



September 2019

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Michael Pollan & Norman Swann in dialogue at the Opera House 20 July 2019

On an ABC interview some days before this event Prof. Pollan was asked what specific benefit is provided by psychedelic drugs or how he would summarise the consequences of a 'good' trip. He replied that it was a completely new, or at least, a most unusual perception of reality, involving the complete displacement of the ego from its central and primary position and in many cases its temporary obliteration.

It raises the question of whether this displacement of ego is possible by means other than drugs. Two options were discussed at the Opera House interview: meditation and holotropic breathwork. Pollan emphasised that 'set' and 'setting' are aspects to be considered to ensure positive outcomes. 'Set' being mindset of the experimenter and 'setting' being the need for a pleasant environment in which to carry out the experiment.

There was reference to historical reports of experiences resulting from ergot and the extensive research under way prior to the '60s which ground to a halt under the flood of popular promotion by Timothy Leary, etc., and the subsequent banning of LSD.

As far as the effect on the brain is concerned Pollan gave examples of research under such techniques as MRI which demonstrate that the areas of the brain which provide our default ego-centric orientation close down under the effects of, for example, LSD25. This is the part of the brain which is endlessly engaged in self-reflection, mind-wandering, future and past imagining.

With this in suspense, the customary subject-object duality is no longer apparent and nonduality prevails. This is often an ecstatic experience which he reminded us is literally Ex-Static. Out of the stasis of our habitual mode.

Pollan mentioned research which demonstrated that our default mode is something we develop and from which very young children are free. This is something Douglas Harding demonstrates with his identity experiments with the young.

He spoke about Stanislav Grof and his holotropic breathing which he himself had tried and found useful, mainly as a preliminary to taking a psychedelic dose. Not recommended if you suffer from arterial fibrillation.

One of the benefits is that psychedelics are non-toxic and non-addictive.

He mentioned his wife had joined him in some of his experiments with good results. His own experiments, four I think, were good and there was only one really terrifying occasion but that was a trial of toad venom, so a bit off the usual course.

There was an interesting note about Leary who, as a scientist, became disenchanted with the scientific approach to psychedelics and switched interest to the poets, writers and the arts as sources of ongoing involvement. (We have had a version of this ourselves recently by way of the inclusion of poetic examples in recent meetings and NOWletters.).

In reply to a question on why the psychedelic movement ran out of steam he thought that perhaps the generational differences were the cause, in that the younger generation saw the positives whilst their elders saw only the negatives and clamped down.

Pollan had some interesting ideas about the relationship of the psychedelic experience to religion and mentioned the work of Terence McKenna's talks, "The Stoned Age". He gave an example of an American woman in London suffering from terminal cancer who had a wonderful psychedelic experience which cured her depression. She was ecstatic and said that she had "kissed the face of God". Pollan said how could that be if she was still the atheist she had always been. She replied that there wasn't any other word big enough to describe the happening.

There was speculation as to what extent psychedelics have provided spiritual inspiration through history and, of course, when the inspiration falls into the hands of our default brain, we get the familiar religious bitterness, competition, and nonsense.

The problem of getting humanity at large into the frame of mind that psychedelics offer was discussed but considered impossible at present and due, of course, to that self-centred default mode in which we seem to be entrapped. Here is a quotation from his book:

"If the experience of transcendence is mediated by molecules that flow through both our brains and the natural world of plants and fungi, then perhaps nature is not as mute as Science has told us, and "Spirit," however defined, exists out there—is immanent in nature, in other words, just as countless premodern cultures have believed. What to my (spiritually impoverished) mind seemed to constitute a good case for the disenchantment of the world becomes in the minds of the more psychedelically experienced irrefutable proof of its fundamental enchantment. Flesh of the gods, indeed"

(from "How to Change Your Mind: The New Science of Psychedelics" by Michael Pollan)

Alan Mann

Medium-Rare, a story by Margot Mann

The smell of barbecued meat tickled the nostrils of the six guests seated around a table waiting to be fed. The meal was taking a long time to appear and there were murmurs of "Where's the chef?" and "I thought we came for dinner." Occasionally Gerry put his head around the door and asked the nearest person to fill his wine glass and then he would take a long slug, smile at everyone and say "Won't be long now, rares all done, just doing the mediums."

