prayer flags are cut by a knife, or whatever it may be, this is the will of a dying man or innermost heartfelt words.”

Labrang Jigme, 26 November, 2016—(Tibet Watch trans.) More information: <https://www.freetibet.org/news-media/na/letter-monk-former-prisoner-express-defiance-and-hope>

Alternative translation:

“If my courage and determination wane, my affection and loyalty to my people, my hope and vitality, that is grist for their mill. The means they use to crush us are many, fear and misleading, lies and deception, but in short, anything from stern wrath to deceptive smiles, and in using them, see how expert they have become! Going down this road, apart from just deceiving the public, they frame us with the greatest and heaviest crimes, and under trial they coax or even force us to admit to many things we never did, an ongoing process of rendering us lifeless as a corpse, if not wiping us out altogether. You can say: “They can do nothing to change my powers of reasoning or my innermost commitment”, but rather, for the sake of sincere adherence to the truth, I found strength, capacity, courage and endurance I didn’t know I had before, which I firmly believe to be the force of truth and reason.

While the altruistic devotion that binds me to my people, my love for my country, my hopes for my kinfolk stand as firm as a mountain, unshakeable, to endure all hardship for the peace of the world, the growth of the nation, mindful wellbeing and so on is the pledge of my truth-affirmed life. The candle of life may be blown out, the flagpole of life-force cut down, but my dying testament and the living breath of my innermost counsel is this.”

Labrang
November 26, 2016

Jigme

(International Campaign for Tibet trans.) Submitted by *Mal Mitchell*.

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Are We Living Life, or Merely Thinking About It? – Trisha English

Many years ago, Jiddu Krishnamurti – mystic philosopher and World Teacher, coined the phrase: *You are the World*. Initially, it seemed to me that in many ways the phrase was a reworking of all the Indian sages who had said similar things. Beliefs were born that somehow we belonged together, that we were inextricably linked to all other creatures on the planet, and as such, we were meant to work in harmony with Nature.

Of course that can be dismissed as romantic nonsense. In contrast, for example, secular learning stresses individual differences, individual protest, individual choice, individual rights and so on. We are indoctrinated with the belief that everyone is an individual, something special, someone who has rights and few responsibilities.

Today, we are reaping the whirlwind of those secular views. Everyone has opinions, viewpoints, biases and any number of dogmatic assertions. We have labels for everything; the most dominant being Left and Right in the political arena, believers and non-believers in the religious realm, competition and cooperation in the commercial world and so on.

I remember in the late sixties and early seventies how the permissive society won the war of words. In education, buzz words like “innovation” and “open learning strategies” became the dominant themes in the same way that words like “narrative” and “conversation” are used today. It mattered not one jot whether the innovations were worth having – it was all about “change”. Change for what? Well, making sure that every individual has the right to succeed. Succeed at what? Well, at making us feel self-confident, and able to “make a difference”. Whichever way you looked at it, the thrust was to foster self-confidence, self actualization, self fulfilment, self realization. The Self became the ruler and the inhibitor of interpersonal relationships. Me first, you second - if at all!

Let me give you a specific example of how these views were fostered. In the primary schools in the seventies, a new method of teaching reading was introduced. It was called “the look and say method”. Instead of getting children to use phonics to unpack a word, they were encouraged to remember whole words. So, if you wanted young children to read the words “I must encourage others to work hard” the children were not taught to use phonics, to sound out the word “encourage”, but to remember it and to recognize it next time around.

Another fad running concurrently, was to de-emphasize spelling. This new innovation was supposedly to assist “creative writing”. Children would be encouraged to write “stream of consciousness stuff” without being slowed down by spelling.

By the end of the eighties educators were complaining that University students couldn't write, couldn't spell, didn't know basic information and on the whole were behind other nations in maths, science and chemistry. Interestingly enough, they were not good at verbally expressing their thoughts either. The overuse of words such as “like” and “sort of” and “you know” were growing in popularity. Language, along with mathematics, and conceptual skills went down the gurgler and to my knowledge never completely recovered although just recently there are indications the pendulum is swinging back.

