



Relationships

Pervixi® – Guides to Living Thoroughly

Philip Johnson



Pervixi

I think I'll just say that the ghost hovering over for me is a letter Oscar Wilde wrote, and he said to Bosie, his lover, *The fact that you didn't get a degree is nothing, but you never acquired what is sometimes called the Oxford manner.* And I'll say to that, the university manner. Oscar said, *Take that to mean the ability to play gracefully with ideas.* I think that's disappearing from our culture, and I think that's a terrible thing.⁰⁰¹

Stephen Fry

How can you keep on asking is Lord Alfred Douglas in Naples? You know quite well he is – we are together. He understands me and my art, and loves both. I hope never to be separated from him. He is a most delicate and exquisite poet, besides – far the finest of all the young poets in England. You have got to publish his next volume; it is full of lovely lyrics, flute-music and moon-music, and sonnets in ivory and gold. He is witty, graceful, lovely to look at, lovable to be with. He has also ruined my life, so I can't help loving him – it is the only thing to do. ⁰⁰²

From a letter Wilde wrote to Leonard Smithers – a Sheffield solicitor with a side business of printing erotica, who became the only publisher interested in Wilde's books in his post-prison years – on October 1, 1897'. (Image opposite ⁰⁰³)



Relationships

Philip Johnson is a counsellor and psychotherapist working from his practice, the *choosingchange*® clinic, in Sydney CBD. He sees individuals and couples to help with assertiveness, relationships, depression, anxiety and drug and alcohol dependencies. His approach to therapy and his passions are outlined throughout this book, including – family-of-origin, attachment theory, science, philosophy, common sense, reading and practice.

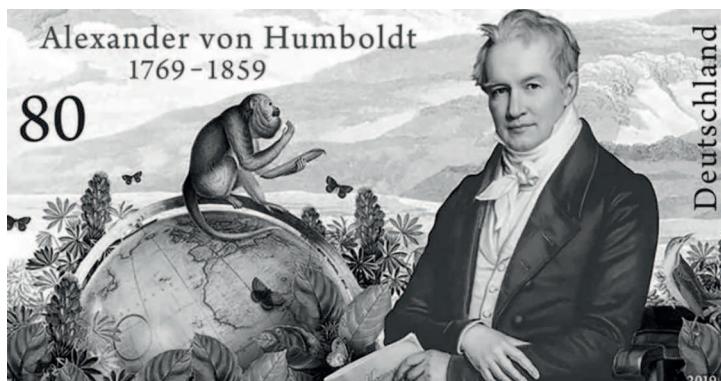
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Dedications

Carol

I have felt her hand in mine all my life.

Alexander von Humboldt

the *Lost Hero of Science*,^a for his exciting adventure story, his many scientific observations, his influence on the study of meteorology, magnetism, ocean currents, and much more, and what's more, for being the first person to observe and report to world leaders the effect deforestation has on the wilderness, (the extinction of species and climate change) and for his passion that is so evident in his life's work.
(Commemorative stamp opposite. ⁰⁰⁴)

Greta Thurnberg

for showing us how fire and passion and hope work.

*When will they ever learn?
When will they ever learn?*^b

a. from Andrea Wulf's book *The Invention of Nature, The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, The Lost Hero of Science*.

b. . *Where have all the flowers gone?* by Pete Seeger and Joe Hickson.

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Pervixi® Guides to Living Thoroughly

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Special thank you to Mitch who tells me to stop talking.

And thank you to Till – whose imminence creates just the right amount of anticipation – anticipation being perhaps the greatest virtue, given that temperance, prudence, courage, justice and patience are all but done in this world.

*Förväntan är utan tvekan som
obesvarad kärlek en underbar idé.*

Hopp, å andra sidan, är en absolut katastrof. ⁰⁰⁵

Onel Nötea (1947-)

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Disclaimer: This book contains many opinions and ideas intentionally set out to inform individuals and couples of some ideas to help them live well – in harmony with self and others. Any changes you intend to make may encounter resistance amongst your friends and family. Likewise, if you feel you are unsure about your next steps you are advised to consult your doctor or a therapist to help you with some of the concepts outlined here.

For diagnosis or treatment of any medical problems, consult your own physician. The publisher and author are not responsible for any specific health, psychological or psychiatric needs that may require medical supervision; and the publisher and author are not liable for any damages or negative consequences from any treatment or action, to any person reading or following the information in this book. References are provided for informational purposes only and do not constitute endorsement of any websites or other sources. Readers should be aware that the websites listed in this book may change.

Page 219 has emergency contact numbers.

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The Death of Socrates (1787), Jacques-Louis David. The Athenian court



Preface

Relationships and loving rule the world and are among the greatest things you will experience. Learning to have a good relationship and understanding loving are the subjects of a long traditions of ‘how to’ books. For a relationship to prosper the



condemned Socrates (469–399 BC) to death for the crime of impiety.⁰¹⁷

individuals involved must themselves be prospering for loving to be effective; it must include being able to look inside and outside of ourselves. Helen Waddell (opposite), translated ‘pervixi’ from the Latin to I have lived thoroughly⁰⁰⁶ which resonates chapter-to-chapter. Learning to live thoroughly is the intention of this book, using common sense, science and philosophy as the basis for this exploration.

Aristotle referred to the use of *common sense* – having the ability to

perceive, understand and judge (ideas); *science* has long been the standard by which knowledge is organised and measured; while *philosophy* stems from the history of human thought. You will see that above all sits philosophy. From this practice human understanding thrives. And, what's more, as Immanuel Kant states –

Among all rational sciences (a priori), therefore, only mathematics can be learned, never philosophy (except historically); rather, as far as reason is concerned, we can at best only learn to philosophise.⁰⁰⁷

It is by participating in philosophy we come to know ourselves; where we discover empathy, reason and compassion for ourself and others.

The ancient philosophers lived when information was drawn from a small library of works written by the few for the few. Politically, intellectually and socially that world was small but ethically strong. In contrast, ours is as wide as can be imagined bringing with it the question of trust – the exabytes (one quintillion bytes and increasing by the day) of data now generally and always available are dogged by issues of legitimacy – what we often hear is loud spruiking ‘with authority’ – often without much substance. We might be tempted to think, *Je lauter desto weniger?*^a

An example is the personal pronoun debate, critical for many that they can be seen and known for who they really are. Hundreds of years ago the idea of asking to be respected could have you ostracised, flogged, raped, castrated, lynched or all five, as testified by the thousands of stories told in the history of the United States of America up until 1981. Not that the USA was the sole perpetrator of unjust human rights – that title jointly belongs to many societies past and present. Asking to be addressed as one would want has long been in debate and this will likely continue for some time. The opposing side is a bit too loud, too much, too abusive and too little use of some eminent people’s positions for peace and goodness. Why so indignant, so insistent that they will not use a particular pronoun when so requested by an individual? In some regions it is now legislated that those who refuse to go along with updated societal norms must to do so. Is it right that social change be directed by law to establish equality, civility, peace, goodness and respect? Is this *Political correctness gone mad* as many cry out from their cold, hard, dead hearts?

To some this book may seem biased, and you would be right, it is the premise upon which it is written – an unbiased word is hardly ever spoken. The understanding of heuristics (our ability to learn and use our

a. *The louder the lesser?*

mind for accessing short-cuts for our actions) teaches us we may jump to conclusions, sometimes encouragingly so, sometimes dangerously. Our learnings and leanings, ideas and arguments toward or against certain ideals drive us – this is our substance empowering us. Humans flounder in uncertainty, sometimes making mistakes when we feel cajoled or obliged. Socrates said it was ‘not knowing’ which gave him freedom to be himself. It’s a wonder he didn’t go stark raving mad for it. His heady ‘out’ was –

I am wiser than this man, for neither of us appears to know anything great and good; but he fancies he knows something, although he knows nothing; whereas I, as I do not know anything, so I do not fancy I do. In this trifling particular, then, I appear to be wiser than he, because I do not fancy I know what I do not know.⁰⁰⁸

Socrates was condemned for his lack of reverence to the gods – ironically his ‘knowing’ perhaps deemed arrogant. The sentence was death by hemlock. He carried out his own execution which could be construed as madness or enlightenment – one man’s poison, another’s salvation. Ages later, Rainer Maria Rilke in *Letters to a Young Poet* said *Your doubt can become a good quality if you train it. It must become knowing, it must become criticism.*

Hold strongly to your beliefs – unless they are ‘mistaken beliefs’, a theory developed by Alfred Adler: the erroneous belief often learned as children from – parents, teachers, priests, peers or other authority figures. Other terms for this theory are ‘basic mistakes’, ‘fundamental errors’, ‘misconstrued ideas’. These ‘faulty beliefs’ will probably run you amuck. Beliefs, legitimate or faulty, if imposed unilaterally (e.g. by church or state), will over time become societal norms and when these are held universally they dictate all our business. These dictated or legislated norms may be incongruent with the public’s beliefs and when disregarded they can cause chaos – at the breakfast table, on roadways, in banks, churches, parliaments, or in the highest offices of the land. Likewise when an individual’s internal beliefs



Rainer Maria Rilke (1928)
by L. Pasternak

are incongruent with societal or family norms, discomfort resonates, sometimes wildly. The concern here is not to define right or wrong, good or bad, but rather how we can relate and regulate with critical, fair judgement; not to look good but to be good. Karl Popper, (*see – 29*) like Rilke (*previous page*) used to say, ‘...*For if we are uncritical we shall always find what we want...*’

When we are involved in making decisions, immersed in activities of the group, we are more likely to feel we belong; a mutual respect emerges. This applies to children as they grow from babies – they take responsibility, adopting family customs early. For example, *The Continuum Concept* principles, sourced from research of tribal customs of the *Yequana* tribe of Amazonian Indians by Jean Liedloff,^b developing trust and confidence-building strategies for the good of the child, family, tribe and species –

The continuum of an individual is whole, yet forms part of the continuum of his family, which in turn is part of his clan’s, community’s and species’ continua, just as continuum of the human species forms part of that of all life.⁰⁰⁹

Following the maxim ‘*Do unto others as you would have them do to you*’,^c may be all you need to know. It is this ethic of reciprocity that this book advocates as a precedent to connection and effective communication. Running alongside this is the idea that it is critically important that an individual holds their personal place sacrosanct – each of us are the most important person in the room. When we are individually well set-up we are in a good place to give and receive care and love. The individual must learn to love themselves before they can love another; this regularly occurs within relationships, not as a separate process. We learn as we experience.

The past brings us to our knees or raises us up

Building on what went before, parents, educators etc., we construct something that seems to make sense even if our walls fall in around us. We rebuild using the same principles (biases) only to find these new walls falling in the same manner. Someone once said – ‘*If we keep doing*

b. There are some criticisms of Jean Leidloff and the concepts she presented, as there are of many ideas about raising children. Boundaries can make or break early upbringing.

c. *The Golden Rule*, seen in many religious and philosophical texts in one form or another.

the same thing expecting a different result, we are probably mad.^d Sooner-or-later, sadly, we tire and settle – acceptance littered with resentment and fear. Avoid despair, have another drink or purchase a bigger car or TV. These norms are established in childhood and play on throughout our lives – the young father will say on his way out for a drink with the boys that often lasts until 5am – ‘*But this is what I want*–’ as the mother pleads *Please stay home and help me with the baby.*

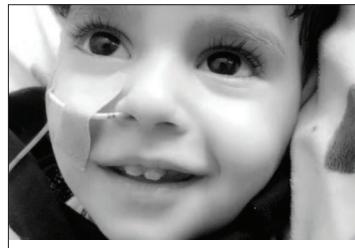
These days of increasingly divisive political climate make life seem very uncertain. The fate of our world lies in the hands of questionable yes-men obeying politically conservative men – with political influence that, for example, sees the USA government in December 2018 stopping a mother (... *help me with the baby...*) visiting her two-year-old son, Abdulla Hassan, so he might be comforted by the touch of his mother as he dies of a brain disease in the USA. This idea that Abdulla’s mother, Shaima Swileh, be denied a visa.^{o10} *Der Fisch verrottet vom Kopf.*^e (Bias?)

On the 30th of August 2019, the Australian government was thwarted mid-air as the plane carrying a Sri Lankan family (*below*) who had settled in the welcoming town of Bioela, Queensland for the past two years were being forcibly removed. Their application for asylum was last rejected in May. Nades and Priya arrived in Australia separately, married and had their two daughters (four-year-old Kopika and two-year-old Tharunicaa) in Australia. The residents of the town where they settled, Bioela, and thousands throughout Australia united in imploring the government to allow them to settle legally in Australia. Despite all the cries and help Australians have offered, Peter Dutton, Minister for Home Affairs, insists they must be deported.