Gerry set out the plates and did a quick check of the steaks. The barbecue was brand new and he was anxious that the expensive steaks should be perfect. Of course these people were his friends but it was natural to want to impress them with his new machine. He beckoned to Jill who was encouraging everyone to eat the small selection of nibbles, hoping to soak up some of the alcohol being consumed. "Have you got Jack's pasta salad under control?" he asked. Jill nodded and pointed to the kitchen. Jack was a vegan and Gerry had a habit of serving him food he wouldn't eat. Last time Gerry and Jill hosted, Jack pushed a pile of chicken to one side of his plate, which had been a bit embarrassing because in the end there really hadn't been enough chicken to go around. Gerry congratulated himself on remembering Jack had become a vegan. He swallowed a long gulp of wine. When he looked at the label on the bottle he saw that it was the same Argentinian wine that Harry had served at his house the month before. Gerry had found it on-line for six dollars a bottle.

The conversation around the table was becoming louder. No use worrying about how long everything was taking, Gerry thought, gently prodding a steak. A chef had told him that a rare steak should feel like the soft part of your thumb where it is fleshy near the wrist. He had forgotten what part of the thumb signified medium rare and well-done – not that he would dare serve up a well-done steak,

even though he privately preferred his meat to be bloodless. It was rather foolhardy to be testing a new barbecue with expensive steaks but it was too late to worry about that now. Jill moved to help him as he began to plate up. Joey and Erin always plated up when the group ate at their house. Joey cooked every time and Erin plated up and then half-way through the meal she would say “I think we all want to thank Joey for this delicious meal,” and depending on how much they had had to drink, guests would murmur their thanks or mutter obscenities while Joey blushed to the roots of his hair. Erin never ate potatoes because she had had to eat them at boarding school. Lucy, who shuddered every time she remembered the food at her own boarding school couldn’t imagine not eating potatoes. She fantasised that any minute now Jill would serve minted baby potatoes with lots of butter. Lucy thought that she would eat her serviette soon if Gerry didn’t get a move on. What on earth was he doing with those steaks?

Harry had eaten all the Sicilian olives and most of the chicken and champagne pate. Gerry noticed that he had also eaten several slices of the fancy bread which was meant to go with the steak and which he had foolishly put on the dinner table. At least he assumed Harry was the culprit. Any minute now, Gerry thought, Harry would start eating the amusing salads Jill had made, most of them with pomegranate which Gerry detested. He sometimes wondered if Harry had had enough to eat when he was a small child with hungry siblings, because he always took so much food. Just as well tonight they were plating the meat.

When the meat was finally ready to serve, Gerry realised that he had lost the piece of paper with everyone’s preference for how they liked their steak. He decided to brazen it out, and with a flick of his dirty cooking cloth and a theatrical sweep of his arm, he set down plates in front of his guests and hoped for the best. There was a silent moment while everyone helped themselves to the baked baby potatoes and pumpkin Jill brought from the kitchen, and a further pause while bread was passed around. Harry had eaten most of the butter.

The first to speak was Harry who was obviously having trouble chewing. “I say Gerry,” he began, “don’t want to be a wet blanket old son, but any chance you could pop this meat back on the barbie for a few more minutes – it seems to need a bit more cooking.” Gerry was alarmed. If Harry complained, something was very wrong. Elaine, Harry’s wife, said quickly, “here, Harry, swap with me. My steak is quite well-cooked.” By this time, emboldened by Harry, others around the table spoke up about the state of their steaks. Most seemed to be undercooked, far too bloody, and even Joey who liked a lot of blood, quietly admitted that his steak was underdone. Gerry jumped to his feet, grabbed a tray and quickly collected all the plates. Avoiding Jill’s eye he said, “it’s that bloody barbecue, I followed all the instructions to the letter. Won’t be long folks.”

