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Greville Street Gatherings

Our monthly meetings started in 1992 and have undergone a series of changes, from early headless sessions, following the visit of Douglas and the ideas of John Wren-Lewis, then Bohmian Dialogue. More recently we have focused on themed meetings, all usually held at Greville street until the current covid induced Zooms. From its heyday, with unmanageable attendances of over 20 participants, the meetings have settled at between 10 and 13 per gathering. I thought it time to check whether it was time to stop or maybe change the format.

I belong to a men’s group in which we take turns to host at our own homes with the host responsible for the theme of the meeting. I suggested this might be a model for the revised Grevgroup, similar to the present Zooms but less Alan-oriented.

As a result of the feedback from participants it seems that instead of the regular monthly meetings we agree that an irregular call to meet, from members when an issue arises, is the preferred alternative. We are no longer tied to a particular day of month and whoever calls the meeting can set the meeting date.

I could describe it as an interest in philosophy. But it is in a particular branch of philosophy known as the perennial philosophy. It is not quite as respectable as philosophy proper as it relies heavily on personal experience and happenings that cannot be readily duplicated or demonstrated. It relies to a large extent on the occasional ‘realisations’ which Eliot referred to in his talk, see below.

Realisations and Consequences—Alan Mann

If asked what our Greville Street meetings are about I would describe them as attempts to reveal and share our ideas about an aspect of everyday life which we almost invariably overlook. The mystical traditions are based on the possibility of realising this aspect of ourselves and a great deal is written about it. However, the writing invariably includes a warning that words will not do the trick and that it is a matter of experience and not of explanation. The poets seem best equipped to convey a sense of the transformation of perception involved and I recently compiled a collection of examples for NOWletter 231 of what I call the Wider View.

The matter of enlightenment arises in this field but is often accompanied by notions of acquisition, of becoming enlightened, wiser and so on whereas the realisation brings with it sense, not of a mightier but a lesser 'me'. All very interesting, but rather impersonal so I thought it would be helpful to say something about how it has worked out in my own life and I have pulled out a few examples which I will now describe.

By way of introduction I mention here, Eliot Redelman's introduction to our meeting on Sunday 19th December 2021. It was a Zoom meeting which we hoped might be our last online gathering but coincided with a surge of cases due to the arrival of the Omicron strain. In response to my request for an introductory paragraph Eliot wrote:

As spiritual seekers, spiritual finders, discoverers and journeyers, we often find ourselves with a realisation of some kind or another. And then a week later it seems like that understanding "didn't stick". Somehow, we need to retake the same class, learn the same lesson a few times before we get to know this one in such a way that we really feel like we got the message this time. This is my topic of discussion. I don't have the answer to the puzzle but I do like the idea of comparing notes on integration, or non-integration of experience.

For my preparation I thought it would be a good idea to summarise what I found to be most important in life apart from the obvious love for, and dependence on, family and friendships developed over the years. Much of what I write here will have been recorded in my earlier notebooks, this is a series of extracts intended as a four-page summary. If I had to choose one thing to pass on to our children and grandchildren, it would be the importance of ceasing to overlook that fundamental aspect of our being which is obscured by custom, habit and conditioning but which becomes obvious once the necessary perspective is recovered.

Transparency

At some point in my late forties (1975 -1980 I became interested in the representation of light in painting. I wondered how painters managed to capture transparency on canvas and I looked up the European masters. I even got out my old oil-paints and knocked up a picture of a wineglass on a piece of wood to see if I could work out what is involved. It has been sitting on a windowsill at Greville Street ever since.

Sometime later I was standing in front of the fire in the hut at Glen Davis looking back at the sink. There was a large beer glass standing empty on the draining board catching the light. I finally got the message: something here but empty and transparent—full of light. Gebser writes convincingly about this in his commentaries on what he calls 'diaphaneity'.

Laughter

I'm not sure exactly how it happened but my painting exercise led to an interest in perception. I sensed that my everyday perception was limited; that perhaps we live in a state of partial blindness and, if this is true, there must be a way of living free of the blinkers. Here are a few examples of these openings from the record I kept for a while.

