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Sydney Headless Way Workshop

Saturday Dec 6, 2025, 1:00pm-5:00pm

Whites Creek Cottage, 31 White Street, Lilyfield, Sydney

Cost: \$30

To reserve a spot contact: Brentyn brentynramm@gmail.com

John Wren-Lewis and Spain

Rogelio from Spain here. Maybe you remember me from our past mail exchange on John Wren Lewis.

Only a few words to thank you so much for this lovely NOWletter episode I received today, which synchronously for me deals with how to get a permanent and spontaneous integration of Unmanifest and Manifest, and avoid the dangers of getting lost in aloof transcendence.

As this is a two-way path, it's also full of beautiful ways to express that space-time events can't be enjoyed if cut from their roots in Eternity, such as Jean Gebser's "...seeing through the world to its origin". And while Traherne's "Till you are intimately acquainted with that shady nothing out of which the world was made, you never enjoy the world aright" is so true and so akin to John Wren Lewis experience, what I found marvellous was both Traherne's "...to see the world not as a collection of things, but as a SACRAMENTE OF PRESENCE", and T.S. Elliot's "To apprehend the point of intersection of the timeless with time, is an occupation for the saint". It is my experience, and I am sure it is yours, that when one stabilizes in the correct hierarchy of Reality, with the manifest not being a world "out there", but an energetic, vibratory dream made of/arising from the Dark, a poignant beauty emerges in the dream even if nothing in particular is going on in its "plot". I hope you're well. Have a nice weekend, Alan. Rogelio

Alan speaking. I replied to Rogelio thanking him for his response and asking him for permission to include our correspondence in this issue and whether he wanted to add or change anything. He replied as follows:

Angelio: I don't have anything in particular to modify or add, although I would like to leave this mail with some words I put together from a contemporary Spanish mystic, only because he creates a peculiar relationship between Manifest and Unmanifest, not negating Creation, not getting lost in It, but using It to reify our Identity as the Uncreated: "One must recede inside oneself backwards. In this way, one will see the totality of body/mind/soul/spirit/Universe, of time past and future, all the Gods and Heavens, arising and moving forward from one's sides...until one arrives to the gold of our own serene Self. As capacity, I am inexhaustible. As Abyss, I am impossible to fill.

See the light of your own feeling of being shining in your hands. Don't make the light questions on anything you saw or heard since it became present. What matters is when it was not. The Light does not see you. We are seeing it. Don't try to transcend the Light. It is always transcended. One million worlds can't fill me. Their disappearance can't empty me".

Rogelio Garcia

The Wisdom of Confucianism

(A guide for our chaotic modern age)

Confucius lived from 551 to 479 BCE. He died aged 72. He was the Socrates of the East and regarded as the First Sage of China. His most ardent exponent was Mencius (372-289 BCE) who elaborated his ideas while advancing his own. Mencius was regarded as the Second Sage. Confucius never regarded himself as an innovator, only a transmitter of ancient wisdom. He revered the ancient legendary kings Yao and Shun regarding them as the paragons of virtue and moral leadership.

Confucius practised what he taught and ceaselessly strove to become a superior person. His self-discipline, tenacity, courage, sincerity, humility and patience were truly remarkable and he never wavered over how his life should be lived:

At fifteen, I set my heart on learning.
At thirty, I had planted my feet firm upon the ground.
At forty, I no longer suffered from perplexities.
At fifty, I knew what were the biddings of Heaven.
At sixty, I heard them with docile ears.
At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart;
for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right'.

Confucius and Mencius both lived in politically troubled times marked by wars and conflicts and they took on themselves to advise rulers to adopt morality in their rule. Though they did not succeed, their influence on history had been unparalleled.

They upheld that human nature was inherently good which, if nurtured through education and self-development, would create the junzi—the ideal or superior person. Man was the measure of man. The junzi had *ren* (benevolence), *yi* (righteousness) and wisdom (*zhi*)—he practised *li* (proper

rituals), filial piety (xiao), loyalty (zhong) and sincerity (chengyi), and was the moral exemplar in life and society. He inspired people to follow the path of morality and ethics. The goal of life was to contribute to the building of an orderly and harmonious society and to serve the nation. The moral person was bestowed with noble qualities by *tien* (heaven) which was regarded as a moral cosmic force or guide rather than a deity.