Is this an example of migrant/

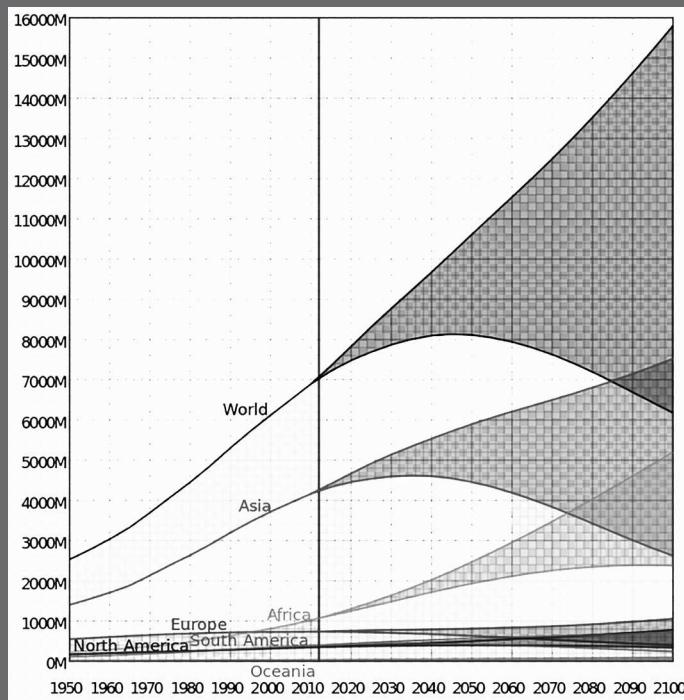
d. It was Jane Fulton in the novel *Sudden Death* by Rita Mae Brown, not Albert Einstein as many of us believe.

e. *The fish rots from the head.*



Abdulla Hassan (2016-2018)





Projected populations of the world from 1950. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; estimate: world population will reach 8 billion between 2022- 2035.

refugee panic, probably rooted in xenophobia? Perhaps this is prompted by the undeniably rapid increase in the world's population, (*above*)⁰¹¹ with the seemingly unstoppable economic growth driven by marketing and unregulated social media, triggering anxiety in the East and the West equally. It is reported by the UN that worldwide there are over 70 million forcibly displaced people and nearly 26 million refugees.⁰¹² Fear of loss of economic autonomy frightens most people, creating the position where nothing stands still – we live on the edge of our nerves.

Democracy works well when compromise and compassion *work* hand-in-hand: employed liberally; allowing dissent, argument and difference. Democracy not working is where those in power/control regularly employ terms and conceit/s that strip reasonable debate from the agenda, making it extremely difficult for anyone to mount an argument without it being labelled 'fake news', or being personally decried for not wanting to *Make America Great Again/Still*. Or where children are criticised for thinking, as in the recent children's climate-change protests.

These polarising debates are dominating news broadcasts and especially social media; more and more being seen worldwide, including democratic nations. The cheap media barons thrive on dissent and publicity. *Divide and conquer.* Famous footballers, actors, influencers and ‘vested interest-ed parties’ including politicians with their incensed proselytising debates (furiously fanned by Sydney shock-jocks Alan Jones and Andrew Bolt and others) are based on their claims are right. Their consequent statements are often demeaning to individuals, one or many groups within our society and when one person is demeaned we are all demeaned. Compromise and the combining of our forces will enable us to overcome the many difficulties we face with climate, trade, oligarchies, despots and presidents. Demanding any of those individuals or millions, who do not agree with you around strongly held beliefs, to change is not the solution. Believing in ‘god/s’ is/are a belief/s, grounded in *faith*; not in fact; not science based.

A residual difficulty with the biases/hypotheses aired in this book is that it assumes these are problems to be solved; furthermore, establishing this presupposes that there are solutions. It is a big ask when one considers the readily available information online and in print – for the search term ‘relationships’ alone, the web yields 1,810,000,000 results (yes, that’s billion); the local bookshop yields 20,094 entries.

Three points –

1. The conversations we have beginning with *how to baste vegetarian lasagne so it's crisp on top and moist and luscious inside when it's taken out of the oven* transitioning into discussing *the pros and cons of Marxist economic principles or conditions of autonomy within information duties in private law* are a thing of great beauty to behold. That may happen in the following pages. Dipping in and out of ideas is fun. No apology, simply pointing it out. Look out for the odd excursus – perhaps therein lie the ‘interesting truths’... *Oh – You never said that was a claim you’ll be making – Sapere aude.*^f What others say is repeated... Goethe: *I can promise to be candid, not, however, to be impartial.*’

2. Emotional health therapy is a tricky subject to explore that some people ignore, some avoid, others embrace. As well those on the periphery of society are likely to suffer more than those in the warm embrace of family and friends; although that embrace is no guarantee of safety and fulfilment. And many who come from extremely trying situations thrive very well.

f. Kant again: *Dare to know* or *Dare to think alone.* Be yourself.

And 3. A more modest approach to the issues presented might have been a better model. Less emotion as Teddy says in *Teddy* by J.D. Salinger (a delightful study of family dysfunction) – ‘*Poets are always taking the weather so personally. They’re always sticking their emotions in things that have no emotions.*’⁰¹³ g

4. Attempt to maintain an air of objectivity especially when under the influence of – ‘...this is the best thing ever that’s happened to me... I’ve never met anyone like you...’^h

5. Don’t take everything personally. Some people talk rubbish.

6. Read novels; stories are about you and your love/r.

7. If God is important to you it’s reasonable to ask *What does that mean?* *God* may mean we organise ourselves humanely – to establish equality, civility, peace, goodness and respect. Given we live in a universe that hosts over 100 billion known galaxies, with a possible 200 billion becoming visible as technology improves, we might ask what is the meaning of life? God’s existence has significance without any other reasonable answer – even as the given possible 200 billion galaxies is a difficult concept to hold onto in these dark times. For some, *God* is hope and possibility. However, on a human level, as James Baldwin famously said in *My Dungeon Shook: A Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation* –

If the concept of God has any validity or any use, it can only be to make us larger, freer, and more loving. If God cannot do this, then it is time we got rid of him.⁰¹⁴

8. As much as this book leans toward the revolution and the toppling of kings, political despots, and the supposedly unquestionably unchallengeable media/entertainment ugly grandiosities, this ‘plan’ is probably not the answer. This was well known in Ancient Greek times: Hydra grew two heads for every one cut off, as attested to by *Hesiod*, the Greek poet active around 650 BC. The rapid increase in far-right political white nationalist movements mirrors extremist jihadists movements. Worrying.

g. Theodore (Teddy) McArdle is a ten year old mystic-savant on a cruise where the events occur roughly between 10am and 10.30am on October 28, 1952.

h. “But this thing that almost never was still beckons, I wanted to tell him. They can never undo it, never rewrite it, never unlive it, or relive it—it’s just stuck there like a vision of fireflies on a summer field toward evening that keeps saying, You could have had this instead. But going back is false. Moving ahead is false. Looking the other way is false. Trying to redress all that is false turns out to be just as false.” *Call Me By Your Name* André Aciman.

Unsettling. Cutting off heads is absolutely self evidently fractious and ineffective. Banning them increases their public presence as well, frighteningly, publicises their ideology. The screaming protesters of ‘what about free speech’ forget that doing harm to others precludes speaking rude and offensive and hurtful words, as well, suggesting harmful gestures and actions and inciting any of the former.

Pervixi holds to the idea that we hardly know our arse from our elbow so let’s solve that conundrum first; which springs to mind Albert Camus and *The Myth of Sisyphus* –

One does not discover the absurd without being tempted to write a manual of happiness. ‘What---by such narrow ways--?’ There is but one world, however. Happiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth. They are inseparable. It would be a mistake to say that happiness necessarily springs from the absurd discovery. It happens as well that the feeling of the absurd springs from happiness. ‘I conclude that all is well,’ says Oedipus, and that remark is sacred. It echoes in the wild and limited universe of man. It teaches that all is not, has not been, exhausted. It drives out of this world a god who had come into it with dissatisfaction and a preference for futile suffering. It makes of fate a human matter, which must be settled among men. ⁰¹⁵

Hope against hope, that we can think a bit like Oedipus. ⁰¹⁶ i
Don’t listen to me; remembering what Goethe said about disregarding the last three thousand years; quite like Greta Thunberg, who passionately says – ‘*Don’t listen to me. Listen to the scientists*’.

Philip Johnson
November 2019

i. The Oedipus myths: mistaken identity, bastard son, killer of father, marriage to mother, blindness, feuding and general mayhem. Life is messy. *Oedipus represents two enduring themes of Greek myth and drama: the flawed nature of humanity and an individual’s role in the course of destiny in a harsh universe.* ¹³



Signs of intelligence in the animal kingdom is thought to be the use of tools. Oldowan choppers dating to 1.7 million years BP, from Melka Kunture, Ethiopia. ⁰¹⁸



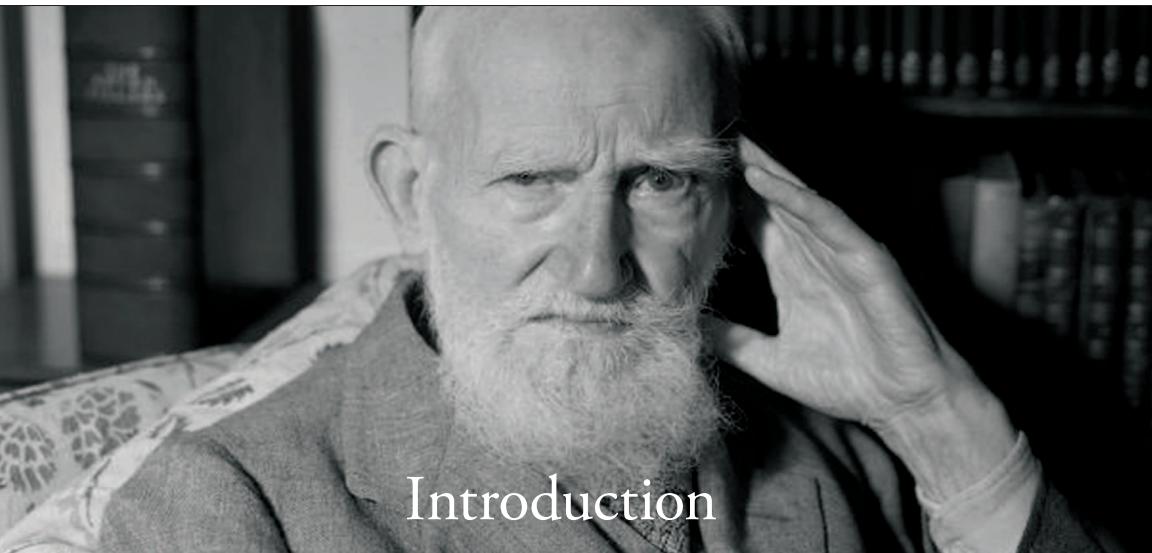
‘Whatever white people do not know about Negroes [anybody different] reveals, precisely and inexorably,

Not one of us...

Not one of us – black or white – knows how to walk when we get here. Not one of us knows how to open a window, unlock a door. Not one of us can master a staircase. We are absolutely ignorant of the most certain results of falling out of a five-story window. None of us comes here knowing enough to play with fire. Nor can one of us drive a tank, fly a jet, hurl a bomb, or plant a tree... We must be taught all that. We have to learn all that. The irreducible price of learning is realising that you do not know. One may go further and point out – as any scientist, or artist, will tell you – that the more you learn, the less you know; but that means you have begun to accept, and are even able to rejoice in, the relentless conundrum of your life...

Every human being born begins to be civilised the moment he or she is born. Since we arrive here absolutely helpless, with no way of getting a decent meal or of moving from one place to another without human help (and human help exacts a price), there is no way around that. But this is civilisation with a small c. Civilisation with a big C is something else again. So is education with a small e different to Education with a large E.⁰¹⁹

Dark Days, James Baldwin,
Esquire, October 1980.



Introduction

Life is not meant to be easy my child;
but take courage – it can be delightful.

— George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

The usual story: we are thrown to the mercy of the world around the age of 18 from a loving family upbringing and a comprehensive education. We may have a gap year and on to university; then we begin our career. It is exciting and rewarding, setting us up for life. Or it can be frightening; it can even be terrifyingly different to that described. Some lives experience the broken family dynamic – living is messy business. The latter experiences (and many others) seen in the psychotherapy room are the seedbed for this book.

Whichever way you come to read this, ‘it is good’, to misquote a well-known source. It may be – entirely by chance, to improve your relationship, out of despair for never having a relationship, or in fear of ever having a relationship again; or simply to get closer to yourself.

Philosophy is referenced many times – philosophy explores how to live well. Needless to say, almost everything here has been said a million times and may even appear more than once in this book. Most of the references cited in this book are currently available. Read them. Read other books too, then read more books. Read novels. Read the classics. You

will discover more in that library than anything in these Pervixi books. Having said that, you can treat this as a broad inquiry into your relationships. You might discover that slowing down, not expecting miracles, loving yourself, even getting over yourself will enhance your understanding of your world and make life more fulfilling. *Read books.*

The topics covered in this book do not encompass everything one couple, marriage or individual counsellor/psychotherapist can offer you. Each couple/individual brings different things to the table. The issues covered here are common to some people.



We must not cease from exploration
and the end of all our exploring will be
to arrive where we began and to know
the place for the first time.