You could say that TV commentators today epitomize the end product of many of these “innovations”. Programmes are all about expressing “emotion” and only nerds and hackers are up for logical thought. It is all shadow and very little substance. Very few feel they can rely on newspapers and TV news for anything approaching in-depth analysis. Most people, if they read newspapers at all, only read the news that agrees with their own particular interpretation of the world. The universal mantra is “don't know, don't care”.

The Australian often has excellent, well researched articles, designed to make people think about where the world is going. A recent article posed the question as to whether or not we are sleep walking into World War 3. The article

presupposes that the audience has a working knowledge of what happened in World War 1 and World War 2. Frankly, it is a big ask. Most youngsters know only that the USA wins every war. How do they know this? Well, they see it on TV, in films, and in other media. Now and again they pick up misinformation from parents, and significant others. At best it is a hit and miss affair.

So what is really meant by the statement, *You are the world?* In Quantum Physics, researchers are looking again at “*consciousness*” which is surely one of the most mysterious things that confront us. What is consciousness? they ask. Does consciousness survive physical death? How is consciousness developed and is it developmental at all? Can consciousness be altered? No one has yet provided definitive answers to these questions. However, it is worth the journey and the enquiry to see how the experimenters approach this subject. Some approach it from a purely materialistic viewpoint. They show how perceptions are sent as electrical signals to the brain, engaged by receptors, and transmitted to the back of the brain where signals are interpreted into what we believe is the reality “outside” of us. But is it *reality*? Is your reality the same as mine? Or are we interpreting the signals in terms of our conditioning? Take for instance a tree. As we grow up, we are told that trees are green, they have a certain shape and defining characteristics and this allows us to call certain things “trees”.

Krishnamurti pointed out that once you label something, once you call the shape a “tree” you stop seeing it. You fail to “see” the stillness or movement of the tree, the subtle changes in colour, the “life of the tree” is not felt, it does not communicate to you and inevitably you have lost relationship with the tree. This happens universally.

You have images of your friends, and your friends have images of you, you give them a name and label them and then you interact with them “from memory”. One image meets another image.

Consciousness is not fresh and new in us because of this identification. In fact we project what “we think” onto the reality and in so doing actually create it.

The reality outside ourselves is all connected to our perception. Perception as a physical function does not occur unless the brain is functioning correctly. In fact we only see colour, because of the physical connections in the brain that make it possible. If our eyes were constructed differently, the world might be seen in black and white, or in colours that we cannot comprehend with our present brain structures. Similarly, because of the material nature of our bodies, we cannot see that reality is in constant flow. Everything is in waves of energy, but our brains apparently hold everything together so that we see matter as solid. But what is matter? If it is congealed wave particles these could collapse or change at any moment. We do not have control of the process any more than we have control of our heartbeats, of our blood circulation etc.

This lack of control, lack of understanding, lack of insight, gives rise to the spiritual view of “*consciousness*” which some have called soul, or atman. But these are labels too, and as such can actually prevent us from enquiring more deeply into the nature and function of consciousness.

The question of whether consciousness survives death is another vexed question. However, one thing is certain. If something survives death it is not *your consciousness*. You don't own it. You don't even know what it is or how it works. You are born with consciousness. The ancient Greeks believed that the body is animated by the breath of Life, and that Life is consciousness. But upon death, does consciousness, which is life, which is energy, cease to exist? Something happens – but what exactly happens cannot be experienced or described, though some have tried.

Consciousness very likely returns to universal energy which is inexhaustible. So you see, when everything is broken down into the smallest units possible we are all the same. We are the world. **But are we the only world, or merely one possible world?** That is the question.

Trisha English

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Donald Ingram Smith (DIS) interview of J Krishnamurti in 1979

(Note from the editor. I was tidying up some of our audio materials and came upon a CD of Donald Ingram Smith interviewing J. Krishnamurti in 1979. As I'd just received the above contribution from Trisha I decided to listen to it and, not surprisingly, I found some correspondence between this article and the CD . Those of us who find the Harding experiments helpful in decoding K will be amused to hear him speaking of 'empty fullness' an aspect of being made plain in the direct experience of the experiments but, more often than not, obscured by words).

They were exploring the way the mind seeks to occupy itself with other than what is actually present to consciousness as a means of avoiding the apparent void.