Confucianism is eminently practical, pragmatic and down-to-earth. It deals with the secular but has a transcendental dimension with its reference to *tien*. It was holistic. Confucius did not dwell on the afterlife as his focus was on human living. When asked by his disciples on death, his pithy reply was:

We know so little about life, why discuss death?

Self-education, self-reflection and self-discipline formed the bedrock of morality. Education was not an end but was meant to create moral individuals to serve society and the state. A person should be willing to lay down his life for the sake of morality, wrote Confucius. Morality was never allied to self-interest.

Mencius wrote: Life is what I want; dutifulness is also what I want. If I cannot have both, I would choose dutifulness rather than life. Also: Morality began with the individual- The empire's foundation rests on the state, the state on the family, and the family's on the individual.

Both sages upheld that the ruler was granted the role to govern by the Mandate of Heaven (*tienming*). He was like a parent extending his love to his children and had to rule justly or his right to govern would be taken away from him. He should select individuals with moral character to help him administer his rule.

Mencius wrote that the people had the right to revolt against an unjust ruler. The Mandate of Heaven was not immutable, and this should serve as a reminder to rulers.

The theory of the inherent goodness of human nature featured more prominently in Mencius's thinking than in Confucius's. Mencius wrote:

No one is devoid of a heart sensitive to the suffering of others. The heart was the most important organ of the human body as it had the capacity to think morally. This distinguished the human being from animals. No one should allow his childhood to go astray and this constituted the most important part of living.

Mencius made reference to the four proclivities or sprouts of the heart:

The heart of compassion (benevolence), that of shame (his conscience would lead him to know his faults), that of courtesy and modesty (observance of the rites) and that of right and wrong (wisdom)

Both sages were pacifists and this philosophy had found so many in the same boat in the likes of Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and Henry David Thoreau. In our world of wars, conflicts, turmoils and misunderstandings, the ren of Confucianism will help to create international goodwill, cooperation and peace, thus eliminating or mitigating the sufferings of millions.

Confucianism had a profound influence on Western thinking, especially on 18th century Enlightenment. Its ideas found deep resonance in the thinking of Rousseau, Voltaire, Leibniz, Adam

Smith and Thomas Paine. Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac* (1732- 1758) contained many Confucian ideas such as virtue, hard work, self-discipline, frugality, attention to family. Even Tolstoy had felt the influence of Confucianism.

The Latin translation of Confucianism by the Jesuit missionaries in *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (Confucius, the Philosopher of China) in Paris in 1687 heralded Confucius as 'the patron saint of the 18th century Enlightenment'. It was due largely to the writings of Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit scholar who translated the Four Books of Confucius which caught the attention and imagination of the Enlightenment.

Confucian wisdom on moral governance and meritocratic bureaucracy won the hearts of The American Founding Fathers of whom Benjamin Franklin was one, the others being John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and George Washington. James Madison the 4th American President hung a portrait of Confucius in his home. Thomas Jefferson, the third American President, was the main author of The American Declaration of Independence in 1776 which contained Confucian ideals –importance of people and benevolent governance. On the US Supreme Court Building in Washington DC, the figure of Confucius appeared alongside that of Jesus and Salom.

Positive psychology came into vogue in recent times with torchbearers such as Alan Beck, Albert Ellis, Martin Seligman who were preceded by Abraham Maslow. Instead of dwelling on the dark side and pathology of human nature, (the latter largely advanced by Sigmund Freud), these psychologists focused on its positive side. This has been a movement towards optimism and human potential and prescribes what mental wellbeing and flourishing means.

Seligman and Christopher Peterson collaborated on the book 'Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification (2004)' which contains a list of attributes which define mentally healthy and productive individuals such as wisdom/knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence which are evidently Confucian in content. Seligman emphasized that wellbeing should form part of positive education while Peterson highlighted that wellbeing came from social connections and relationships, these ideas also ran parallel with Confucius's.

Confucianism has also contributed to social psychology through its ideas on altruism, tolerance, loyalty, tolerance, sincerity, sympathy and empathy, mutual support and cooperation. Modern capitalism is characterised by greed, corruption, a lack of morality and transparency, even illegality, and, as such, is an economic, social and ethical malaise. It has ignored human welfare with its sole orientation on self-interest and profit-seeking. This has to change before the rot becomes worse. In this regard, Confucian morality has a vital role to play such that a more ethical and responsible society can be brought about for the benefit of all citizens.