— T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

In *Four Quartets* (1941) T. S. Eliot writes on man's relationship with time, the universe and the divine. A common theme throughout the four sections is the end becoming the beginning – ‘*What we call the beginning is often the end, And to make an end is to make a beginning.*’⁰²⁰ If only we had noticed. Hindsight’s *Bugger Me*.^a It’s only an experience? More likely it’s an experience to relish. How to do that well? Poets, writers, philosophers and thinkers worry these themes to death, when ironically the one thing to be concentrating on *is* death which is entirely a metaphorical discussion because not one of us can speak of it in the first person. ‘I can not ever know what death is. Which is why discovering the meaning of life inhabits us. Makes us, us. Dogs, unlike humans, think a bit – their attention can be held momentarily by a ball or food. Their maximum emotional response is that of a two-and-a-half-year-old – none of the empathy, shame, pride or guilt that hits humans at that time.

How do we find out who we are and what makes us tick? Families are the source of much of this information. We are carefully/carelessly cajoled into forming our relationship styles based on ‘what’s good for

a. — Russell ‘Bugger Me’ Hindsight: It was 1876. Hindsight famously left out a plethora of punctuation and left in a plethora of spelling mistakes in his hastily published tome *The Beginnings of Sensibility in the English Aristocracy*. His errors were ridiculed mirthlessly amongst the publishers and printers of his time – hence ‘Hindsight’s Buggers’ which has come to mean ‘anything we should have corrected and didn’t.’

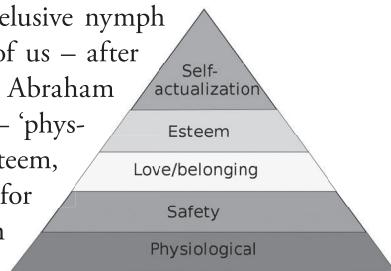
you.' The way we experience, celebrate or endure begins with the very first connections we make at birth... 'Born to be attached,' is the mantra of attachment theorists. It makes sense - it is a requirement that babies are greatly cared for, nurtured by their mothers/fathers. The quality of that connection is a precursor for the baby's early development into adulthood. Suckling, for instance, has been described by Timothy Morton in *Humankind: Solidarity with Non-human People* –

The loose connectivity of the symbiotic realm effects other orders of being, such as language. The opening and closing of suckling mammalian lips makes an /m/ sound that is surely the basis of words such as 'mamma'. Such words are shared by non-human mammals, such as cats, whose meows also evoke this action, a sign they learn to use more frequently as adults when they live with humans.⁰²¹

It makes sense to strive to be the very best at being attached – that is the parents' main job. Having this kind of ethos as the foundation for your relationships almost, but not entirely, guarantees you a happy life.

Happiness

Happiness, whatever/wherever that elusive nymph hides,^b is an expectation for most of us – after food and shelter; as suggested by Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* (1943) – 'physiological, safety, love, belonging, esteem, self-actualisation.'⁰²² Searching for meaning has been part of the human experience from the beginning of thought. Who we are and why we are are contemplated endlessly by scholars, philosophers, religionists, theists, atheists, politicians, the wise and the foolish. In the Western tradition Thales (624 BC) (Thay-less) is considered the first philosopher to have asked these questions, followed by Socrates c. 470 BC and Plato c. 427 BC; with Confucius around 500 BC thought to be the first known Eastern philosopher. Aristotle rates doing the good thing for others, the altruistic action, as loving, a cornerstone for living well. However, altruism can sometimes turn dangerous,

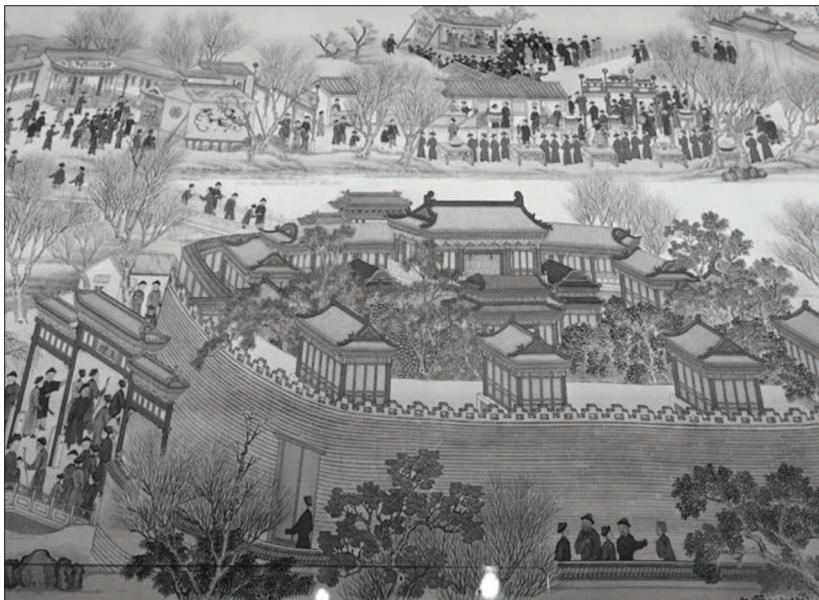


b. Where does that 'nymphed' hide? Or is that a satyr we seek?

as John Armstrong describes in *Conditions of Love* –

To seek the good of the other is, in the end, to seek their happiness. This is what altruism, and love, come to. In modern discussions of love, altruism sometimes gets a bad name, and not surprisingly. We have become highly sensitive to the ways in which people, especially women, can ‘love too much’. This happiness when one partner takes the subordinate role in a relationship – endlessly sacrificing their own concerns and interests to what suits the other. Ultimately this leads to the destruction of the sacrificed personality, so the subordinate lover has no authentic concerns and is simply a support mechanism for the other party.⁰²³

Balance and the ethos of equality imbued in a relationship brings connection with stability. It takes resilience, humour and great communication skills to live well – overcoming the obstacles we encounter on our way to success, great, moderate or small, or sometimes not at all. Happiness can only exist if equanimity, equality and fairness are implicit

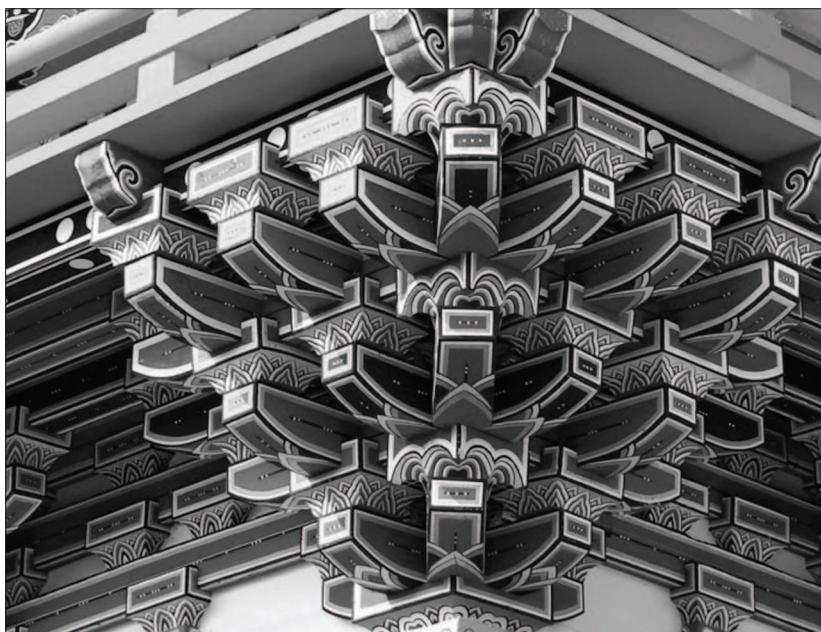


Section of a 39 meter scroll painting depicting the 60th birthday procession of the Kangxi Emperor. The scroll features over 18,000 figures (mostly officials and invited guests) lining the streets and *hutongs* of Beijing between the Xizhimen Gate and the Forbidden City to watch the processions.⁰²³

in the structure of our lives. How do we manage this kind of presence in our relationships? As with almost everything we must begin with ourselves, ‘... and to make an end is to make a beginning,’ (See T. S. Eliot – 2.)

Structure, structure, structure

The Forbidden City,⁰²⁴ (*opposite*) located near Beijing, was built on a fault line 650 years ago. It was designed according to Confucian principles, those outlined in *The Book of Changes (I Ching)* – ‘*the union of nature and human beings*’.⁰²⁵ Construction began in 1406 and lasted 14 years. The wood used throughout the original structures is sourced from *Phoebe zhennan forest*, trees endemic to China.⁰²⁶ These trees, growing to 30 meters in the forest jungles of the south-western areas of China (*see – 6*), were so valuable only royalty could afford them. They are now a threatened species; semi-fossilised they are called ‘Black Wood’, which is today worth up to \$14,000 per cubic meter. Whole logs of *Phoebe zhennan forest* wood (from Guizhou, Hubei, and Sichuan provinces) were used to construct the pylons of the Forbidden City which, despite being built



Dougong, literally: ‘cap and block’, unique structural element of interlocking wooden brackets, an important element in traditional Chinese architecture.⁰²⁶



Phoebe zhennan forests where the Forbidden City timber pylons were sourced⁰²⁶ in Guizhou, Hubei, and Sichuan provinces.



on a fault line, remains the largest longest standing wooden structure in the world.

We can be clever – this unique structure symbolises living well. The pylons are not embedded in the foundation but ‘float’ on the base. Mounting the pylon is the *dougong* (image – 5), a centuries old cleat system requiring no nails or glue –

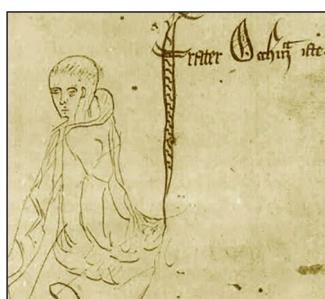
The presence of earthquakes in China has resulted in timber-framing practices that put European design to shame. As early as 500 BC, builders in China developed disaster-resistant structures with interlocking flower-shaped brackets called dougong that reduce the impact of earthquakes on buildings. These joints are so effective, they have helped the Forbidden City in Beijing withstand 200 earthquakes in 600 years. ⁰²⁷

The wooden pylons with the dougong brackets bear the roof structure’s huge weight and pressure in implausible and complex ways, withstanding the many earthquakes the area experiences (over 200 earthquakes in the past 600 years); tested to 10.1 magnitude. The pylons and cleats simply shake without breaking. The clever design of the *dougong* ⁰²⁸ dating back some 1200 years, is based on ‘ratios and proportions,’ incredibly resilient and strong; it is again being implemented in modern-day architecture in China. ⁰²⁹

As we are inevitably shaken by many *emotional earthquakes* during our time on earth, we can guard ourselves against these shocks with a similarly strong, flexible and resilient ‘structure.’ In simple terms, this is *the way*; or more humbly, this is *a way*. Don’t look for complicated psychological understandings within yourself to live well. Look around you. Ockham’s Razor. ⁰³⁰ c People have been inventing ways to do things well for thousands of years. Use your experience, experimentation, resilience and determination.

The Pervixi series presents concepts to help reveal possible quirks of your structure – your personality – so you can recognise the dangers of falling afoul of your weaknesses while learning to strengthen and utilise a loving, confident, caring and

c. William of Ockham (1287–1347) (*Sketch labelled ‘frater Occham iste’*, 1341, above). Ockham’s Razor: ‘Choose the answer with the smallest number of “assumptions” which might prove to be the truest solution.’



William of Ockham: from a manuscript of Ockham’s *Summa Logicae*, MS Gonville / Caius College, Cambridge, 464/571

fulfilling nature. Compassion, love, respect, assertiveness and authenticity – these are the bywords for this delightful journey:

1. **choosingchange®** – inviting the challenges to make changes.
2. Anxiety – Is there a positive aspect to anxiety?
3. Therapy – Unearthing resources for the process of choosingchange®.
4. Family – We come into the world with a genetic profile; the environment and family exert great influence.
5. Love – Where our instincts are designed for attachment – erroneously, dangerously, beautifully – sometimes all three together.
6. Partners – The joy/frustrations in partnerships. Embracing both strengthens connection, resulting in a delightful relationship.
7. Authenticity – Trust and risk. Stepping into uncomfortable places for greater knowledge is ‘the way’.
8. Undefended Love – Taking responsibility for our feelings and understanding those of our partner results in a balanced connection.
9. Attachment – Our intimate and daily connections to one another.
10. Assertiveness – Uniting all the aspects: our character, upbringing, family dynamics, emotional and psychosocial attributes producing a quality that helps the completed person to know themselves and speak for themselves authentically.

The Appendix for last thoughts and then an incomplete list of books because reading facilitates greater awareness.

Love – a necessity, an achievement, will change...

This book has four strands. 1. Love is necessary, it is an inevitability, we are born to attach and the intimacy of partnerships is both rewarding and difficult – for most of us humans it is somewhere in between; 2. Love is an achievement requiring intelligence, application and determination; you need to know what to do and how to do it. 3. Love changes over time; and 4. Be wary...

4 – Pessimism

Pessimism is the fourth strand. Be wary. The negative runs right through this book, runs through us. We are a sad careful lot – out of necessity we are prone to think the worst – it is thought this prepares us for the

disasters we inevitably face. We're anxious when our expectations are not met and tend to lash out. Stoics will have us accepting what we have and getting on with it, *get over yourself* as our best friends are likely to say. Being an inventive organism we will probably find a way out or through the disasters without losing too much of our humanity.