January 1974. We camped at Merle and Joe Rankine's farm near Rosebank in Northern NSW. We were with the Leddens and had spent a happy week camping at Port Stephens. We ate Gold Top Mushrooms one night. There was no apparent effect until, on our way back to the tent the stars seemed to be unusually bright and colourful. I climbed into my sleeping bag and closed my eyes. Then I had an experience of colour and shapes of incredible beauty – all patterned and geometric. (Very close to the fractal patterns which I came upon later) There was a complete assurance that everything was alright, no sense of knowing the answers but only that all was well and, in the context of that understanding, any questions about the meaning life, death, etc., were completely irrelevant, (as if transcended). During the process I had thought 'this might be a good time to try the universe with one of my questions' (see below) and I asked 'What about death?' and it burst out laughing. Sounds ridiculous I know but that is as close as I can get to the response.

The experience was drug induced but it carried with it a sense of authenticity and truth and I determined to get back to this newly discovered aspect of my being without the use of drugs.

I checked on this possibility later and found that sitting doing nothing for a few days produced similar results.

Intensified perception

July 1976. Went to work as usual. Felt vague and unable to concentrate. Came home. At 3.30 went to bed and slept one hour. Woke up at 5pm. Talked to Margot in kitchen. Felt very concentrated in head, heightened perception. Fascinated by boiling vegetable water, flowers, pumpkin being cut up. Taste of food intensified. The above description is fairly low-key but it was the first time I'd had this particular experience. The colour of the cut pumpkin seemed to fill the room and the bubbling water was amazing.

At this time, I was recording my dreams and the handwritten journal is full of them. They are as interesting as yesterday's newspaper but there are a few worth recording.

Krishnamurti

Sometime in August 76. A dream in which I am in a room with a group of people. We are talking about meditation and trying to convince some sceptic of its value. For some reason I am required to write the name of any leading guru

which comes into my head on a piece of paper. I have some trouble remembering the name but then write on the page as follows:

I'll try to reproduce the sketch as drawn in my notebook.

Krishnamurt i

There was no room on the first line for the final letter 'i'. (The text box won't let me cut the page immediately after the 't' in the above example.) I didn't know anything about Krishnamurti at the time. I thought he was just another Advaita guru, another Indian on the circuit. Not knowing anything of his teaching the fact there is no room for the 'i' on my dream page line is an uncanny summary of his essential message. Although I was taking these dream pointers very seriously I didn't follow up on the Krishnamurti 'tip' for several months though I remained aware of the need to check him out. (My relationship with the Krishnamurti 'teachings' had mixed results. When I read his books it seemed he had a clear grip of the 'Wider View' and that it would be pointless to persist in trying to find my own way. All that was necessary was to learn from Krishnamurti. Big mistake!)

Green Vase

16 October 76. I was following a traditional meditative practice of observing an object and progressively identifying and naming its characteristics, shape, colour, size, etc., down to the smallest detail until all description is exhausted. I had started this meditation on the green vase Arnold and Wright gave to Margot when she resigned her job with them in Christchurch, when I noticed that the carpet colour seemed unusually intense. It was a gold colour, a cheap flax or jute product called Tintawn. After about ten minutes, I had a sense of depth to the pot I hadn't noticed before and a feeling of gladness. I had a feeling of affection for the vase and a sudden awareness of this being reciprocated, or rather, common to us both. I remember thinking "what sentimental rubbish" when the words "no it is not it is love" entered consciousness.

Kundalini

I'm not sure when this occurred. For some reason it isn't recorded in the notebook. I was doing some regular meditating at the time. I was sitting cross-legged in one of our old armchairs, the ones with orange covers. I suddenly felt a surge of energy at the base of the spine which immediately surged up the spine and as it reached the crown of my head, I stopped it. I felt it, in some way, was going to take me over, obliterate me and I recall thinking "this cannot happen I have responsibilities" and with that it disappeared. This is very similar to what I later read about Kundalini, albeit at a very basic level. It never recurred and I often feel I blew some sort of rare opportunity there.

Perfection of Creation

4 May 78. I was using my 100 breaths technique at this time. It involved counting one hundred breaths without losing focus on the breathing. If attention wandered, I had to start again. On reaching the target I could then ask a question and await the answer. On this occasion I asked:

In view of the assumed presence of Atman why can't Atman purify or illuminate the individual system. (The striving for perfection or illumination of Atman in the presence of same seemed odd.)

Answer:

It is in the perfection of creation that we are engaged.

I understood this to mean that we are engaged in the process of evolutionary creativity. The existence of Atman, perfection or perfectibility within the individual organism was irrelevant because the purpose was the perfection of the whole not of the parts.

I can't remember the exact way I framed the question. But I remember the reply exactly, it appeared in my head without any conscious construction. I thought, at the time the answer implied that there is a component of the individual system requiring perfection and, possibly, that this part must be perfected before extending the process.