“Poor Gerry,” murmured Elaine. As Harry’s wife, she had endured years of embarrassment watching him take inappropriately large helpings while their friends noticed, but said nothing. She wriggled in her seat, remembering the time, not so very long ago, when they were at a restaurant sharing dishes with friends and she had been forced to tell Harry to put some of the pulled pork back because

other people hadn't had any yet. Harry had hooted with laughter as he surrendered some of the pork. "Oh sorry guys, didn't realise." Elaine had been so ashamed she couldn't speak but no one else seemed to care. Their friends often said things like "Look out, Harry's got his eye on that," or "You'd better finish that off before Harry spots it." Harry used to tell Elaine she was far too sensitive.

"The thing about a salad is that it can never be underdone," Jack said, taking a mouthful of lettuce and baked potato and scraping a lot of cold pasta into a corner of his plate. "The pomegranate makes all the difference. Wonderful." He took the last slice of bread. His wife Lucy, desperate for the meat which had seemed to be within her grasp a moment ago, tapped her knife noisily on the table. She helped herself to a small baked potato and ate it slowly, her gaze fixed on the door through which she willed Gerry to appear with her perfectly cooked medium-rare steak.

"Perfection at last my friends," Gerry said loudly, as he and Jill came through the door with plated steaks on trays. "That barbecue is going straight back to Bunnings. There must be something wrong with the temperature gauge. Bon appetit – sorry for taking so long." He whistled as he set down plates in front of his guests. Then he wiped his hands on his serviette and turned up the volume on Mozart playing quietly in the background.

If any of the guests wondered how Gerry knew which steak was theirs, no one said anything.

Margot Mann

Douglas Harding on Stress—by [contemplativeinquiry](#)

Contemplative inquiry is a blog created and maintained by James Nichol who lives in Stroud, Gloucestershire, England. The *Contemplative Inquiry* blog started in August 2012, and includes personal sharing, discursive writing, poetry and book reviews. <https://contemplativeinquiry.wordpress.com/about/>

"The whole truth about you is three-fold. Instead of being the mere thing they told you you were, you turn out to be (i) No-thing at all, and (ii) the Totality of things (and, as these, altogether safe) and (iii) every particular thing that lies between (and, as such, altogether unsafe and at risk). Yes, you are wholly free from harm by your very nature as (i) and (ii), and wholly free from the stresses and strains of the world of things: and, by your very nature as (iii) wholly caught up in them. The difference between you as Container (i & ii) and as Contents (iii) is infinite, the separation is nil. On the one hand, each of those things counts as just itself, just one thing. You, on the other hand count as zero and an infinity of things, and each

of them in particular, as well. As 0 and ∞ you are stress-free. As what lies between them you are stress-bound.” (1)

Harding goes on to describe how “the contents that fill your ever-peaceful Container build a Universe out of their clashing”, as a horseshoe takes shape from the downward blows of the hammer and the upthrust of the anvil. But does that mean that we have to take on all the world’s stress, “all its catastrophes and pain and alienation – even finding room for its terrible weight of greed and hate and fear? ... How can you be the stress-free All without embracing every stressful part?”

Harding addresses these questions by looking at four people and their responses to personal and collective suffering.

The first is a Red Cross worker who showed an agony of stress in her voice and on her face. “She could not have cared more. Her involvement was complete, her detachment non-existent”. For Harding, it seemed that her wellbeing and effectiveness were compromised by a lack of access to that “interior Rest ... which can not only receive without harm, but also transmute, all the world’s unrest”.

The second is Douglas Harding himself, on first becoming a Seer and discovering that Emptiness which gave “peace and a quiet joy, and the sensation of having dropped an intolerable burden”. He had learned the lesson of absolute detachment, but not yet the lesson of absolute involvement. He writes that his support of famine relief efforts in Bengal, where he was serving at the time (it was 1943), were real, but “uninvolved, detached, cool”.