Realising we will be upset several times in our lifetime it is worth learning how to manage these times. When things go wrong on the train, around strangers for example, we usually do quite well – the occasional eye-rolling to the fellow passenger or *There you go – You'd think they could organise things in a once-in-a-decade-storm a bit better*, as you settle down with your book. However, if this happens over breakfast, with the family, it's a different story – *I want my paper, you know I like to read it over breakfast...* – all hell can break loose; the special china thrown up against the wall; there may be some shouting and blaming; not to mention some bad words the kids should not be hearing at their tender age. Now (when) you know your traits, how you act in the office or on the train – these are again exemplars of how you could (or, yes, should) act with the loves of your life when things go wrong at home among friends and family.

Overlapping

The chapters that follow will reflect the many back-and-forth influences on our upbringing: we are genetically imprinted, we absorb our parents attachment style by osmosis, we learn to understand and interpret as we are educated, our *education* is the consequence of where our parents sent us to school and the particular education system we entered and the individual teachers we were *landed with*, our physical capabilities, inherent interests, musical ability, artistic capabilities, resources, the encouragement we received and so on... all playing a part in who we are and how we see the world. The list of influences on each seven-and-a-half-billion of us is almost as diverse as the seven-and-a-half-billion of us – showing us the diversity of the way we have turned out to be.

We also rely on each other in many ways. Without the spirit (ethic) of reciprocity we will be fighting and arguing left-and-right until the cows come home. The advantage of these disparate ideas might be that we will have much to discuss, much to learn from listening to our friends and partners. It is often our differences that bring us to greater understandings. Curb stubbornness, welcome challenges, do not mourn too much what is lost, slow down, listen to others, celebrate what you gain.



The friendships, lovers, important jobs, great pieces of art (music, paintings, songs), marriages, affairs, ideas, all come to an end; a great ending that we all face eventually, as Yalom says in *Staring at the Sun* –

Each of us has a taste of death when slipping into sleep every night or when losing consciousness under anaesthesia. Death and sleep. Thantos and Hypnos in the Greek vocabulary were twins. The Czech existential novelist Milan

Kundera suggests that we also have a foretaste of death through the act of forgetting – ‘What terrifies most about death is not the loss of the future but the loss of the past. In fact, the act of forgetting is a form of death always present within life.’ In many people death anxiety is overtly recognisable, however distressing.



In others, it is subtle, covert, and hidden behind symptoms, and it is identified only by exploration, even excavation.⁰³¹

— Irvin D. Yalom (1931–)

Anticipation is such a lovely aspect of our future experiences^d just as *memory* lasts long after the event – none such as the friendships we encounter; these tender attachments are the most valuable. We live our own story and when memories are lost or forgotten we are demeaned.

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved, it tolls; it tolls for thee.

— John Donne, *Meditation XVII Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*⁰³²

d. Søren Kierkegaard says anticipation is often more pleasurable than the event itself.

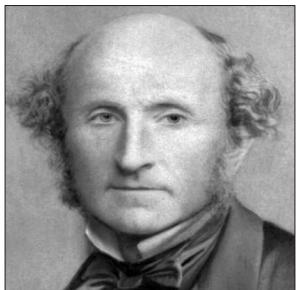
What I do affects everyone

No man is an island means that what *you* do ripples to *others*. When we do well by opening a door for someone – who may just sail through without any acknowledgement, may take over holding the door or may thank you – it's always what you do that counts. There are many other acts that will spill directly to others. John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty*^e said –

No person is an entirely isolated being; it is impossible for a person to do anything seriously or permanently hurtful to himself, without mischief reaching at least to his near connections, and often far beyond them. If he injures his property, he does harm to those who directly or indirectly derived support from it, and usually diminishes, by a greater or less amount, the general resources of the community.

If he deteriorates his bodily or mental faculties, he not only brings evil upon all who depended on him for any portion of their happiness, but disqualifies himself for rendering the services which he owes to

his fellow-creatures generally; perhaps becomes a burthen (burden) on their affection or benevolence; and if such conduct were very frequent, hardly any offence that is committed would detract more from the general sum of good.



— John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)⁰³³

Quotes – the best of all in this book

How often it is said, *If only I could have said it like that...?* A good quote is like a blanket in winter pulled up as you settle on the couch by the window looking out into the cold with a book snuggled into your chin. Or a good game of cricket. We stand on the shoulders of giants (*see Blind Orion next page*). ... 14

e. ‘Finally, if by his vices or follies a person does no direct harm to others, he is nevertheless (it may be said) injurious by his example; and ought to be compelled to control himself, for the sake of those whom the sight or knowledge of his conduct might corrupt or mislead.’³⁶



Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun (1658) by Nicolas Poussin.⁰⁴²



And the giant Orion carried his servant Cedalion on his shoulders to act as the giant's eyes.

Empathy is Respect

Empathy – a collaborative space between people with a sense of boldness, humility, dignity and respect. Carl Rogers' 'positive regard' does not only apply in the therapy room; respect is a universal minimum to hold for all your relationships, for all living things. We know this without being told. Carl Rogers, in *Client-centred Approach to Therapy* says –

The central hypothesis of this approach can be briefly stated. It is that the individual has within him or her self vast resources for

self-understanding, for altering her or his self-concept, attitudes, and self-directed behaviour – and that these resources can be tapped if only a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided.⁰³⁴

— Carl Rogers (1902-1987)



That we already own these tools/capabilities allows for a certain degree of relaxation when we are considering tapping into our 'vast resources' (Rogers). Realising you are loveable, deserving and much like most other people will help you to welcome love and affection when it is shown to you. On meeting new people you are able to relax and concentrate on the characteristics of the person speaking with you rather than worrying whether or not they may like you as you list the many deficiencies you know you (and they) have. When these self-love attributes are recognised and embraced you are at liberty to be yourself.

Taking those parameters above as true, even so there still persists the ever-present questions: *What is this all for? Why am I here? Am I the only one here? If that latter is the case, why aren't I more in control of what happens to me?*

The answers depend on many factors and each of us somehow finds a way to make some meaning from our connections and the events that occur to us. Yes – there is no one answer. Philosophers will have a different attitude and draw conclusions depending on their way of thinking, their way of life, just as a bricklayer will according to his or her way of seeing things.

There does seem to be a commonality though. Our answers draw

from our own experiences. The bricklayer, for example, may see life through the application of his/her trade to the correct alignment of bricks, the consistency of the mortar, the following of the architect's drawings and eventuality of the fore-person's decisions. The philosopher, on the other hand, may research meaning through the many texts that have been written over the past three thousand years, comparing and contrasting ideas, usually in a forum of peers and articles published in their trade journals. Socrates said it is best to just ask questions.

So, what is it that gives us meaning? 42? It was Douglas Adams and/or Mark Carwardine in their '*arresting odyssey through the Earth's magnificent wildlife galaxy*' searching out endangered species, who said – *Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so.*⁰³⁵ Our meanings derive from the way we see things, think about them and then act out in our life from those observations, ideas and beliefs. As is mentioned throughout this book, the individual is entirely responsible for this process. Well, not entirely.

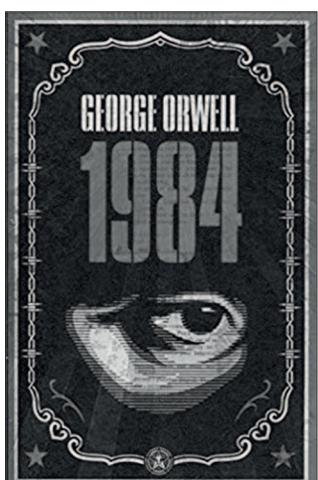
Many clients traversing through therapy rooms are of the opinion that their ideas are mistaken, bad or abnormal, and that there is something wrong with them. Sometimes a diagnosis helps but often stigmatises. Robert Plomin in his book *Blueprint: How DNA Makes Us Who We Are* strives to bring the erroneous of this to our attention –

Fifty per cent of us will have a diagnosable psychological problem in our lifetime and 20 per cent will have had one within the last year. The cost of suffering to patients and their friends and relatives, as well as the economic costs, make psychopathology one of the most pressing problems of today. Although the problems are real, the issue that this chapter [Chapter 5, *Abnormal is normal*] is that psychological problems are diagnosed as if they are diseases that you either have or don't have. This either/or mindset means that scientists have tried to look for the cause of the disorder, something that makes 'us' different from 'them'. This view is deeply ingrained in psychiatry, which follows the medical model of illness, treating mental disorder as if it were a physical disease like infection that has a simple, single cause... Genetic research shows that the medical model is all wrong when it comes to psychological problems... there are no genes 'for' any psychological disorder... we have DNA differences that are related to disorders.⁰³⁶

We can only make up our own mind (Kant's *Sapere aude, dare to know*) when we traverse the thorny concept of 'truth.' By this, it is meant, 'as accurate a representation of the facts as we can decipher from the information provided'. Is the earth flat? Does God exist? The facts will substantiate the 'truth' as far as we can decipher. Is Donald Trump, President of the United States of America, a liar? He certainly manages to avoid answering questions directly, utilising the politician's favourite ploy, obfuscation. From his repeated behaviour we draw conclusions that Trump is lying. The reason he gets away with it is precisely because he is President of the United States of America; his title lends weight to his speeches. Just as the titles belonging to Vladimir Putin, Boris Johnson, Scott Morrison, lend weight to their speeches. However, if a speech is made without regard to honesty and genuine interest in the people they govern, these speeches are meaningless; dangerous, demeaning to the people. Political debate must be firmly based on science rather than faith. (*Again, Je lauter desto weniger?*)

The art of public figures and the use of obfuscation to gain popularity goes back a long way. Probably from the beginning of time. In more recent times, in *The Culture of Narcissism*, Christopher Lasch notes: *He (Nixon) comments on his own performance... but with the complete indifference to the irony of the situation—that he spoke “the exact opposite of the truth” so effectively that several liberal papers strongly commended him and even forced (President) Kennedy to modify his own position.*⁰³⁷

The character Balstrode, in Benjamin Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*,^f describes a tragedy occurring in his community where Grimes is encouraged to commit suicide: *When horror breaks one heart, All hearts are broken:*⁰³⁸ when one person is demeaned we are all demeaned, bringing to mind the themes in George Orwell's novel, *1984*, first published in 1949 –



The ideal set up by the Party was something huge, terrible, and glittering—a world of steel and concrete, of monstrous machines and terrifying weapons – a nation

f. Inspired by a series of poems (letters) by George Crabbe, *The Borough*. The Letter XXII is the story of Peter Grimes who killed his father and murdered three boys he had hired to work for him. Disgraced, he sails into a storm at the encouragement from his friends.

of warriors and fanatics, marching forward in perfect unity, all thinking the same thoughts and shouting the same slogans, perpetually working, fighting, triumphing, persecuting – three hundred million people all with the same face.⁰³⁹

Do we need to be worried about the similarities of today's events to that of decades ago or those *predicted* decades ago for today? It might be that all societies have insidious and unavoidable aspects that sometimes appear and thrive, other times rise but fall silently away. There is some thought that because many people alive today did not experience first hand the horrors of the World Wars I and II are less likely to realise the horror of a world war. Yes, Vietnam and the many small wars occurring are publicised and 'known' yet they do not offend as much as the dislocation that occurred between and after 1919 to 1944. Although, today, refugees are filling the oceans in numbers we are not able to count. These dislocations infiltrate the consciousness of us all and promote fear and uncertainty. This is possibly a reason for the wide reporting of mental health deterioration in the community. A free press permits the public examination of government actions, allowing dissent and relieving the pressure while bringing to account the leaders who left unchecked might lead the people to war. We must be thinkers and reasonists.

Michel Foucault (*below*) on the subject of the uses of philosophy –

What is philosophy today... if it does not consist in, instead of legitimizing what we already know, undertaking to know how and how far it might be possible to think differently.⁰⁴⁰



— Michel Foucault (1926-1984)



'Good night and good luck.' — Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965) ⁰⁴³

William M. Murrow, remains one of the best and original fearless reporters of all time (so far). His sign-off *Good night and good luck*, each night was the epitome of how this man stood with his ideals and expectations of himself and from others around him. The ‘sign-off’ originated in London during the war where people would leave each other not knowing if they would see each other the next day. A short extract from a biography of Mr Murrow –



Born April 25, 1908, in a log cabin with no electricity or running water, Murrow didn't set out to make his name in journalism.

After graduating from Washington State University in 1930 – he spent a year working in logging camps to earn enough money for college – he went to work for non-profit organizations in New York. In 1935 he was hired by CBS, where he would spend the next 25 years. His first job entailed giving speeches about how to use radio in education. In 1937, CBS asked him to move to Europe to build a network of reporters to cover the looming war. They were called 'Murrow's Boys' – although there was one woman in their ranks.⁰⁴¹



Delphic sibyl, Michelangelo at the Sistine Chapel.
FrescoPhoto – JörgBittner Unna life. 045

1 — choosingchange®

I complete me. I just got lucky that, after I completed myself,
I met someone who could tolerate me.

— Sandra Bullock (1964-)

Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety.