Happiness was found in ethical and not sensual pleasure. Love of learning, virtue and ethics, friendship, contentment, self-discipline and -self-restraint; harmony with one's fellow-beings and the universe were contributory factors. During the Han Dynasty, entry into public service necessitated that individuals should excel in the imperial examination as a sine qua non for serving the ruler. Anyone could sit for the examination as this was not confined to those from noble or educated families. This system was becoming the standard method for selecting officials and was

fully developed in the Song Dynasty. Thus, Confucianism had given birth to meritocracy which has lasted until our modern age.

These are the most quoted sayings of Confucius:

It is man that makes Truth ('the Way') great and not Truth that makes man great.

Within the four seas, all men are brothers.

Refrain from doing unto others what you would not have them do to you.

Even walking with two others, there are lessons to learn-I will imitate their good points while from their bad ones I will correct in myself.

The gentleman worries about truth, not poverty.

I am content to eat coarse rice, drink water and use my elbow as pillow—this is enough joy for me.

I treat rank and wealth attained by immoral means as passing clouds.

The elements that make for benevolence are:

respectfulness, tolerance, trustworthiness in speech, readiness and generosity.

*A gentleman never ceases to exercise benevolence,
not even as long as it takes him to eat a meal.*

If you rule over people with dignity, they will be reverent; if you treat them with kindness, they will render their best; nurture the good people and give instruction to the backward—this will be imbued with enthusiasm.

This is the hallmark of a gentleman:

he conducts himself respectfully; he serves his lord reverently; he is generous in caring for common people and is just in employing their services.

*The gentleman cultivates himself and in being so wins
reverence and thereby brings peace and security to his fellow-beings.*

If one has errors and takes no action to mend, then one is in error indeed.

The gentleman reaches out to what is up above while the small man only gets through to what is down below.

The gentleman helps others to realize their inherent good; the small man does the opposite

The gentleman understands morality while the small understands only profit.

The wise man is never of two minds: a benevolent person has no worries; the courageous person has no fears.

If you tackle a task from the wrong end, you will achieve nothing but court harm.

A craftsman is able to come to his own only by first sharpening his tools.

The person who has no regard to future difficulties will be beset by worries much closer at hand.

The following is from Mencius:

'No man is devoid of a heart sensitive to the suffering of others

A person must not lose his original heart

and the purpose of education is to ensure that this heart does not go astray.

Life is what I want; dutifulness is also what I want.

If I cannot have both, I would choose dutifulness rather than life

Sincerity is the way to heaven.

A trail through the mountains, if used, becomes a path in a short time, but, if unused, becomes blocked by grass in an equally short time.

Let not a man do what his sense of right bids him not to do, nor desire what it forbids him to desire. This is sufficient. The skilful artist will not alter his measures for the sake of a stupid workman.

Only when a man will not do some things is he capable of doing great things.

Treat others as you would be treated. Devote yourself to that, for there's no more direct approach to Humanity.

Integrity, wisdom, skill, intelligence – such things are forged in adversity.

So it is that whenever Heaven invests a person with great responsibilities, it first tries his resolve, exhausts his muscles and bones, starves his body, leaves him destitute, and confound his every endeavour. In this way his patience and endurance are developed, and his weaknesses are overcome. We change and grow only when we make mistakes. We realize what to do only when we work through worry and confusion. And we gain people's trust and understanding only when our inner thoughts are revealed clearly in our faces and words.

The feeling of right or wrong is the beginning of wisdom.

Don't do what should not be done, and don't desire what should not be desired.

Abide by this one precept, and everything else will follow.

Human-heartedness is man's mind. Righteousness is man's path. How sad that he abandons that path and does not rely on it; that he loses that mind and does not know to seek it.

The above testifies to the great wisdom of Confucius and Mencius, which if heeded, will help create a happier and better world, to the benefit of everyone in the world.

A.C. Grayling, the renowned philosopher, wrote:

'It can be said that a better acquaintance with Confucius and his values has been too lacking in the western tradition; it is both right and timely, as the globalised world becomes one village, and different traditions meet and mingle, that the insights of the Chinese great philosopher, should become more known to all.'