The third is the Bengali saint and seer Anandamayi Ra, who Harding met at her ashram twenty years later. He remembers her ability to weep alongside a bereaved mother, fully sharing her grief, without losing her own serenity. “She took on the other’s grief by being herself free of grief, just as she took on the other’s face by being herself faceless. Fully to appreciate what this means in practice you have, like Ma, to see steadily Who you are. To get the point you have only to see, right now, how your own Emptiness is empty for these comments on her”. Harding concludes “Anandamayi Ra was neither attached to nor detached from the mother and her grief. She was both. Her message for her devotee, as for me then and ever since that memorable occasion was, I AM YOU”.

The fourth is Mother Teresa who, according to Harding, had “in her own fashion ... broken through to confidence in place of fear, love in place of hate, abandon and detachment and surrender in place of craving.” She too had solved the problem of stress by immersion in it, “by being it absolutely and not being it absolutely”.

Harding concludes with three recommendations for day-to-day practice. The first is to “stop playing ostrich” about our own mortality and our collective human vulnerability to catastrophe, including catastrophes we create for ourselves. We have no reason to expect that “our troubles will somehow blow over. They won’t”. The second is to check in regularly with our place of safety – Who we really are, through Harding’s own exercises or some other means. The third, however, is not

to get stuck in the Container at the expense of its contents, the world. Harding says that this isn't a recommendation for moderation, but for extremism, and finding the unique role that best expresses "this truly amazing union of perfect freedom with total involvement ... let us remember that living thus, consciously, is the very best thing we can do for our disaster-prone world".

(1) Douglas Harding *Head Off Stress: Beyond the Bottom-Line* London: The Shollond Trust, 2009 (First published by Arkana in 1990)

Generation of Hope—Thomas J. Hancock

One of our former regulars, now living too far away to join our monthly meetings, Yvonne Treuen, sent us a copy of a book by her friend and companion Thomas Hancock. It took me a while to get around to reading 'Generation of Hope' but I found it carried an encouraging message for the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Circumstances that tend towards despair rather than hope and I have tended to classify hope as wishful thinking but the book converted me to seeing it as an active principle. I should have known better as my other Thomas, Thomas Traherne, insists that I am as prone to love as the sun to shine, that I must set about enjoying the world aright and asks me "... are you not drawn to some great thing?" To which I answer—indeed I am. And therein lies my hold on hope. I can now see it is helpful to consider how much of what I do is hope-oriented.

The author writes convincingly of the possibility of Renaissance Mark 2 and offers guidance to where it might arise—the most recent example being the world-wide climate action by young people. I include a summary of the book and an introduction to its author below. Alan

GENERATION OF HOPE

An analysis of the role of HOPE in the continuing existence of WESTERN CIVILISATION

And a Model for living with confidence in the 21st Century Postmodern World

Faith – Hope - Love

A journey through the making of our Western Civilisation, and the ways in which



HOPE has been the sustaining force and inspiration to the generations of people who have lived loved and built the world in which we now live in the countries of the West. Thomas Hancock has lived in Bathurst NSW for some years following retirement from a long life of experience of many countries we call Western, and many Asian countries where people still strive to enhance their way of life in their own manner.

These experiences have enabled him to appreciate that in every country, the people who call it home have found ways in which their past history has formed and shaped their 21st Century environment. With all the variations of culture, language, climate and natural environment, every region is unique and has developed in the certainty that they are building a future based upon their special values. We are no different in the way in which our Western ethos has developed, and we now face the challenges which the postmodern world has brought us.

Copies of this inspiring book are available from the publisher, Franklin Partners by post anywhere in Australia Contact: thomas.hancock@franklinpartners.org \$20.00 RRP Plus Postage

Exploring 'Generation Of Hope'—a summary of the book.