— James Baldwin (1924-1987)

Choosing to explore how you operate, how you react or respond can help you identify areas which thrive or falter, allowing you to reconfigure your approaches to be more effective. This kind of awareness also engenders better relationships with the rest of your family, work colleagues and friends. With practise and application things can be completely different. Thousands of ideas about living life well have been written – in the Western tradition three thousand years have gone before us (*see Goethe – 155*). Aboriginal Australians have inhabited the Australian continent over 65,000 years; so it is thought that we do know there is much we do not know, and we frequently ignore long known helpful experiences.

In China, the earliest history was recorded in oracle bone script which was deciphered and may date back to around late 2nd millennium BC ⁰⁴⁴ (right).

Be curious. Life is automatically interesting. Talking, listening and observing arouses curiosity – discovering the way you see things and the way you think, the way you react to incidents in your life and how others work, all information that is critical to helping you apply changes in your



BabelStone. Ox scapula with divination inscription. Oracle bone from the reign of King Wu Ding (late Shang dynasty).

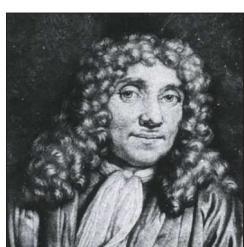
life. Guidelines and common sense can assist in relieving symptoms, sometimes even ‘curing’ psychological distress for individuals and couples. Life does not come easily for many, but it can be wondrous (loosely quoting G.B. Shaw). With care and respect there is a greater chance that your experiences will help you learn about yourself.

**When you know how you react or respond to things, what
your schemas are, how you see things, what you believe
and why you believe it – then chances are you will find
ways to make a difference. You must be the one to do the
work because you are the expert in your world.**

The single cell

Your life began as a sperm merging with an ovum. It is believed all life on earth began as a single cell 3.5 billion years ago.⁰⁴⁶ Over the millennia, this single cell evolved into the complicated multi-cellular structure we call the ‘human animal’. The human brain is a remarkably complex structure, with its trillions of synapses stemming from the billions (about 200) of neurons communicating with each other at lightning speed via chemical neurotransmitters. The brain of a five-year old has over 1 quadrillion synapses. The enteric nervous system beginning in the oesophagus and extending down to the anus has an autonomous control of the gastrointestinal tract. This ‘stomach brain’ not only organises the digestion of food, it also communicates with the brain to affect mood to some extent (reported by Elizabeth Pennisi in *Science Mag* 2019), via bacteria in the gut through the neurotransmitter serotonin.⁰⁴⁷ You what you eat; your mood is what you eat.

The operation of a single cell organism is complex enough. For instance, the paramecium, a member of the species ciliate (protists), act in similar fashion to multi-cellular organisms. Paramecia, (*illustration opposite*) thought to have been first discovered in the 17th century by **Antonie van Leeuwenhoek** (1632-1723),^a (*left*)⁰⁴⁸ who was known

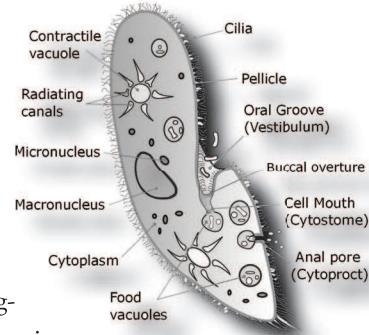


as *The Father of Microbiology*, are characterised as follows –

An examination of the many different species that make up this large, diverse division, the protozoa shows a wide range of well-defined differences

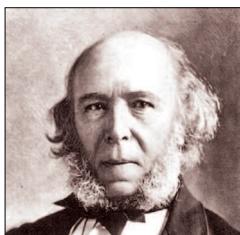
^a. The first to discover sperm cells; slightly creepily, his own.

among them. Some groups, like flagellates and especially amebas, are far less structurally complex than ciliates as exemplified by Paramecium. In addition, some, have extremely complex sexual stages (autogamy, cytogamy, conjugation) that are lacking in the former groups. There is evidence that certain flagellates and amebas do indeed have the capacity to multiply indefinitely provided they have a sufficient food supply and their physiological needs are met. ^{049 050}



This describes the way individual cells function within multi-cellular life forms, such as humans; recent experiments have even shown that these single cell organisms can *learn* through the application of electricity, much the same way human cells learn. So much so that...

If a single cell, under appropriate conditions, becomes a man in the

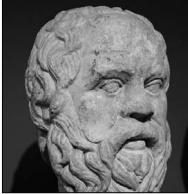


space of a few years, there can surely be no difficulty in understanding how, under appropriate conditions, a cell may, in the course of untold millions of years, give origin to the human race.

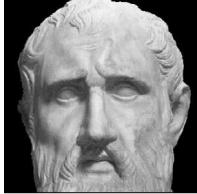
— Herbert Spence (1820-1903)

Experiences, good and bad, mark a person for ever. '*Can I love and hate a person at the same time?*', (perhaps first experienced as a baby when mother leaves you alone and then returns) or will the individuals, not managing these complex conflicting emotions, drink themselves to oblivion over their grief and sadness? Will they ever find out what it is really like to feel OK with their own and their family's difficulties?

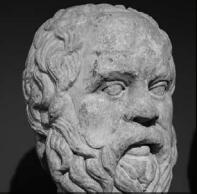
Although reading will provide many helpful references and consulting a therapist will bring insight into your psychology and behaviour, it is your own research and decision-making that will help to release you from dependency.



Epicurus 341-270 BC



Zeno 490-430 BC



Socrates 470-399 BC

If we read the ancient Greek philosophers – such as Epicurus, Zeno, Socrates, we discover that the principle object of their science has been the destination of man, and the means to achieve it.⁰⁶²

The Delphic Temple (*ruined remains below*⁰⁵¹) architrave inscription *'Know thyself'* has been attributed to Bias of Priene, 6th century BC, and was a foundation of Greek philosophy – philosophy intended as a guide to be better at being in the world – to be great friends, great lovers, helpful teachers and, most importantly, expert students. *'Know thyself'* has been corrupted many times – *Create thyself, Live thyself, Be thyself, Do anything, Just do it, Take thyself*. These interpretations are self-centred. The original *'Know thyself'* could be better interpreted as *Love thyself* – learn to love yourself by gaining knowledge of yourself.

Delphic Temple, Mount Parnassus, 10 km from the Gulf of Corinth⁰⁵⁰



Psychotherapy and counselling help facilitate the client to help themselves by changing ways of thinking and reinterpreting meanings toward changing or managing dysfunctional behaviours. If we do take the Socratic maxim *'I know nothing—'* to heart, there is hope that this can encourage and enhance thinking to establish extraordinary relationships and fulfilling lives. Living less '*hand-to-mouth*' is the desired option. This does not mean avoiding living in the moment – it refers to living in the moment precisely because you are more assured, confident, assertive and relaxed in your own skin. The 'change' in *choosingchange* is easily understood – the 'choosing' is a little different. Although you may say you want change, is it your choice or is it a demand from someone else, your partner or the Zeitgeist (the Kardashians for example)? If it is not your choice then you are probably in trouble.

Nothing happens, nothing changes unless you want it to happen and only after you study the need for change is it possible to implement new strategies.

If you picked up this book hoping to get tips on how to make your partner change into the person you want, then you are in for a shock. They won't change unless they want to change.



Happiness does not depend on outward things, but on the way we see them.
Everyone thinks of changing the world,
but no one thinks of changing himself.

— Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy (1828-1910)

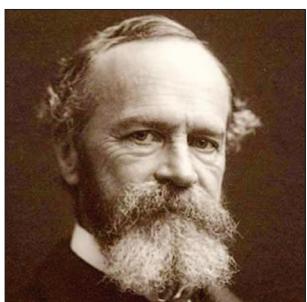
Maya Angelou said – *'Life loves to be taken by the lapel and told – "I'm with you kid. Let's go."*" This is where change might begin, by moving into the uncomfortable place. That place will be uncomfortable for you and possibly uncomfortable for all those around you because they are used to you as you are, how you 'normally' behave.

Change is more about you than anything else

Other people can't be changed easily unless you forcefully inflict your will over them. You can find out how to change yourself through discov-

ery, application and determination. If you choose to apply the tips and theories you discover there is a good chance you will effect some positive changes on your life and, indirectly, on the lives of people around you; as you change, the ripples will vibrate the '*slender threads of gold*' (*of John Donne – 156*) linking you to others. This applies to all our friendships, especially our intimate connections. Every time you interact with others the 'threads' grow stronger or weaker, tear or shred, depending on how we act – the threads are always slender.

Change occurs slowly at first, building to noticeable improvements the more you practise. In order to choose you need the freedom to make choice – choice demands information, knowledge and the learning of skills – therefore we can conclude: choice informs change.



A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices. Common sense and a sense of humour are the same thing, moving at different speeds. A sense of humour is just common sense, dancing.

— William James (1842-1910)

Being your own psychologist

To help make effective choices, look around to see how the world works. Find out what other people do, what works best, who has great relationships, who works best in your workplace, or which couples look like they are really enjoying themselves. What are they doing?

Most people get along with each other in most circumstances, even if just to get by in the moment. Nevertheless, each of the seven-plus billion of the population have different ways of seeing and interpreting things. The United Nations exists because nations have disagreements and need to continually negotiate these differences of opinion. If you controlled the world or everybody believed what you believed... it's a fantasy, forget about it. It is this very realisation that allows you to have an empathic understanding of other people's views. We have to work together. Harking back to the paramecium, (*see – 23*) a tiny organism, William James notes in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* –

A social organism of any sort whatever, large or small, is what it is because each member proceeds to his own duty with a trust that the other members will simultaneously do theirs. Wherever a desired result is achieved by the cooperation of many independent persons, its existence as a fact is a pure consequence of precursive faith of one of those immediately concerned. A government, an army, a commercial system, a ship, a college, an athletic team, all exist on this condition, without which not only is nothing achieved, but nothing is even attempted.⁰⁵²

Negotiations at United Nations sometimes do not work. Even with all the complexity, sophistication, influence and funding, with thousands of people attending meetings and the complex translations occurring, still there are disagreements. Nations walk out or are expelled. Shoes are banged on the desk.

The *Green Zone* (2010) directed by Paul Greengrass, based on the book *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* by Rajiv Chandrasekaran, takes a critical view of the civilian leadership of the American reconstruction project in Iraq. Both film and book posit that '*...the responsibility of the Fourth Estate taking for granted the messages given by governments [is] not at the forefront of our awareness.*'⁰⁵³ In that context, the consequences were thousands of people killed, a nation embroiled in civil and international conflict, and pain and suffering globally

Being the United Nations

The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945 and committed to maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among nations; promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights... Due to its unique international character, and the powers vested in its founding Charter, the Organization takes action on a wide range of issues, and provides a forum for its 193 Member States to express their views, through the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and other bodies and committees...

The work of the United Nations touches every corner of the globe and focuses on a broad range of fundamental issues, like sustainable development, protection of the environment and refugees,

disaster relief and mitigation, counter terrorism, as well as disarmament and non-proliferation.⁰⁵⁴

Even so, with all those resources available, there are starving millions, wars, death, destruction '*touch[ing] every corner of the globe*', leaving us with the thought that all those resources cannot stop dysfunction among the nations. Instilling methods and processes that will enable great relationships between two people is not that different to those employed between nations –

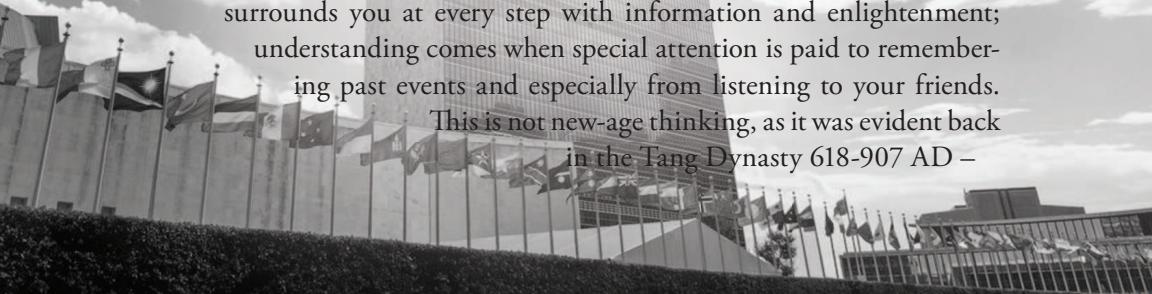
- Ask questions, don't demand answers.
- Let the speaker elaborate on their point of view.
- Put your ideas and feelings aside for the moment.
- Answer any of their questions as fairly as you can.
- Breathe and calmly consider their ideas.
- Acknowledge their feelings – *most important*.
- Put your case in the *Short and Sweet* mode – 52.
- Look at the person you are speaking with.
- Be direct, fair, calm, kind and loving.

Being your own mini United Nations at the kitchen table allows for the forgiving nature we are born with to play a major part in the relationship dynamic. Nobody you know is a bastard at heart – at least not many. When someone treats you badly they may be in trouble themselves – and/or it might be a sign to employ empathy; if the bad treatment persists, make sure your perception is not mistaken (mistaken beliefs we hold from childhood may cause us to be very sensitive, reactive or triggered); if that is not the case, then maybe it is time to move on.

Following your gut is a maxim held by many a benevolent friend or advisor. It is paradoxical to consider that *your own gut* may well be way-off in deciphering the ins-and-outs of all kinds of things – engineering, science, mathematics, astrophysics or godliness to name a few.