At a Nobel Prize writers' conference held in Paris in 1988, the following observation was made:

'If mankind is to survive, it must go back 25 centuries ago to tap the wisdom of Confucius.'

Confucius has been as influential as Aristotle and Marcus Aurelius and his ideas on compassion and humility are in the same vein as Jesus's and the Buddha's. Living a virtuous life should be the goal of everyone. Peter Singer, the renowned philosopher wrote: China has revived.

Peter Lim

Let This Darkness Be a Bell Tower

*Quiet friend who has come so far,
feel how your breathing makes more space around you.
Let this darkness be a bell tower
and you the bell. As you ring,
what batters you becomes your strength.
Move back and forth into the change.
What is it like, such intensity of pain?
If the drink is bitter, turn yourself to wine.
In this uncontainable night,
be the mystery at the crossroads of your senses,
the meaning discovered there.
And if the world has ceased to hear you,
say to the silent earth: I flow.
To the rushing water, speak: I am.*

Rainer-Maria-Rilke
Sonnets to Orpheus II, 29

The Dreaming

The following is an update of something I wrote for NOWletter 228 and a note on access to W E H Stanner's essay 'The Dreaming'.

I remember, when arriving in Sydney from the UK in 1960, a conversation with my brother-in-law to be, Ian, a man born and bred in Australia, about the 'Aboriginal' situation, sometimes referred to as the Aboriginal problem. I was convinced that the necessary action was simply to ensure that the provision of genuine equal rights in all fields was all that would be necessary to meet their just aspirations and 'make them more like us', or possibly just like us. I could tell that Ian didn't quite agree with me. And whilst I can't recall Ian's response, I now know he was right because I have spent the intervening years, on and off, trying to understand the Aborigines and trying to be 'more like them'.

Seven years before my arrival in Australia the anthropologist W E H Stanner's book 'The Dreaming and Other Matters' was published. In 1968 he gave the Boyer Lectures in which he drew attention to what he called 'the great Australian Silence' which dealt with the issue of how white Australia has evaded the consequences of the atrocities of colonisation and its ongoing impact on the first nation peoples.

In 1968, Stanner talked in his Boyer lecture *After the Dreaming* about the "cult of forgetfulness" practiced on a national scale in Australia, where Australians do not just fail to acknowledge the atrocities of the past, but choose to not think about them at all, to the point of forgetting that these events ever happened. A different history arose in the Australian memory, and it formed negative stereotypes of First Nations peoples. These stereotypes entrenched the ongoing experience of the marginalisation and systematic discrimination of First Nations peoples in Australia. Listening to and learning from First Nations peoples about their cultures and histories can allow avenues for us to start to remember differently, in ways that heal instead of harm.

Around 2010 or so I came upon Stanner's work, in NOWletter 228, April 2010 I recorded my discovery of Stanner's reference to a meeting with an Abotiginal man who, referring to our differences, said:

*White man got no dreaming,
Him go 'nother way.
White man, him go different.
Him got road belong himself.*

Stanner's essays provide both background to and explanation of what I find so powerful about the Aboriginal contribution and, to some extent the way it corresponds to Western approaches which I find relevant. In my own background it is worth exploring the similarities with, Awen, which is the nearest equivalent I am aware of.

I eventually realised that first nations people see the world somewhat differently. Whereas I, and most of the people I know, default to a third person perspective, the traditional Aborigines seem to have a more participatory, less time-dependent outlook, what we might call the first-person view. Here is the famous quote from Douglas Harding followed by an extract from Stanner's book *White Man Got No Dreaming*.

Douglas Harding:

To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for to-morrow or yesterday - must be my first concern. And my second must be to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays."

W.E.H. Stanner summarised his understanding of our differences:

*Consider a few of the contrasts (between the first Australians and the colonisers). We are deeply interested in futurity. We try to foresee, forestall and control it by every means from astrology and saving to investment and insurance: the Aborigines are scarcely concerned with it at all; it is not a problem for them. Their 'future' differentiates itself only as a kind of extended present, whose principle is to be continuously at one with the past. This is the essence of the set of doctrines I have called *The Dreaming*.*

In Brentyn Ramm's paper *The Technology of Awakening: Experiments in Zen Phenomenology* he writes: In the history of Zen, when asked 'what is the Tao?' Zen master Yichu replied by opening his arms to the scene (Daoyuan 2016, p. 183). I hadn't come across that before reading the paper but it almost exactly the same response as I was given by an Aboriginal guide when I asked if he could explain 'The Dreaming'. We were in the Northern Territory, at one of the famous gorges. Our guide smiled, looked away, raised his chin and slowly, silently turned his head, an invitation to join him in participation in the occasion rather than rely on an explanation.