I finally ended up with the conviction that the most credible interpretation is that the perfection of creation involves the ending of my determination to remain separate from it as a separate observer. To enlarge: Bohm "Wholeness is the absence of the 'me'". Francis Lucille, in reply to the question "Well, if as we have just discovered, there is no me – what is it that is enlightened?" Francis in reply: "This!"

Endless analysis. I spent hours looking at thought, ego and berating myself for inattention. No wonder the Harding experiments provided such relief. It is possible that work-induced stress might have set the scene for some of these revelations. I recall taking an early mark from work on one occasion about this time and, in explaining my need to be elsewhere I said to my boss, who'd just given me an outline of some new procedure he was introducing, that I'd heard every word he said but couldn't recall one of them. And then told him I thought that I might be going mad and, if that proved to be the case, he'd be the first to know. (Not a career enhancing comment!) Coincidentally, I came across this quotation in a book I'm reading which relates to the sense of going mad which sometimes accompanies a 'realisation':

William Blake, the visionary poet and engraver, was fascinated by the combination of religion and madness in his life, because he believed that as society moved towards scientific explanation for everything, religious people would increasingly appear insane.

In December 76 I came upon this quote from St. Augustine:

Go not outside, return into thyself: truth dwells in inward man.

A foretaste of the Harding story and about this time I read R. H. Blyth's Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics which introduced me to Traherne:

Till we see our nothing we cannot understand the value of our being. Select Meditations 149

*That Being Greatest which doth nothing seem ! ...A deep Abyss That sees and is
From My Spirit*

And Shen Hui

Seeing into one's self-nature is seeing into nothingness. Seeing into nothingness is true seeing and eternal seeing. [Shen-hui](#)

And on to Douglas Harding. Here is his description of what we experience when we point to where other people see our face. Putting aside what we know and relying on direct experience.

Case study #13. The first characteristic is that it has no boundaries, no fence round it, no edges; it's absolutely unlimited in all directions. The second characteristic is that it is absolutely clear, clean, empty of contamination. It is utterly simple, totally transparent, empty of everything but itself, empty even of itself, clearer than glass, cloudless, an infinite sky. The third characteristic is that it is also full of the world. Because it's empty, it's full – full of the scene, whatever the scene is, absolutely united with it. The fourth characteristic is that it is awake, it's aware, it's conscious. And the fifth characteristic is that it is right where you are. (Harding, 2000, p. 65)

Douglas Harding developed a series of experiments designed to unravel the mystery. He wrote several books and the one I'd read before I met him was entitled "On Having No Head—Zen and the rediscovery of the obvious". He came to Sydney in 1991. The Psyche online magazine article I refer to below has a very good explanation of the experiments by Brentyn Ramm.

Leaving this collection of memories and returning to Eliot's introduction, in his final paragraph he summarises:

Integration is about making the lessons stick. It's not just about "I saw it" and leaving those messages in the past, it's about, "I see it now", and making those spiritual leanings present and ongoing through life. The joy and delight of spiritual realisation but ongoing. And hopefully as we integrate our experiences of the divine with every day life, we also get to share it with our friends and loved ones.

So, my response to Eliot's question lies in the word 'realisation' he used to describe the problem. How do we make real what is seen on these occasions, to be the true situation. In my case as I set out on the journey, I had notions of enlightenment as something to be acquired and this is often how it is presented, as some sort of acquired ability or personal qualification. The universe put me straight on that with the message about the perfection being a matter of realising the wholeness of being not about the upgrading of Alan.

How does it all play out in my everyday life? Well, it doesn't replace the everyday doings of Alan who continues much as before. However, the 'wider view' is always available and that which the 'realisations' reveal, is ever the case, a sort of background music available for the looking. The looking, or more accurately apprehending, might require a bit of effort by way of meditation or, in my case, simply consciously including in the occasion, that out of which the looking is 'peering'. Putting aside believing and going with beholding. I am particularly interested at the moment in whether this wider view, which seems to manifest as a rare occurrence in the Western mind, is more readily available to Native peoples such as the original occupants of this country.

Alan Mann

P.S. If readers would like to add their realisations and consequences to the record, I'd be happy to include in future issues.

The Apprehension— Thomas Traherne

If this I did not evry moment see,
And if my Thoughts did stray
At any time, or idly play,
And fix on other Objects, yet
This Apprehension set
In me
Was all my whole felicitie.