But it is not just your inner self that you need to examine. The world surrounds you at every step with information and enlightenment; understanding comes when special attention is paid to remembering past events and especially from listening to your friends.

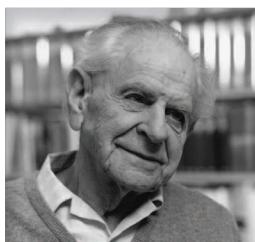
This is not new-age thinking, as it was evident back in the Tang Dynasty 618-907 AD –



On one occasion Emperor Taizong of Tang asked We Zheng, ‘Why are some monarchs wise and others fatuous and incompetent?’

Wei Zheng replied, ‘Wisdom comes to those who are willing to listen to diverse opinions. Ignorance results from wearing blinders... It is not enough for an emperor to be smart and well read. He has to be willing to listen with an open mind to the advice of his ministers. Emperor Yang of Sui, in his arrogance and conceit, talked the talk of Yao and Shun Wu walked the walk of Jie and Zhou. His increasing confusion eventually led to his self-destruction.’⁰⁵⁵

You might have to *get over yourself* in order to get on with the daily grind. Remembering, we tend to see what we want to see, we are reluctant to change. Getting over ourselves stops us having child-like temper tantrums (reminiscent of executives storming out of meetings when they’re not getting what they want) – which is a sign of all times, and not just *Trumponian* times.^b



If we are uncritical we shall always find what we want – we shall look for and find, confirmations, and we shall look away from, and not see, whatever might be dangerous to our pet theories.⁰⁵⁶

— Karl Popper (1902-1994)⁰⁵⁷

When our shortcomings are known (and we do get over ourselves), education begins. Reading and researching brings to mind many other ideas and philosophies. Listen to yourself, question your inner voice, join the league of the brilliant. What we don’t know is more important to find out than to shore up what we already know. The trouble is, *not knowing what we don’t know* causes anxiety, sometimes a great deal of anxiety. When this anxiety rules our lives, we are unable to fully appreciate the moment. We forget about learning from our past and we ignore looking to the future. It is a bit like living in a panic room – high anxiety anticipating the worst of times.

The utter inexorability of our lives drives us further toward our predicaments from the moment we wake. That is the moment when we

b. *Trumponian* refers to the bombast, egotism, and lies, or anti-establishment, authoritarian, bigoted ideologies that some associate with the language, conduct, and viewpoints of President Donald Trump.

realise we have to start problem solving, making decisions to keep the ‘inexorability’ rolling. Sleep beautiful sleep. A foretaste of death where nothing needs to be solved, for eternity. *He that sleeps feels not the tooth-ache*, Cymbeline, William Shakespeare.

Environment or genetics

Always there is the argument whether our lives are affected by nurture or nature. Is it our genes of our parents most influencing our lives? It is quite possibly the genetic imprint (inherited) that plays a part. Not only that, the genetic influence is *changed by the environment*, shock-horror, as Richard C. Francis states in his book *Epigenetics: The Ultimate Mystery of Inheritance*—

Environmentally induced epigenetic alterations that occur early in our lives are especially important. We have explored, in particular, the epigenetic effects of poor nutrition and stress on the foetus and the infant, and the myriad health consequences during adulthood. But our environment continues to epigenetically influence our genes throughout our lives.⁰⁵⁸

Only recently has the human genome been mapped and we can start to see connections indicating the in-heritability of traits. Our genes are the blueprints of our being. Building anything decent requires a plan. The main interest has been in discovering inheritable diseases such as breast cancer and schizophrenia; important for us to know about so research can be done to inhibit the onset of such life impacting conditions.

What we also want to know is how much our mother and father, grandmother and grandfather, friends, teachers and our society will influence who we are and how we operate. If we already are predetermined by the genetic makeup we inherit is this all a futile attempt to make us better?

We obviously (usually) look a little bit or a lot like our parents, one or both, and our brothers and sisters, one or both. No research team needs to be formed for this enlightenment. Still sometimes, sons and daughters do not bear family resemblances. What are the influencers that cause these differences? DNA, Diet, parental preferences, education, individual traits (opera or sport, or both) and so on for the many things that make a person an individual. This mystery goes back much further than initially considered, positing that *humans had indeed mated with Neanderthals, and not just once.*^c Catherine Brahic reports in the *New Scientist*, October 2018 —

c. *The ghosts within*, article by Catherine Brahic. See Endnote⁵⁷.

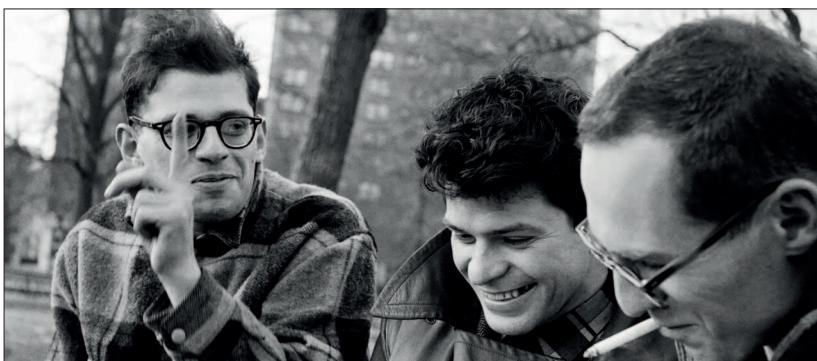
The broad idea is that all DNA is subject to random mutations that accumulate over millennia and are passed down from generation to generation. By looking at mutation patterns in modern populations, it is possible to spot segments that don't match the usual *H. sapiens* pattern. These are presumed to come from populations that evolved separately from our own species for thousands of years before mating with humans. Statistical models can then produce estimates of when the two groups mated and how different the other population was from our ancestors.⁰⁵⁹

So, do parents really matter?

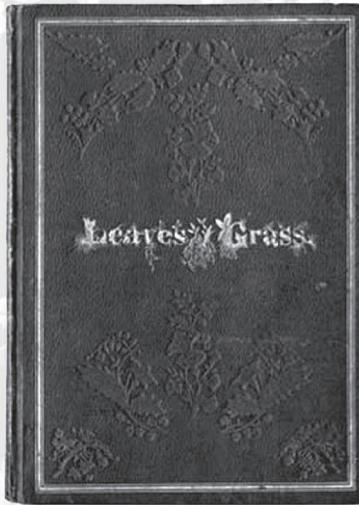
Yes they matter a hell of a lot. However, a bit less than was previously thought. Parents can not take the entire blame for how their children live their lives. We know children start out with a genetic make-up (their DNA) marking them for life... and ***news flash***, it will change *as* they grow. Parents matter *after* that fact. How the parents and all the other people and things that come in contact with the child influence the child will make a great deal of difference to their outcomes.

A child is predisposed to read or play football not only because of the genetic heritage and imprint that *influenced their parents'* choice of school for the child. It is a self perpetuating skill... I am because I read, yet I had to be before I could read. Still, as Robert Plomin (2018) says –*'The environment is not something 'out there' that happens to us passively. Instead, we actively perceive, interpret, select and modify and even create environments, in part on the basis of our genetic propensities.'*⁰⁶⁰

We might do very well by reading Allen Ginsberg, already worrying us about the state of the nation, back in 1955 –



Ah! says Allen Ginsberg with Gregory Corso, and Barney Rosset.



Extract: *A Supermarket in California*,
Berkley 1955 – Allen Ginsberg

What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked down
the side-streets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at
the full moon.

.... I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork
chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?

I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you,
and followed in my imagination by the store detective.

We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy
tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy,
and never passing the cashier.

.... (I touch your book and dream of our odyssey
in the supermarket and feel absurd.)

.... Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?

Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America
did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a
smoking bank and stood watching the boat
disappear on the black waters of Lethe?⁰⁶¹

Top: Original Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman.

Opposite: Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky, 5 Turner Terrace, San Francisco, 1955.

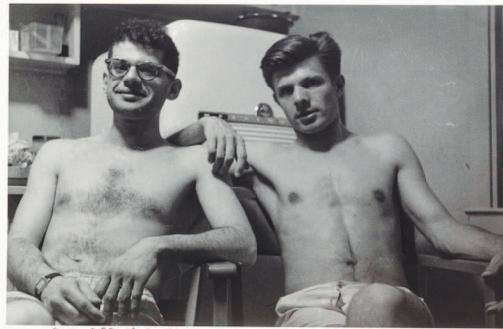
Credit: University of Toronto Art Centre

Gift of the Larry & Cookie Rossy Family Foundation, 2012.

Opposite top: HOWL was published one year after this photo was taken⁰⁶³

THE POCKET POETS SERIES

HOWL



Allen Ginsberg & Peter Orlovsky in kitchen, 3 Tenants, Tenants共同所有, San Francisco, 1956. Allen Ginsberg



Zhang Lu-Laozi Riding an Ox. Ming dynasty (1368-1644).⁶⁴

2 — Anxiety

When you are content to be simply yourself
and don't compare or compete, everyone will respect you.

— Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, (601 BC, Chu - 533 BC, Zhou dynasty)⁰⁶⁵

'Ah— Anxiety. My old friend,' sighs the client
settling back in the comfort of the couch.

Humans live in an anxious state of contradiction: seeking independence while driven to social interaction. We fiercely desire companionship and that pull toward connection is sometimes without regard for risk. The risk is that of leaving ourselves vulnerable to losing individuality. The pull back and forth between these desired states is like gravity – always there, not felt nor seen. Physiologically and psychologically we are drawn to one-another for comfort, companionship, common good and procreation. Once procreation is achieved, attention shifts to family and community. We usually attend to all these needs simultaneously with emphasis on one or the other depending on the moment.

Whether sexually you identify as heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, sapiosexual, pansexual, bicurious, polysexual, monosexual, allosexual, androsexual, gynosexual, questioning, asexual, demisexual, grey asexual, perioriented, varioriented, heteronormative, cishet, polyamorous, monoamorous, queer, ally or combinations of the above – everyone has that yearning to meet up and connect, some to procreate and some not... *'Not that there is anything wrong with that.'*⁰⁶⁶

All animals seek to be connected and for humans that need is often complicated by our human, sometimes fractious upbringing. Humans think and feel and sometimes those are misaligned.

Our lived life is highly influenced by our perceptions, which initially come by association – the relationships within the family of origin among others. Understanding the origins of any misalignments or mistaken beliefs will help us adjust our responses to triggered anxieties.



Stewie in therapy

Stewie in Family Guy, the one-year-old baby who speaks fluent Queen's English (his inner dialogue), a homage to emotion and reaction illustrate how a baby might experience life, led almost entirely by their feelings. He is frequently anti-social, even violent to almost everyone who gets in the way of his 'needs', including his mother Lois, to whom he periodically shows matricidal tendencies, sometimes he follows those urges. His loving caring side disappears the moment he is thwarted. Nearly everyone Stewie comes into contact with has ended up badly scarred. Ask Brians. Stewie might be diagnosed as having masochistic tenancies with *Dissociative Identity Disorder* as shown here from extracts of Stewie's therapy session to help identify why he is racked with anxiety issues –

'... anyway, 'fluid' is something I hear being tossed around a lot now.
But I'm confident in my heterosexuality. That's a word, right? - Yes, of course. Okay, just sounded strange for a second.'

The therapist, Dr. Pritchfield, acknowledges how difficult it must be being so intelligent –

'It is. Whew– Just that, just that acknowledgment. –You know, sometimes I don't know where I fit in...
I give myself these excruciating migraines. I actually have way more hair than this, but I pull it out.'

The therapist asks Stewie what he likes to talk about –

'Me? Well, I like to talk about world domination...
I also like to talk about musicals. It's hard to find someone who can converse on one of those topics, let alone both. And I really, really,

really want to see Hamilton, but by the time it gets here, I'll be 30... And I've even memorised some of the songs, but I have no one to sing it for, and I'm really good – do you want to hear it? ...

'I really I really need you to hear me sing Hamilton (crying) – I'm so good. Why can't I be on Broadway? I want to be on Broadway.

*I want the world to fall in love with me eight times a week.'*⁰⁶⁷

[Emphasis added.]

After Stewie's birth the doctors found inside Lois plans to blow up major capitals of Europe so some of his problem existed before birth. Stewie's wild extremes from '*I like to talk about world domination...*' to '*I want the world to fall in love with me eight times a week...*', may stem from avoidant-attachment and 'splitting', where things are perceived as either 'all bad' or 'all good', rather than both good and bad; whereby babies who feel safe, warm and nourished at the mother's breast suffer dislocation if for some reason this feeling of safety is interrupted. Alone on a cold table while mum searches for a clean nappy the baby may feel loss and abandonment; the baby may even subsequently experience fear. This can develop into a love/hate dislocation as the mother comes and goes, seemingly 'without reason.' Usually the baby and young child will adjust to early attachment incidents, realising this is the 'stuff of life' – the mother may not be here now, but she will return shortly.

When 'secure attachment' doesn't occur and the mother or family are not considered a safe haven, this 'splitting' is carried into adulthood and adult intimate relationships are often difficult to maintain.