JK. The more I realise I am empty the more I hold on due to the fear of this emptiness, the fear of loneliness, of having a void in myself. If I don't escape but face that without distortion, without wanting to escape from that, without trying to cover it up, just facing that...

DIS. Just being what it is....

JK. What it is. Then if I look without the observer I am that emptiness, the emptiness is not separate from me, I am that, the observer is that ...Right?

DIS. Right.

JK. Then what takes place? Then there is no longer a movement away from it, as any movement I make will be in the category of 'escape' ...entertainment. The mind remains with it without becoming neurotic. It becomes neurotic the moment one escapes from it. One remains with it without saying I must change it, I must fill it...so when there is emptiness and there is no observer who wants to direct it then that very emptiness undergoes a tremendous transformation. It is no longer empty therefore there is no fear ...the craving for pleasure and entertainment comes to an end.

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Correction.

I said Dave Knowles' contribution to the last issue, NOWletter 196, was a talk he gave to his Canberra philosophy group — he has written to correct this misinformation and says "I should point out that my Philosophical Bytes are NOT addressed to a philosophy group but to the IT-literate members of the ACT Apple users group, a fact

which would give more sense to my comments (which may confuse your readership)". My thanks and apologies to Dave.

Dying to be Me by Anita Moorjani – Alan Mann

One section of the Capacitie website is concerned with the work of the late John Wren-Lewis (JWL) and, in particular, his eloquent expression of the realisation that followed his near-death experience (NDE). On our recent travels we had one of our periodic meetings with our friend, author and NOWletter contributor Mal Mitchell who also had dealings with JWL some time before we got to know either Mal or JWL. One of the subjects Mal raised at our meeting was the book *Dying to be Me* by Anita Moorjani and I decided to get hold of it on our return to Sydney. I was surprised to find I already had a copy which I'd downloaded to Kindle in 2013, started to read but abandoned after reading the introduction.

So , I decided to try again. Anita describes how she became ill with cancer and how it spread through her body until unable to walk or digest food , emaciated and dying she was given up as an incurable case by her medical carers. At that point, and near death, she describes how she gave up, and how her surrender initiated an extraordinary transformation in which, in spite of her physical condition and her clear understanding that she was dying, came with the realisation that everything was just as it should be, fear evaporated and although she was unable to talk to her family, friends and surgeons, who surrounded her at that critical time, she was aware of their presence, their love and sadness and aware of wishing she could somehow reassure them that 'all was well'.

It eventually transpired that this transformation was physiological as well as psychological and it marked a turning point from which she progressed to complete recovery. The book describes both her search for a cure prior to the final stages of the cancer as she tried everything on offer in Eastern as well as Western medicine plus all manner of health based systems, yoga, meditation and so on, and describes the steps on her road to good health.

What is of particular interest to me is her description of the state of being in which she found 'herself' after all abandoning hope of recovery:

"The state I was in during my NDE was way beyond the mind, and I healed because my damaging thoughts were simply out of the way completely. I was not in a state

of thinking, but a state of being. It was pure consciousness—what I call magnificence!"...

..."In that state, there was total clarity and all became known. I seemed to become everything, and I existed in everything...The overwhelming sensations were in a realm of their own, and words don't exist to describe them. The feeling of complete, pure, unconditional love was unlike anything I'd known before. Unqualified and non-judgmental...it was totally indiscriminating, as if I didn't have to do anything to deserve it, nor did I need to prove myself to earn it."

Her attempts to communicate her experiences are reminiscent of both JWL and Jill Bolte-Taylor's descriptions of their experiences and, in particular, JWL's redefinition of himself as 'The Universe John Wren-Lewis'. She writes well and communicates as effectively as words can, the sense of the wholeness of being and the shift from the individual to the undivided.