Deconstructing Yourself—Michael Taft's podcasts

Meditation, Insight, and Predictive Processing interview with Ruben Laukkonen

Host Michael Taft talks with neuroscientist and meditator Ruben Laukkonen about the phenomenology of the insight experience, how the sequence of deepening meditative practices maps onto the model of predictive processing in the human brain, the Eureka heuristic, what neuroscience can tell us about the deconstructive model of meditation, the science of cessations, and much more.

Ruben Laukkonen is a postdoctoral fellow at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and lecturer at Amsterdam University College. Ruben seeks to uncover an empirically grounded and experientially authentic understanding of meditation, insight, and non-duality. Using a combination of neuroimaging, machine learning, and phenomenology, he is investigating some of the rarest states of consciousness available to human beings. Ruben has an eclectic contemplative background, including traditions such as Zen, Advaita, and Theravada.

See: email conference proposal <https://rubenlaukkonen.com/>

Quotes of the month

1. Robert Penny sent the following note. I found it interesting that Douglas Harding experienced what I find to be the case whenever I hunt around in my old notebooks.

Firstly, I repeat one highly significant thing that Douglas told me personally. He said “After I'd written the Hierarchy book, whenever I thought I'd made a new discovery, I later found it in the Hierarchy book.”

2. To live authentically is to live in the full awareness of the nothingness of oneself.

Can any reader enlighten me about who said that? It sounds as if it could be Kierkegaard or Heidegger?

Conclusion—by Jim Clatfelter

There's no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.
There won't be applause when the fat lady sings.
There's no kind of pie in the sky that I know of.
You get what you get without any strings.

I'll say it out loud and beg you no pardon.
In telling the truth I mean you no harm.
Nothing awaits as you cross over Jordan.
Nothing occurs when you purchase the farm.

I take it as true that my final conclusion
Needn't be mournful or sad or morose.
On this I am clear and absent confusion:
There's no coming back from the big adios.

There's no ebullition in biting the big one.
No dividend comes when you cash in your chips.
So live for the now because in the long run
Your final reward is a total eclipse.

It's here in the moment, of this I am certain,
That living is given anew and afresh.
Embrace what's presented until the last curtain.
There is no escape from the way of all flesh.

Jim Clatfelter

Remembering D. Rajagopal from Trisha English

In an age before the internet, Facebook and the mobile phone, belief systems were vastly different to those of our technological age. Until 1947 India was dominated by the culture of the British Raj and the values of the Victorian/Edwardian Empire which were superimposed upon an ancient people, many of whom were illiterate and poor but in possession of a rich spiritual heritage.

In such a society two brothers, Krishnamurti (K) and Nityananda (Nitya), were discovered and indoctrinated by Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, the luminaries of the Theosophical Society, and heirs to the Blavatsky heritage of Masters, occult science and belief in the coming of a new Messiah. The brothers were discovered in 1909 and remained under the care and instruction of the Theosophical Society until Nitya's death from tuberculosis in 1925. Krishnamurti left the Theosophical Society in 1929 having renounced its beliefs and domination over him.

In 1914 before this breakup occurred, a new person was “discovered” by Leadbeater and incorporated into the rarified atmosphere of the Theosophical headquarters in Adyar, India. His name was D. Rajagopal.

Some writers have suggested that Rajagopal was a kind of “insurance policy” in case the chosen Messiah (Krishnamurti) should prove inadequate for the task. This was a distinct possibility given that Nitya and Rajagopal were intellectually gifted whereas Krishnamurti had a “vacant

mind” and could not absorb formal learning. At least that is what we are told. From the very outset the brothers disliked Rajagopal. He was good looking, pedantic, fastidious and sometimes bossy. Nitya was devastated when he was told that he would have to share living quarters with Rajagopal at Cambridge, where they both studied successfully for a law degree.

Rajagopal was a devoted Theosophist and regarded the beliefs of the Theosophical Society to be sacrosanct. When Krishnamurti left the society, Rajagopal followed him having taken a vow, along with Rosalind Williams, to care for Krishnamurti during his lifetime. This may seem extraordinary and unnecessary, but in the climate of the time a vow was binding to believers. It was instrumental in binding them irrevocably to K’s destiny and to each other. Since we do not know the details of this vow, or the consequences of breaking it, biographers have tended to overlook this commitment or take it for granted.