As an adult, Stewie may have attachment difficulty when he meets a partner, whom he will be consistently seeking to replace his mother. It will be an all-or-nothing relationship and usually that is a short lived experience. After six months of heaven (the honeymoon period), this person may begin to despise their partner – disgusted with sex in the bedroom, bathroom habits, smells, social habits and manners, not replying to texts, late for dates – all may become impossible to tolerate. Sometimes the connection will last three years but a pattern of three year relationships shows some form of dysfunction. A terrible word for often quite normal relationship experiences until you find the right one.

To manage overreactions to these issues you can reunite with parents or other close friends and discover the many sides of their character.

Realising you may have misinterpreted earlier experiences and that we are all a bit mad in our own way can bring us to a better appreciation of previously discarded connections.

Family Guy and many other sitcoms, novels, films, plays and stories are funny/sad/interesting/rewarding precisely because we see much of ourselves and others in the characters.

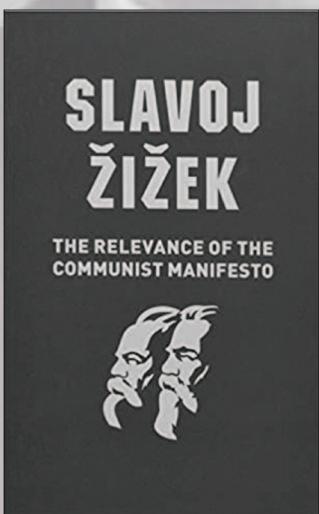
Stewie, as an example, has difficulty processing adult responses because the adult frontal lobes (responsible for cognitive abilities) have not yet properly formed – therefore, he finds social behaviours, motivation and planning frustrating. He gets furious when things don't go his way. Stewie knows 'adult-like-anx' because he is 'intelligent' enough to recognise that no one appreciates his innate nature. He is surrounded by aliens, or is he the alien? Stewie is an angry baby; and we enjoy seeing him and the many other characters in fiction because that is what some of us are like. And where a child is forced to be 'adult like' before their time these same difficulties my ensue.

Anxieties inhabit and inhibit society on many levels. A Credit Suisse report from November 14, 2017 stated that '*1% of the population own 50.1% of all household wealth in the world.*' (above)⁶⁸ There is an underbelly of resentment and fear throughout society. Disgruntlement. Fear of loss of freedom; freedom to speak, to choose, to be free itself... whose force(s) can be garnered to support a party or leader promising falsely (the Fake News phenomenon), correction of this imbalance; hence the rise in extreme political philosophies (Donald Trump) appealing to the

disgruntled. Slavoj Žižek notes in his slim book *The Relevance of the Communist Manifesto* –

Since in our society free choice is elevated into a supreme value, social control and domination cannot be allowed to appear as infringing on the subject's freedom; they have to appear as, and be sustained by, the individuals' very experience of themselves as free. There is a multitude of forms in which this 'unfreedom' appears in the guise of it's

The wealthiest
1 %
of population own
50.1% of all
household wealth
in the world.



opposite: when we are deprived of universal healthcare, we are told that we are given a new freedom of choice, namely to choose our healthcare provider; when we can no longer rely on long-term employment and are compelled to search for a new precarious position every couple of years, we are told that we are given the opportunity to reinvent ourselves and discover new, unexpected creative potentials that lurked in our personality; when we have to pay for the education of our children, we are told that we become 'entrepreneurs of the self', acting like a capitalist who has to choose freely how to invest the resources he or she possesses (or borrows) - into education, health, travel... ⁰⁶⁹

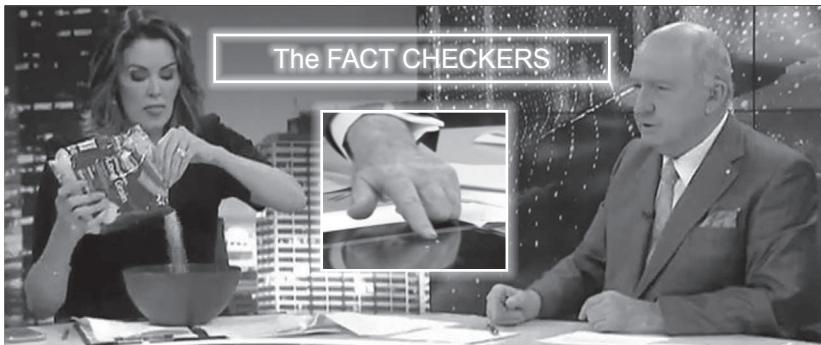
A spectre under-looming, Australian NIB CEO Mark Fitzgibbon (*pictured in background opposite* ⁰⁷⁰ ^a) proposes Australia abolish Medicare and force people to take on private insurance. "*[A] sensible policy approach would be to make private health insurance compulsory for all Australians with taxation devoted to subsidising the premiums for those who would otherwise be left behind. That is, high-income earners would at one end of the scale pay the entire premium while at the other, those with low income fully subsidised,*" Mr Fitzgibbon writes in an op-ed in *The Australian Financial Review*. ⁰⁷¹ ⁰⁷² (See endnote for full text of statement.) 'Self-serving' is the immediate criticism. Each new policy, mandated by law, gives private insurance companies a guaranteed income stream. Healthcare fully privatised operates in USA and we know it does not work; millions suffer/die prematurely because they are not fully covered; it's the poor, the old, the under represented, the minority groups who never get the proper care. Where we are not free to choose is it freedom at all? Disgruntling...

Atomic angst

Decades ago, we worried about the 'bomb' when *duck-and-cover* was deemed the appropriate safe response to a nuclear bomb dropped on civilians. Is that why it was deemed justifiable to bomb on civilians at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945?



- a. As is so often the manner in which massive social changes occur... starting with a rumour, gradually building up to concepts, proposals, definitions, policy and political promises... laws passed in parliament by wealthy people all with private medical insurance, massive superannuation plans, family trusts, property portfolios and benefitting from anb ongoing salary when they leave their parliamentary position, the latter often moving into jobs associated with their former portfolios held whilst in government.



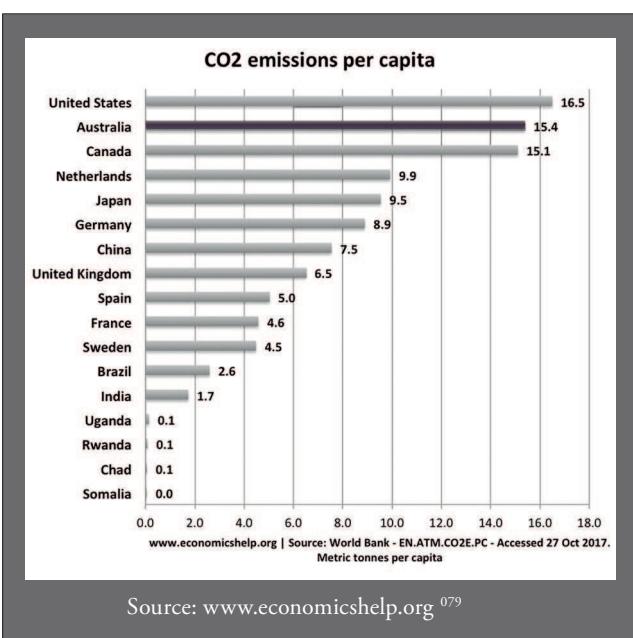
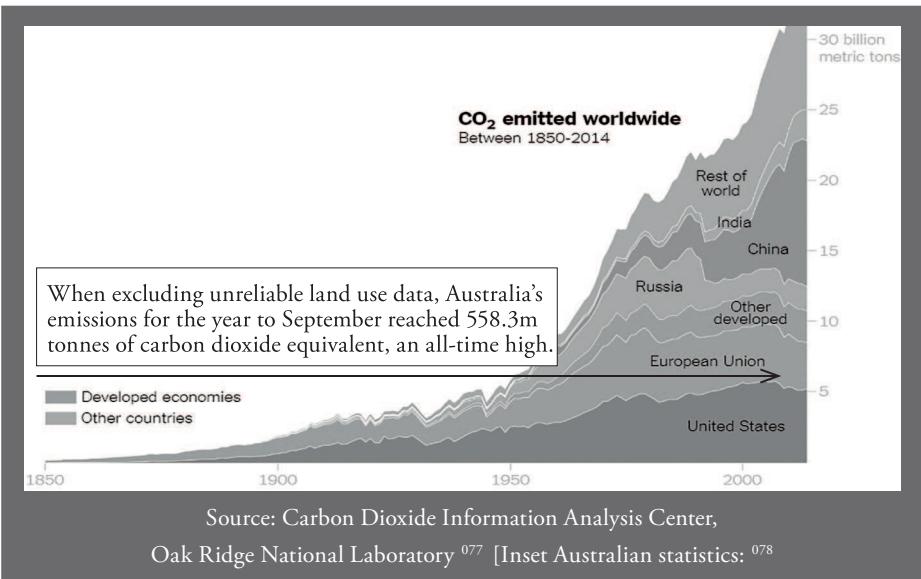
Alan Jones (as ‘the king’ of breakfast radio ‘I say it as I see it!’) and Peta Credlin: using ‘scientific research’ with rice, bowl, tongue, finger of Alan Jones (inset) and arrogance to expose the hoax of climate change (e.g., presence of CO₂ in atmosphere) and how much responsibility Australia has to shoulder. ‘None’ say Peta and Alan.⁰⁷⁵ More about Jones⁰⁷⁶.

Just duck-and-cover? Today, we worry about the bombers and the climate – we will either self-destruct through civil disobedience or destroy the planet by man’s mischief. David Attenborough stated in a recent interview – ‘We (humans) are now so numerous, so powerful, so all-pervasive... that we can actually exterminate whole ecosystems without ‘even noticing it.’⁰⁷³ (See Alexander von Humboldt – 124-131.) Attenborough goes on to say in a recent BBC1 documentary (April 18, 2019)... ‘Right now, we are facing our greatest threat in thousands of years: climate change... 1. Animal extinctions; 2. Extreme weather; 3. Rising sea levels; 4. Deforestation; and 5. Global warming, and six – ‘calling-out climate change deniers.’⁰⁷⁴ Nearly a third of carbon dioxide on our planet is caused by deforestation.^b (See charts opposite for CO₂ in the atmosphere today.)^c Don’t listen to me, listen to the scientists.

People are discouraged with public officers not performing: the lack of direct representation in parliament; corruption in the police force, politics and big business; religious institutions failing in caring

b. Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations in parts per million (ppm) for the past 800,000 years, based on EPICA (ice core) data. The peaks and valleys in carbon dioxide levels track the coming and going of ice ages (low carbon dioxide) and warmer interglacials (higher levels). Throughout these cycles, atmospheric carbon dioxide was never higher than 300 ppm; in 2018, it reached 407.4 ppm. NOAA Climate.gov, based on EPICA Dome C data (Lüthi, D., et al., 2008) provided by NOAA NCEI Paleoclimatology Program.

c. The current warming trend is of particular significance because most of it is extremely likely (greater than 95 percent probability) to be the result of human activity since the mid-20th century and proceeding at a rate that is unprecedented over decades to millennia. See Endnote⁷⁵.



for their flocks; media shock-jocks and ‘personalities’ loudly pronouncing their verdicts – these groups attempt to set the agenda but more than likely create anger and displacement which threatens to engulf the populace. Misinformation (real-fake-news) can/will cause discombobulation purposefully. In the last two decades the diagnosis of depression seems to have been increasingly replaced by the diagnosis of anxiety. Doctors report these presenting two disorders more than ever. Stress affects everybody; it is a knock-on dilemma affecting more than the person having the original disruption. No longer babies, we must make adult decisions as these influence all things in our lives hopefully without resorting to planning matricide (*Stewie*) or use of language to undermine the happiness of people around us. More gyms and ‘stress relief claiming schools of thought’ have

arisen in the past 20 years than in all years preceding.

There are many things for us to be anxious about, from terrorist to domestic violence incidents. Major cities install speaker and alarm-lights on street corners instilling a palpable presence and promoting fear.

We seek safety and reassurance, especially in our love lives. In the dating scene, nothing is so anxiety provoking as the horrendous situation when a prospective date you have made online doesn't show up or turns out to be something other than what was advertised. This disappointment is proportionate to the numerous dating sites available, some listed here –



EleteSingles, Zoosk, Silver, Singles50, eharmony, Academic Singles, RSVP, Match, OkCupid, MrRight, MrOK, The League, BeLinked, Coffee Meets Bagel, eDarling, Bumble, Happn, Hinge, Raya, Match.com, Clover, Find-a-Fuck, Parship, Badoo, FMK, Her, Huggle, Pickable... and the best of all, *beautifulpeople.com* where others rate your outward beauty and the 'already members' vote you in or out – 1. Absolutely Not; 2. No; 3. Hmm OK; and 4. Beautiful. Your accumulated *Hmmm OK*; and *4. Beautiful* votes determine your rewarding entry to the *Beautiful People Dating App*.

It's a numbers game; a swipe, a click away from ecstasy. It is easy to be taken in by the mobile dating apps because they are so accessible, the millions of possible hook-ups, while the hours of messaging are exciting and killing us. Technology has brought many wonderful opportunities alongside some distractions that limit human connection perhaps resulting in depressed feelings, weight gain (less walking about), anxiety when others don't respond immediately (or at all), online bullying, hate tweeting. The act of dismissing can be a demeaning, dehumanising process; swiping away those you don't like the *look* of.