“Hope is the parent of all human enterprise”¹

“Much of happiness is hope, no matter how deep the underworld in which that hope was conceived.”²

“The antithesis of cynicism is hope, the oxygen of the human spirit”³

“Depending on how we use science, it can generate hope or despair. We need ethics to guide science so it generates hope.”⁴

“He[she] must be able to hope that his[her] evaluative procedures and subsequent actions will contribute to an ultimate solution, or that an anticipated goal will be reached and rewarded”⁵

“The psychosocial strength, or virtue, gained from successful resolution of the trust-versus-mistrust conflict is termed hope”^{.6}

“The hope of a great transformation is replaced by the more modest aspiration of a relentless defense of immediate, local pleasures and struggles for justice”⁷

“Faith teaches us to love and hope preserves our inspiration and reminds us that there is no end to loving. Despair on the other hand is an experience which is for ever restricting our capacity to find meaning in ourselves and others.”⁸

1 Generation of Hope

2 Peterson Jordan – 12 Rules for Life p94

3 Professor Margaret Somerville – Bathurst Talk March 2019

4 ibid

5 Gilmore, John – The Productive Personality

6 Erikson, Erik

7 Steven Seidman

8 Dominian, Jack – The Capacity to Love Dartman Long and Todd – London 1985 p 56

What exactly is “postmodernism”?

I quote from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the definition of the postmodern creed.

“That postmodern is indefinable is a truism. However, it can be described as a set of critical and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty and the univocity of meaning.” [TJH emphasis].

Professor Jordan Peterson explains the implications of this definition in the following words.

“The postmodernists built on Marxist ideology. It was no longer specifically about economics, it was about power. And everything about postmodernism is about power. And that’s why they are so dangerous, because if you’re engaged in a discussion with someone who believes in nothing but power, all they are motivated to do is to accrue all the power to them, because, what else is there? There’s no logic, there’s no investigation, there’s no negotiation, there’s no dialogue, there’s no discussion, there’s no meeting of minds and consensus. There’s power.

It is active by political correctness; class envy; victimisation; identity politics; promotion of extreme non-viable policies for destructive purposes; anti-establishment attacks; gender fluidity movements; anti-religious attacks and unworkable energy policies designed to disrupt infrastructure and industry

Hope is the parent of all human enterprise

Throughout recorded history, and no doubt before that period, there has always been one faculty and virtue of human nature which has ensured the enduring presence of humanity on our planet. That virtue is hope, a word in the English language taken from Old English ‘hopa’ when linked with the Latin “exspecto” meaning “to hope for” implies an object for our expectations. One of a person’s earliest experiences, even before being born are able to express it in words, is the expectation of the baby that it will be nourished; the child that it will be fed, and

the adult who is capable of expressing an expectation, that her goals and desires will be met. Hope, expectation and anticipation are imprinted upon the very soul of human beings.

Much of happiness is hope, no matter how deep the underworld in which that hope was conceived.

In this statement, Professor Peterson is presenting the concepts of life as a journey, and that where you begin this journey might be as important as the direction in which you are heading. He poses the idea that:

“Perhaps happiness is always to be found in the journey uphill, and not in the fleeting satisfaction awaiting at the next peak.”

In any useful journey it is important to identify a goal – a destination to which we aspire, and for which we hope to achieve. It is this HOPE of achievement which supports the journey uphill, with all its challenges and tribulations. We have this destination/goal as the force that causes us to persevere in the struggle uphill, more than the brief satisfaction so easily extinguished by the urge for the next longing.

The antithesis of cynicism is hope, the oxygen of the human spirit.

Professor Somerville is speaking about transcendence as the feeling that we belong to something larger than just ourselves, and that what we do or don't do matters more than to just our own self, but to all others, including future generations.

It is this concept of “passing on value to future generations” which flows from having already received value from past generations. When the postmodern philosophy seeks to delete from our lives, all the values and learnings of the past, we in the 21st Century are left with nothing of value to appreciate and to pass on to our children and our children's children.

Somerville poses this seeking for transcendence as the antidote to the destructive and negative aspects of cynicism, a force which denies the presence and value of the transcendent in life.

We condemn humanity to a nihilistic future if we do not have defined goals, and hope of achievement as the oxygen to support effort.