Prior to Nitya’s death from tuberculosis, he was nursed by Rosalind Williams with whom he fell in love. After his death, Rosalind transferred her affections to Rajagopal. She could not after all marry Krishnamurti, the future World Teacher. Not only was he trained to love purely, but “marriage” was regarded by him and his mentors as a kind of fatal disease. There is no doubt that at this time Krishnamurti, in a human sense of course, may have envied Rajagopal because he had observed Rosalind’s affection for Nitya. It is not unreasonable to conjecture that he fell in love with her himself. This could account, in part, for his unhappiness at their engagement and subsequent marriage and explain why he did not attend their wedding.

To cut a long story short, Rajagopal, Rosalind and Krishnamurti made their home in Ojai, California. During this period Rajagopal assumed responsibility for most of the organisational tasks associated with establishing a base for K, such as handling his financial affairs, arranging his talks in various countries as well as expertly editing his books. All these tasks fell under the management of KWINC and later the Krishnamurti Foundation. It was just as well Rajagopal was a workaholic because a less dedicated person would simply not have coped. Rosalind became the mother figure and cared for her husband as well as Krishnamurti, cooking, cleaning, entertaining guests and so forth. Her daughter makes the point in her book “Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti” that Rosalind was not drawn to belief in the occult but assumed the role she was assigned. Indian culture would not have regarded these duties in any exceptional way, so gratitude was out of the question. That is why Mary Lutyens, K’s biographer, regarded these tasks as a privilege bestowed on Rajagopal and his wife. It also explains why Krishnamurti was never grateful to the people who cared for him or donated time and money to his mission. Understructuring his behaviour was no doubt the Hindu belief in reincarnation which assumes that whatever happens to you in this life is deserved and the result of karma accrued in a previous life. Rosalind would often accompany Krishnamurti on his travels, leaving Rajagopal with the burden of organisational matters. In the summer of 1930 she went to Paris to attend a fashion opening. The trip was supported by Rajagopal who encouraged his wife to pursue her own adventures. Krishnamurti was also in Paris having delivered a series of talks in Strasbourg. This was to be a fateful reunion between K and Rosalind because she discovered she was pregnant. Instead of feeling elated, Rosalind was overcome with anxiety as to how she would break the news to Krishnamurti and Rajagopal.

We are told by Radha Sloss, Rajagopal’s daughter, in her book “Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti” that Krishnamurti expected everyone to keep themselves free and pure for the “work”. Sloss adds a remarkable aside: “one might wonder why she felt she could not discuss her predicament with the person who should be most concerned: her husband” (page 109 Lives...). Readers are left to speculate if the cause of her anxiety may have been because she was sleeping with Krishnamurti at the time and not her husband. The official version is that her marriage was unsatisfactory and that after the birth of her daughter, marital relations with Rajagopal were terminated at his request, thus freeing Rosalind to conduct a secret love affair with K which lasted some 25 years.

We are further informed by various authors that K's reaction to the news was one of displeasure, as well it might have been if it posed a threat to his image as World Teacher. Throughout his entire life, and in every relationship, Krishnamurti regarded his mission as being more important than anything else, and this belief was at the heart of many relationship breakups which occurred later in his life, such as the suggestion to David Bohm that he abandon his career as an academic and tour the world with him. Bohm patiently explained that he had family responsibilities and could not possibly consider such an offer.

Rajagopal was married to his work, or more correctly to Krishnamurti's work. After the initial surprise, he accepted the birth of Radha, but it was Krishnamurti who played the role of the loving father in every sense. In fact, when he first saw Radha in Ojai, in 1931, he asked Rosalind "Do you think it is Nitya?" To fully understand the import of this remark, it is suggested that interested people might like to read "A Tale of Two Brothers" by Mahesh Kishore.

Prior to the birth of Radha, Krishnamurti and Rajagopal were in Greece, staying at the Grande Bretagne Hotel in Athens where they had their first major disagreement. It is possible that Rajagopal had reached the limits of his loyalty at this time, since he had dispatched the pregnant Rosalind to Ommen allowing the two men an opportunity to thrash out whatever was eating away at them. We are not privy to the details, but we are told that Rajagopal was so exasperated with Krishnamurti that he said "You ought to be exposed" (page 110 Lives ...) Krishnaji just laughed and said "Go ahead, try it, who would ever believe you against me". Down through the years, this was to be a most prophetic statement culminating in absolute toxicity. In the end, K was persuaded to sue Rajagopal for misappropriation of funds, property, and copyright.