I have a copy of Stanner's essay 'The Dreaming' and can email as a PDF document on request to me at felicitie@gmail.com.

Alan Mann

I have a copy of Stanner's essay 'The Dreaming' and can email as a PDF document on request to me at felicitie@gmail.com.

Starsight <https://bio.site/STARSIGHT>

The site introduction reads: Jack Davis is the founder of STARSIGHT, a platform for creativity, consciousness & transformation. He's a board member of the Australian Centre for Consciousness Studies, and works as an Akashic Records practitioner, artist, mentor & educator.

The website presents a series of video clips in which Jack Davis offers a contemporary perspective on reality and consciousness based on his own experience and that of a number of contemporary groundbreaking philosophers and scientists.

Explore his website at: <https://bio.site/STARSIGHT>

Artificial Intelligence

I have included two artificial intelligence reports which were called up during recent discussions and reading.

Alan

AI on Impersonal Consciousness

The concept of impersonal consciousness invites a radical rethinking of identity, awareness, and the nature of self. Rather than seeing consciousness as tied to a personal ego or narrative, impersonal consciousness points to a deeper, universal awareness that transcends individual identity.

 What Is Impersonal Consciousness?

- Essence Beyond Ego: Impersonal consciousness refers to a state of awareness that is not bound by personal identity, thoughts, or emotions. It is the “observer” that simply witnesses, without attachment or judgment.
- Spontaneous Functioning of Totality: As Ramesh Baleskar, a disciple of Nisargadatta Maharaj, explains, everything happens as a spontaneous expression of the Totality. There is no individual “doer”—only consciousness unfolding.
- Impersonal Thinking: According to the Institute of Metaphysical Science, impersonal thinking arises when the mind is free from the concept of “me” or “you.” It's a clear-sighted presence that allows reality to be as it is, without interference.

AI summary of Michael Levin's work

Michael Levin's work explores how intelligence and cognition emerge in biological systems, especially through bioelectric signaling and morphogenesis. He is reshaping our understanding of development, regeneration, and the nature of life itself.

Here's a deeper look at his contributions:

 Core Focus: Bioelectricity and Morphogenesis

- Bioelectric signaling: Levin studies how cells use electrical signals—not just genes—to communicate and coordinate complex behaviors like growth, repair, and regeneration. These

signals help guide cells to form organs and body structures, even when initial conditions are disrupted.

- **Morphogenesis:** His lab investigates how multicellular organisms self-organize into coherent anatomical forms. Remarkably, even when organs start in abnormal positions (e.g., “Picasso frogs”), they can still form functional, normal-looking bodies.

Cellular Intelligence and Non-Neural Cognition

- Levin proposes that cells and tissues exhibit a form of basal cognition, capable of problem-solving and goal-directed behaviour. This challenges the traditional view that intelligence is confined to brains and nervous systems.
- His work suggests that DNA is not a fixed blueprint, but more like a set of tools that cells use creatively to achieve anatomical goals. This has profound implications for biology, medicine, and AI.

Xenobots and Synthetic Life

- Levin co-developed xenobots, programmable living robots made from frog cells. These tiny organisms can move, sense their environment, and even self-replicate. They represent a new class of synthetic life and open doors to regenerative medicine and bioengineering.

Interdisciplinary Approach

- His lab integrates developmental biology, computer science, cognitive science, and synthetic morphology. They use both natural models and engineered organisms to uncover universal principles of intelligence and organization.
- Levin collaborates with institutions like the Wyss Institute at Harvard, the Santa Fe Institute, and the Allen Discovery Centre, and co-directs the Institute for Computationally Designed Organisms.

Philosophical and Practical Impact

- Levin’s research is transforming how we think about life, consciousness, and evolution. By showing that intelligence can emerge in non-neural systems, he’s influencing fields from regenerative medicine to artificial intelligence.
- His work also has practical applications in cancer suppression, tissue engineering, and drug discovery, using bioelectric and computational models to guide cellular behaviour.

X