Depending on how we use science, it can generate hope or despair. We need ethics to guide science so it generates hope.

As an international ethicist, Somerville has worked for years with people such as Peter Singer, Jordan Peterson and Sir Roger Scruton, and managed the difficult act of agreeing/disagreeing with each, whilst maintaining genuine respect and friendship. For some years she shared a television presentation with Peter Singer, another leading international ethicist.

Professor Somerville addresses a popular belief that science and religion are antithetical and in conflict. Coming from a background as a Professor of Medicine and a Professor of Law, she absolutely refutes this belief, and claims the opposite,

that they are strongly linked in that they both involve, or at least should involve, experience of amazement, wonder and awe.

It is in this linking that both science and religion enable us to transcend beyond the “me” into the universal “we”, so necessary for a quality society. In classifying “religion” as that which we hold as a set of beliefs which are a central aspect of our lives, she includes both the spiritual and the secular as valid religions. The wonder of creation is expressed through practices of religion. Science complements this and is expressed:

“What 21st Century science reveals and the astonishing new powers it gives us, which no humans before us have ever had, should elicit the same response, especially because that has an important role to play in making ethical decisions about what we should and should not do with that science

He[she] must be able to hope that his[her] evaluative procedures and subsequent actions will contribute to an ultimate solution, or that an anticipated goal will be reached and rewarded.

John Gilmore is writing under the heading of “Productive Personality”, which he sees as an essential quality for all people in all societies. He links hope with faith and expectancy, qualities and attributes so strongly condemned by a postmodern ethos which denies reality and certainty. He points out that:

“The dynamics of aspiration involve hope, faith, and expectancy. In coping with daily problems, an individual must be able to act with the confidence that a solution can be found for a conflicting, ambivalent, or confronting situation.

It is these qualities which enable we humans to transcend the purely mundane aspects of living, and by replacing the “me” with the “we” create coherent societies.

The psychosocial strength, or virtue, gained from successful resolution of the trust-versus-mistrust conflict is termed hope.

In these words, the eminent 20th Century psychotherapist, Erik Eriksson provides a neat definition of HOPE. He views hope through the lens of trust and mistrust where trust must have some object in which to trust. It would be the height of stupidity to place our trust in something or someone known to us to be unworthy of that trust.

However, we do not always know beforehand who or what to trust, and therein lies the wisdom of experience. Once we have resolved this doubt, we then become free to establish goals and become confident that we can trust the means and people on whom we rely to achieve those goals.

When postmodernism denies reality and truth, there is absolutely no sense in placing trust and thus disabling hope. The net result of this postmodern philosophy is CHAOS, and that is precisely what its champions are seeking, chaos in the Western Civilization.

Jordon Peterson describes chaos in the following terms.

“Chaos is the domain of ignorance itself. It’s unexplored territory. Chaos is what extends, externally and without limit, beyond the boundaries of all states, all ideas, and all disciplines. It’s the foreigner, the stranger, the member of another gang. Chaos is the despair and horror you feel when you have been profoundly betrayed.”

The hope of a great transformation is replaced by the more modest aspiration of a relentless defense of immediate, local pleasures and struggles for justice.

One of the most forceful exponents of postmodernism is Steven Seidman, a North American academic whose views greatly influence the young of that region, and many internationally.

This subject raises some highly controversial issues. On the one hand there is the positive value to individuals and society of helping to raise individuals who, through self-expression are able to create or stimulate products which are useful to society, and worthy of preservation for future generations. On the other hand, a concentration on self by “victimhood”, ego-centric obsessions and hedonistic pursuits fails to create value, contrary to that which postmodernist Seidman states.

A clue to the underlying message and goal of postmodernism is the use of the word justice. The entire goal of the movement is to destroy our Western Society and replace it with those who see themselves as victims lacking power and influence. “Victimhood” defence by “virtue signalling” becomes a powerful and influential social destructive force.

Faith teaches us to love and hope preserves our inspiration and reminds us that there is no end to loving. Despair on the other hand is an experience which is for ever restricting our capacity to find meaning in ourselves and others.