The details of the court cases have been documented in various contemporary material but the fullest account is contained in Mary Lutyens booklet available on the net entitled "Krishnamurti and the Rajagopals". In retrospect, K's life seems to fall into three parts. The first concerns the conditioning of K as the coming Messiah or World Teacher by the Theosophical Society; the second was family life with the Rajagopals in Ojai; and the third was dominated during the sixties by the "new" Krishnamurti people including Mary Zimbalist, Alain Naude, the Lilliefelts and many devotees who were allocated senior positions in the Schools and Foundations. Mary Lutyens and Pupul Jayakar were the chief scribes designated by Krishnamurti as his official biographers.

The final years of Krishnamurti's life were productive and financially profitable up to a point. The people in charge of his financial affairs were all wealthy, and it was these people, especially Erna Lilliefelt his secretary in Ojai, who urged Krishnamurti to legally challenge Rajagopal for the return of his property. With the exception of Lutyens and Jayakar, most of these newcomers were unfamiliar with the first and second parts of K's life. The court cases associated with the legal proceedings dragged on for years until they were finally settled and most of K's property and archives were returned to him. The final court case, in which Rajagopal sued K and the Trustees of the Foundation for libel, was not settled until after Krishnamurti's death in 1986.

Whatever his faults, Rajagopal loved Krishnamurti. He longed for a reconciliation but not at any price. K on the other hand would not countenance a rapprochement under any circumstances and grew more hostile to Rajagopal as the years passed, frequently exploding with rage and hatred one moment, and the desire to save them from damnation on the other. These outbursts are recorded in Mary Zimbalist's unfinished book entitled "In the Presence of Krishnamurti". It was published after the Sloss book and contains valuable information about the last twenty years of Krishnamurti's life in which Mary Zimbalist was K's confidante as well as his constant companion and devotee. She claimed in her book that she was willing to give her life for K and his teachings and this is exactly what happened. Meantime, the Sloss

book continues to attract trenchant criticism, and is frequently characterised as full of lies and written with malice aforethought to deliberately discredit Krishnamurti.

It can be seen that studying the life and times of Krishnamurti, World Teacher and Philosopher, is like entering a labyrinth of mystery and challenge. Even serious scholars find it difficult to be objective about events. To most people it will be clear that Radha Sloss loved her two fathers, as she called them, and wanted her story to be regarded in a sympathetic light. In the main, critics have tended to fall into two groups, those who accept the spiritual side of Krishnamurti and thus excuse his behaviour in the name of some unknown entity that is directing humanity, and those who examine his life with a certain detachment and admiration for Rajagopal.

There are many important lessons to be learned from K's story and the part played in it by Rajagopal, but they all come with an implicit warning: - that love and devotion for a guru or authority figure can obscure reality and lead to the acceptance of illusion as fact.

My own personal gratitude to Krishnamurti is summed up by Radha Sloss in the final paragraph of her book. She writes:

“To Krinsh (Radha's name for Krishnamurti) I feel grateful for many things. From earliest childhood he taught me to be free from the desperate seeking and searching for respectability and security, for gurus and masters and ideologies. I learned from him that comparisons and labels lead to prejudice and unhappiness, that conformity leads to mediocre imitation, that there can be no freedom where there is guilt or fear. He let me be free from him and taught me not to be afraid to wander in a pathless land”.

Trisha English,

Xmas Hymn 2021 by Peter Lim

Farewell to the sad story
Of the last two years
Let joy and harmony
Dispel all our fears—

in common humanity
Let's wipe away suffering's tears
In every grace and humility
Love blesses and endears.

Peter Lim

Soul or Sole?—Alan Mann

Nick Morris introduced his theme for our monthly men's group meeting with the question “How do you care for your soul?” He added Socrates' views on the question as an aid in considering the matter.

At his trial Socrates stated that his purpose was to bring to his fellow men an understanding that their overriding duty was to care for the soul, placing that concern above any other. Without this devotion we become obsessed by that which must come to pass. This is a life full of desire and fear. It is a life in which we are for ever grasping after things and, having grasped them, fearing for their loss. It is a life in which the one thing we will assuredly lose is any knowledge of the underlying totality of love.

Nick extended this with some further questioning: Do you feel at one with others, or hold a belief in personal isolation? How does love manifest itself in your life? For example, by loving what you do whatever it may be? Why do you value love so highly? Does its power reveal reality?

Is the European materialist tradition of despiritualizing the universe similar to the mental process which goes into dehumanizing another person? How much responsibility does a man have to argue that a good male or female friend would be wise to adopt a change in perception or action ?