I have difficulty in accepting some of the interpretations she places on her experiences but, as she says, the words don't do it and it is the experience that matters so I remain uncertain about some of her proposals. For example, her conviction that individual as opposed to 'general' awareness, survives death of the body. I can readily endorse the claims that seem to match my own understanding and these include her rejection of certainty :

"My sense is that the very act of needing certainty is a hindrance to experiencing greater levels of awareness. In contrast, the process of letting go and releasing all attachment to any belief or outcome is cathartic and healing. The dichotomy is that for true healing to occur, I must let go of the need to be healed and just enjoy and trust in the ride that is life." ..."Needing certainty shackles my potential for the unexpected. Feeling I don't know, or Let's see"

As far as method or how to come upon this aspect of ourselves is concerned she stresses her realisation that the undivided wholeness of being is what we really are, what I would call my first nature and my failure to be it is due to the predominance of my second nature. As she says:

"It can be tricky at first to distinguish what's motivating us. The difference is that the mind is more about doing, and the soul is more about being. The infinite self is our essence. It's who we truly are..."

...“I have discovered that to determine whether my actions stem from “doing” or “being,” I only need to look at the emotion behind my everyday decisions. Is it fear, or is it passion? If everything I do each day is driven by passion and a zest for living, then I’m “being,” but if my actions are a result of fear, then I’m in “doing” mode.”

My experience suggests that the seeing, which was instigated by her crisis, enabled the switch from doing to being and that once seen the door to understanding remains ever accessible. Many years ago when I was wondering about these matters in general and, in particular, why if we all participate in the wholeness of life, how come it is all so mysterious and our first nature apparently so inaccessible. At the time I was thinking in terms of Atman and Brahman and wondering if we all have a fragment of perfection, the divine spark of Atman, why am I not whole. The universe tapped me on the shoulder and made it clear that it is the perfection of creation that we are engaged in not the perfection of Alan. Anita has a comment on similar lines:

“Once I realized that there’s nothing outside my infinite self, I could begin to focus on viewing myself as an ongoing work of perfection—but in a way that’s dynamic, not static. Like a kaleidoscope that turns from one exquisite image to the next, perfection is constantly in motion.”

On the question of seeing, which seems to be a necessary preliminary to any shift I have found the Harding experiments to provide a practical doorway to what Anita is writing about. She sees no need for prayer, or an external separate God which, would be in my opinion, a response from the outside looking in. Once the realisation hits, one’s life, in her words, can be felt as a prayer in itself.

“Why do I suddenly understand all this? I wanted to know. Who’s giving me this information? Is it God? Krishna? Buddha? Jesus? And then I was overwhelmed by the realization that God isn’t a being, but a state of being...and I was now that state of being!”

I like her practical and down to earth approach which is exemplified in this final extract from her book.

“So in the end, my NDE brought me back to myself. I believe this is the most powerful idea for each of us: realizing that we’re here to discover and honor our own individual path. It doesn’t matter whether we renounce the material world and meditate on a mountaintop for 20 years or create a billion-dollar multinational company that employs thousands of people, giving them each a livelihood. We can

attend a temple or church, sit on the beach, drink a margarita, take in a glorious sunset with a loved one, or walk through the park enjoying an ice cream. Ultimately, whichever path we choose is the right one for us, and none of these options are any more or less spiritual than the others. I'm not saying that I'm against organized religion, but I am skeptical of any message when it leads to all the divisiveness, strife, and killing that go on in this world in the name of religion, when in truth, we're all One—all facets of the same Whole. Human beings are so varied that some fare better with organized religion or spiritual paths, whereas others don't. If we simply live in a way that nurtures us and allows us to express our creativity, letting us see our own magnificence, that's the best we can possibly do. To advocate any option or doctrine as being the one true way would only serve to limit who we are and what we've come here to be.

Thanks to Mal for reminding me about the book and to Anita Moorjani for sharing her experience. After I'd finished the book I found her 18 minute TED talk and I have put the link below.

Alan Mann

Dying to be Me. My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing by Anita Moorjani. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhcJNJbRJ6U>

The book: "DYING TO BE ME: MY JOURNEY FROM CANCER, TO NEAR DEATH, TO TRUE HEALING" ,,, "by Anita Moorjani" ,,,

Meetings:

Byron Sophia Philosophical Group Masonic Centre, 6 Byron St. Byron Bay –

Open Meetings: every Thursday from 1 to 3 pm

Greville Street –Chatswood -- Next meeting 10am SUNDAY 3rd September.

Let me know of changes or of other meetings we could list here.

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