Jack Dominian was a leading psychologist and psychotherapist in 20th Century England, dealing with mentally and socially disturbed people unable to take full control of their lives. He spoke and worked from a life guided by a full set of personal spiritual transcendental values.

This statement provides a complete counter to all that postmodernism preaches. It is a guide to a fruitful and meaningful life, in which we do have control of our future because we have confidence in the realities in which we live.

It is also an antidote to the chaos and despair of a postmodern ethos which denies truth and reality, and leaves the world devoid of meaning. No society can lay claim to a future unless that future is founded upon a known and valued past, with defined and certain goals for the future

Thomas Hancock

Letter to the Guardian 29 August 2019

I thought this a most appropriate comment on the recent Brexit developments:

It is timely to remind our MPs of Cromwell's speech to parliament, 19 April 1653:

“Ye sordid prostitutes, have you not defil'd this sacred place and turned the Lord's temple into a den of thieves, by your immoral purposes and wicked practices? Ye are grown intolerably odious to the whole nation; you were deputed here by the people to get grievances redress'd, are yourselves become the greatest grievance.”

Graeme Innes-Johnstone, Elland, West Yorkshire

Cheer up! — From *The Compleat Angler*

Well, Scholar, having now taught you to paint your rod, and we having still a mile to Tottenham High-Cross, I will, as we walk towards it in the cool shade of this sweet honeysuckle hedge, mention to you some of the thoughts and joys that have possessed my soul since we two met together. And these thoughts shall be told you, that you also may join with me in thankfulness to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, for our happiness. And that our present happiness may appear to be the greater, and we the more thankful for it, I will beg you to consider with me how many do, even at this very time, lie under the torment of the stone, the gout, and tooth-ache; and this we are free from. And every misery that I miss is a new mercy; and therefore let us be thankful. There have been, since we met, others that have met disasters or broken limbs; some have been blasted, others thunder-strucken: and we have been freed from these, and all those many other miseries that threaten human nature; let us therefore rejoice and be thankful. Nay, which is a far greater mercy, we are free from the insupportable burthen of an accusing tormenting conscience; a misery that none can bear: and therefore let us praise Him for His preventing grace, and say, Every misery that I miss is a new mercy. Nay, let me tell you, there be many that have forty times our estates, that would give the greatest part of it to be healthful and cheerful like us, who, with the expense of a little money, have eat and drunk, and laughed, and angled, and sung, and slept securely; and rose next day and cast away care, and sung, and laughed, and angled again; which are blessings rich men cannot purchase with all their money. Let me tell you, Scholar, I have a rich neighbour that is always so busy that he has no leisure to laugh; the whole business of his life is to get money, and more money, that he may still get more and more money; he is still drudging on, and says, that Solomon says "The diligent hand maketh rich"; and it is true indeed: but he considers not that it is not in the power of riches to make a man happy; for it was wisely said, by a man of great observation, "that there be as many miseries beyond riches as on this side of them ". And yet God deliver us from pinching poverty; and grant, that having a competency, we may be content and thankful. Let not us repine, or so much as think the gifts of God unequally dealt, if we see

another abound with riches; when, as God knows, the cares that are the keys that keep those riches hang often so heavily at the rich man's girdle, that they clog him with weary days and restless nights, even when others sleep quietly. We see but the outside of the rich man's happiness: few consider him to be like the silk-worm, that, when she seems to play, is, at the very same time, spinning her own bowels, and consuming herself; and this many rich men do, loading themselves with corroding cares, to keep what they have, probably, unconscionably got. Let us, therefore, be thankful for health and a competence; and above all, for a quiet conscience.

Izaak Walton

Greville Street Meeting Programme

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

Byron Sophia Philosophical Group

Marvell Hall, 37 Marvell Street, Byron Bay, Beyond Sports-Fields

Open Meetings: every Thursday from 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm

Celia – 02 6684 3623 / byronsophia@gmail.com