That's quite a lot to consider and I've been considering it on and off since our meeting and now I'm trying to summarise my response.

I think Socrates idea of care was really about discovering the right relationship with it and then as it – right apprehension. It also crossed my mind that the word soul and sole might be interchangeable and I wondered whether there is some etymological connexion. More on that later.

It occurs to me that although we all know what we mean when we use the word soul it is extremely difficult to find words to define it. It can be apprehended but not adequately described, it has to be experienced rather than explained.

I found it helpful to define the word soul as capacity, as first-person awareness. To experience soul as consciousness, as consciousness revealed when attention is reversed and I become the 'Aware Space Here'.

This has been traditionally referred to as the state of being when there is awareness that the assumed observer is identical with what is happening, the "observer is the observed" of Krishnamurti and many others.

If this identity-free consciousness is allowed to prevail then there is a shift in the direction of agency, from the customary 'here' to the 'there' and then simply a dissolution of the here and there into 'just this'. 'Soul' is then experienced as what is happening now, but the 'what is' of now rightly apprehended. It is how the undivided wholeness of being appears in consciousness.

Taking the backward step.

Removing the mask, reversing the arrow of attention—

To include both inner and outer glance.

Wait—wait on, not wait for—Allowing the occasion to unfold

Feel it first embrace, then include 'you'—as the fundamental wholeness of being is realised.

And in which, as one tradition has it, 'we live and move and have our individual being'

Hence the relevance of 'sole' as mentioned above.

If this seems absurd, as it might well do to the everyday mind, suspension of disbelief, or belief of any kind for that matter, enables the ever-present perspective in which it makes perfect sense.

Alan Mann

Psyche Magazine Article by Brentyn Ramm

<https://psyche.co/ideas/to-experience-zen-like-awakening-try-going-the-headless-way>

Brentyn's opening introduction includes the following: In Chinese Zen Buddhism (Ch'an), a significant form of awakening experience is known as 'Kensho'. This literally translates as 'seeing one's true nature'. In Zen, one's true nature is often described as 'empty' – and at the same time identical with the given world. Kensho isn't the end point of practice. It isn't some supreme final state such as 'enlightenment' or 'nirvana' (if these states are even possible). Rather, it is the beginning, for awakening is in fact a life-long practice, never truly completed. This is the type of awakening experience that I am interested in here.

After a Meeting — Peter Lim

I can't find a definition
struggle so often-
these inner stirrings
that seem to stop time-
the heart seeks
a new dimension
the entire being longs
for the unknown
that floats in some distant land
that words hold no description-
a state of semi-blissful suspension
yet that's not yet realisation
not yet---much is required
of faith, surrender
humility and patience--

through a glass
darkly I see
who but the saints
or the few blessed
will have clarity
and can enter
that unknown realm?

questions unanswered
some doubts still remain
the heart should be patient
if the eternal is to be gained

Peter Lim

You Can't be too Careful, a story by Margot Mann

Merryn checked her backpack again. It contained a bottle of water, a small fold-up umbrella, bus and train timetables, small packets of pain killers, bandaids and tissues, a tampon, her fold-up hat, a thin cardigan rolled into a ball, a small day-old muffin, a mobile phone, some lip salve, suncream, her wallet and a change purse. She felt a prickle of relief when she realised her sunglasses were on her head.

She would have to hurry if she wanted to catch the 3.50 train to the city. As she left the house, she straightened the doormat, looked in the letterbox for the third time that day, slung her backpack on her back and began to walk up the street. It was all very well for Dee to keep telling her that the postie doesn't bring much mail these days: what if something very important was delivered, like an official notice saying she was someone's sole beneficiary and it got wet in the rain? She didn't want anyone she knew to die of course, but she told herself that it was not completely impossible that someone she had never heard of could leave her all their money. She shuddered at the delicious possibilities. She hadn't said any of this to Dee because she would laugh and pooh-pooh the whole idea and tell Merryn she was a silly old thing and not to waste time dreaming.

Merryn trudged up the hill, thinking about Dee and wondering why she hadn't heard from her. She was such a good friend and Merryn trusted her judgement implicitly, although she acknowledged to herself that Dee could get cranky at times, especially if Merryn was being silly. Merryn didn't always know when she was being silly so it helped to have Dee point this out. Dee was one of those people others describe as very active and Merryn, who was not, admired this about her and always sought to fit in with Dee's busy timetable. Merryn remembered the time she had turned up at Dee's unit in mackintosh and gumboots on a day when light rain had been forecast. Dee had hooted with laughter and Merryn had smiled uncertainly, pleased that Dee seemed glad to see her.

"Come in, you silly old thing. I hope you've brought a packed lunch for us to share," Dee had said, leading the way to the small sitting room where it was hard to find a seat not covered in books or papers. In fact, Merryn always took food when she visited Dee because the latter's fridge habitually housed a few bottles of wine and not much else. "I hope you are eating proper meals," Merryn would say and Dee would shout with laughter and fall back against the cushions on the only chair not covered in papers. Then she would get up, pour two glasses of wine, and handing one to Merryn, say "Just as well you brought some food, I haven't eaten for days," and wink at Merryn, who would sip her wine slowly and worry about Dee not eating, although she always seemed healthy enough and it didn't seem to slow her down.

Merryn and Dee had met when they were next door neighbours. Dee found it very convenient to have someone water her pot plants and bring in her garbage bins (and mail) when she was away: at one stage she even had a small cat who used to follow Merryn around, possibly recognising a more regular source of food than her owner. When Dee moved to a unit in another suburb she maintained contact with Merryn. "You are so good to me," she would say, kissing Merryn warmly on the cheek, "what would I do without you? I'll only be gone for two weeks this time," and Merryn took Dee's key and murmured that she'd love to help out and to let her know if she thought of anything else.

This time Dee had rung from somewhere in America and asked Merryn if she would mind tidying the unit and putting clean sheets on the spare bed - there should be some in the linen cupboard, she said - because Dee had invited a work colleague to stay, and would Merryn be an absolute angel and just make sure the place wasn't looking too awful. She laughed lightly in Merryn's ear as she rang off. Merryn spent most of the next day cleaning Dee's bathroom and kitchen thoroughly. She put sheets on the spare bed as instructed and arranged and paid for a technician to fix the dishwasher, which she discovered was full of dirty dishes. The following day she bought some of Dee's favourite cheese and olives for the empty fridge and returned to the unit with pots of herbs for the kitchen, all the while imagining her friend's pleasure at such thoughtfulness.

Several weeks passed with no word from Dee. From time to time Merryn briefly considered phoning or texting her friend, but she remembered one or two other occasions when she had expressed concern for Dee's welfare which had not been well received, to say the least. Dee had been very cranky indeed and had only contacted Merryn some weeks later when she needed her help.

As she neared the station, Merryn imagined Dee laughing and saying "You silly old thing, you worry too much." She had decided to take the train into the city and meet Dee as she left work. She quickly revised this thought. Perhaps she wouldn't actually confront her, she would simply see if she was back at work and was O.K. She knew which doorway she would emerge from in Pitt Street, and it should be easy enough to check that her friend was back from her trip and that all was well. Merryn felt only the slightest unease when the thought occurred to her that Dee might see her and call her a silly old thing in front of her workmates. She resolved to keep out of sight as much as possible.

She found a spot behind a pillar near Dee's workplace, and armed with a take-away coffee, settled down to wait the twenty minutes or so for her friend to appear. She wasn't used to drinking coffee this late in the day but thought the occasion demanded it.

When Dee did not appear in the first surge of home-bound workers, Merryn, greatly daring, asked a young woman if she knew Dee. "Dee?" she replied, and then, "Oh, DEE," she said again, walking so fast Merryn had to run to keep up with her. "She usually leaves later than this, doesn't she work for the CEO?" Merryn, unable to speak, nodded. "She might be overseas, I haven't seen her lately. Is there a problem?" Merryn shook her head and fell behind the young woman who waved, mouthed "sorry" and continued to walk very fast towards the station. Merryn followed her, walking slowly, as she attempted to make some sense of the situation. She spent a sleepless night considering all the possibilities and finally decided that she must risk Dee's displeasure and visit her unit. She felt a frisson of anxiety at the thought of turning up uninvited, but she had already decided that a text message or phone call would not do. She was Dee's friend and she must be brave.

When she arrived at the unit in the middle of the day, she noticed hoardings surrounded by a small group of people. A young man carrying a clipboard approached her and when Merryn said "Where's Dee," in a small voice, he looked at her curiously and replied "Oh, you mean the owner – I'm afraid she's still in America, we're handling all aspects of the sale for her." At Merryn's stricken look he continued, "Didn't she tell you – she's just got married and won't be coming back for a while." He looked around at the crowd of people. "I think it will bring a good price with the market the way it is at the moment, don't you?"

Margot Mann