Many people report they have found lasting happiness from a meeting on many of these dating websites.

Algorithms are barely adequate. Characteristics a couple might match on are nuanced. Random selection might be more successful. Can love be statistically quantifiable? Better to meet people face-to-face, gathering together and talking face-to-face, *shock horror*. (*See Gregory Berns – 81*) It is the rejections that can forge a detrimental inroad into the users' psychology.

Although many people report they have found lasting happiness from meeting on dating websites, the experience in the *choosingchange* clinic has many users getting less than 20% response from their swiping.

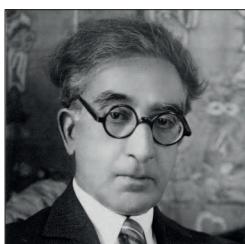
Harry recently met a ‘coffee date’ for the first time. It was a lovely time chatting and everything seemed to be going quite well when Harry’s date asked, ‘What do you think?’, Harry responded, *‘I thoroughly enjoyed the time and I’d quite like to meet up again. What are your thoughts?’* His reply, eyes wide open, ‘No, I’m not really interested.’ Shocked, Harry pointed out to him that he might well have indicated that before asking him (Harry) what he thought. Not a good match Harry decided.

A range of new phrases have been coined to describe these experiences from meeting up through dating apps – *ghosting*, where sudden unexplained ending occurs and you never hear from your date again; *stashing*, where your date doesn’t introduce you to their friends; *zombie-ing*, where a ‘ghost’ resurfaces and you are enticed back; *benching*, where you become a back-up buddy; *catch-and-release*, where the other person makes a date and immediately loses interest; *breadcrumbing*, where the prospective date never has any intention of following through; *catfishing*, where the other person is pretending to be someone else online; *kittenfishing*, where an online profile is presenting someone in an unrealistically positive way; or *slow fade* where a connection is brought to an end by less-and-less responding to texts over time, eventually with no response at all (a relative of *ghosting*). These are cowardly devices employed to avoid taking responsibility for words spoken, deeds done, or intentions not fulfilled. All easy to do all from the safety of the keyboard and computer screen, possibly born of insecurities.

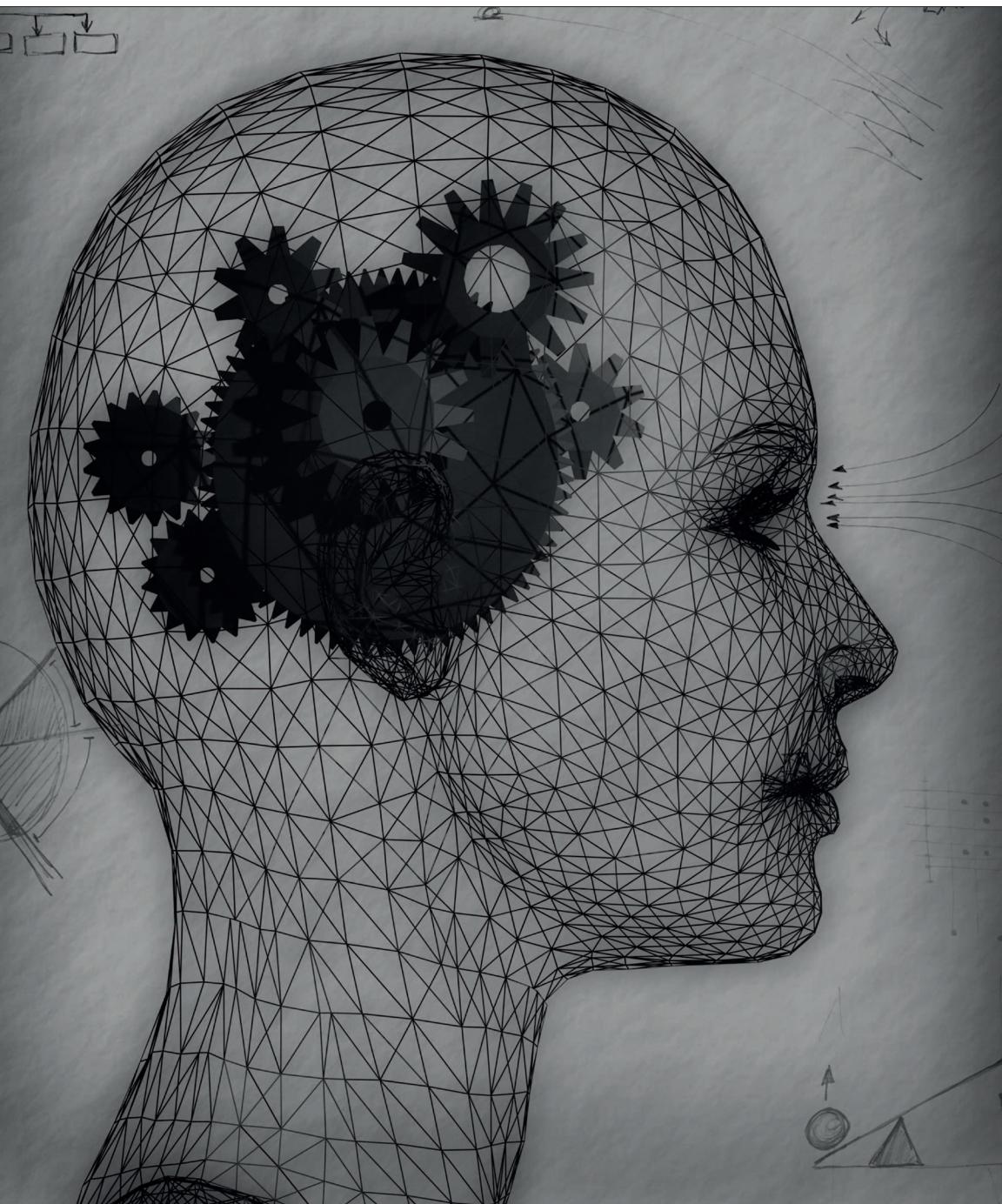
There is a sense of disposability inhabiting the online social environment, the anonymity and deliberate misleading statements. The longer the ‘chat’ the greater the possibility of being misled. Anxiety runs through the hope, (very serious for some), of meeting a partner or making friends. Our huge expectations and projections onto the beloved can sometimes be our greatest disappointment, bringing us to the brink of insanity or at least making us wonder how to manage these ‘rejections’.

He who hopes to grow in spirit will have to transcend obedience and respect. He’ll hold to some laws but he’ll mostly violate both law and

custom, and go beyond the established, inadequate norm. Sensual pleasures will have much to teach him. He won’t be afraid of the destructive act: half the house will have to come down. This way he’ll grow virtuously into wisdom.



— Constantine P. Cavafy (1863-1933)



3 — Therapy



‘That’s the way of things, sometimes,’ my father said. ‘Things happen inside a person that they think they have no control over, and it turns out they do, but they need to be told by someone else.’ 080

— Donal Ryan (1979-)

John Donne, William Shakespeare, C.P. Cavafy, Gioachino Rossini, Giacomo Puccini, John Luther Long (*Madame Butterfly*), Leo Tolstoy, John Fowles, Emily Bronte, Murray Burnett and Joan Alison (*Casa blanca*), Boris Leonidovich Pasternak (*Dr Zhivago*), Jane Austen, Victor Hugo, André Aciman among many, many others – all writers of love stories; stories we grow up with, stories with character’s we aspire to. The romantic experience can be inspiring/humiliating/despairing. Annie Proulx—

In an interview about her work, and *Brokeback Mountain* in particular, author Proulx stated Jack Twist is a “confused Wyoming ranch [kid]” who finds himself in a personal sexual situation he did not foresee, nor can understand. She said both men were “beguiled by the cowboy myth”, and Jack ‘settles on rodeo as an expression of the Western ideal. It more or less works for him until he becomes a tractor salesman. Jack is also more romantic than Ennis, being the one who pursues the relationship and insists that they should live together officially. He is open about his desires and discontents,

which is also shown in the novella, when he tries to open his wife Lureen's eyes about their son's dyslexia even though he knows that he has no say, since she holds the money in the family.

One mystery surrounding Jack Twist (as well as Ennis Del Mar) is his sexual orientation. He has a sexual and emotional relationship with Lureen, but he still shows more sexual desire towards men in general than Ennis, who has no relations with men other than Jack. Jack sleeps with other men, including male prostitutes. While meeting Ennis in the mountains for the very last time, Jack says he is having an extramarital relationship with a woman; however, it is likely that the woman, the "ranch foreman's wife", is actually the ranch foreman himself, as in a previous scene, he invites Jack to a cabin to "do a little fishing and drink some whisky ...". In a later scene, Jack's father mentions that Jack had revealed a plan before he died to come up with a male friend to the family ranch and live there'

How different readers take the story is a reflection of their own personal values, attitudes, hang-ups... It is my feeling that a story is not finished until it is read, and that the reader finishes it through his or her life experience, prejudices, world view and thoughts. ⁰⁸¹

We are reminded that we are the product of our prejudices; can therapy argue against these prejudices, these 'romantic stories' we are informed by?

This is how so many couples get together – the heady taste of romance wafting through the bar, the years of mothers and fathers, teachers, priests and politicians skewing our perceptions. Brokeback Mountain leaves all readers with a hope they can have that experience?... just once?... maybe?... even though it may end in tragedy. We also take away from that story some quite distinct learnings regarding how to have a relationship, love being an important ideal to pursue as are other aspects of our lives. Relationships for other than heterosexual couples may be intrinsically more difficult due to homo/trans/etc., phobias alive in some societies, probably born of religious or other dogmatic instruction. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes in *Epistemology of the Closet* –

Even at an individual level, there are remarkably few of even the most openly gay people who are not deliberately in the closet with someone personally or economically or institutionally important to them. Furthermore, the deadly elasticity of heterosexist presumption means that, like Wendy in Peter Pan, people find new walls springing up around them even as they drowse: every encounter with a new class-full of students, to say nothing of the new boss, social worker, loan officer, landlord, doctor, erects new closets whose fraught and characteristic laws of optics and physics exact from at least gay people new surveys, new calculations, new draughts and requisitions of secrecy and disclosure.^{082 083}



— Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950-2009)

There are many stories, films and plays about love. It is the constant ever-thrusting to ‘original’ and ‘new’ fashion driving us; and of course, the resultant procreation. That is why we are easily drawn into the passion of relationships. The disenchanted turn away from love – the inference drawn from past disasters, hurts or sometimes inherited traits from ‘family of origin’, both well-functioning and dysfunctional. The individual can learn how unproductive and unhelpful reactions appropriated in their upbringing can be ameliorated. Knowing and practising different responses can help to calm the anxieties in the adult relationship.

Make decisions boldly after careful thought but make the decision in a timely fashion. A mistake made mindfully will probably not be large and not hurt as much if wrong.

Relapse and ‘endings’ in therapy

Many people come to self-help books or attend counselling when they are in pain – when the disaster occurs, they seek help. When the pain is relieved, even just a little, they sometimes stop attending. ‘*Why come when I am feeling ok?*’ they might say. Perfectly right too. Be aware that when you end a relationship, the anxiety often disappears because the cause of the re-activeness has stopped. But chopping off a finger when you have a splinter might cause more discomfort or dysfunction later on. Therapy requires connection, empathy, reciprocity and persistence for it

to work, even a little bit. According to John M. Gottman –

... our current best estimate is that for about 35% of couples' marital therapy is effective in terms of clinically significant, immediate changes, but that after a year about 30-50% of the lucky couples who made the initial gains, relapse ⁰⁸⁴

Otherwise, people terminate against professional advice. Gottman goes on to claim that the therapist who maintains a high level of strategic, persistent intervention –

...is highly active... and with clear rationale that is articulated to the clients... will have some degree of effective and positive outcome for the client. Otherwise, people terminate against professional advice. ⁰⁸⁵

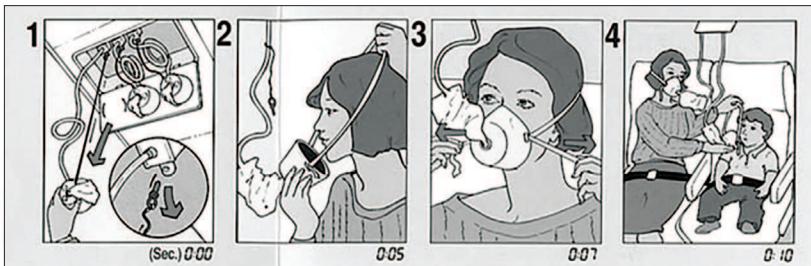
Relapse can be seen as an integral aspect of the change process. People do not easily change. Many years of believing something or acting in a particular way lend to a ‘comfortable’ albeit horrible place to be, only remaining there because the ‘comfortable’ is a known entity. A therapist will encourage the individual or couple to reconsider aspects of the difficulties in light of revelations discovered through the therapeutic process. Go to the uncomfortable place if you want growth. Even with the best of the therapist’s experience and skill, the couple can encounter enormous resistance even in the presence of great desire for change.

Resistance may manifest through relapse

When things go wrong in the normal course of the day you will probably manage to overcome the disappointment. However, if you are tired and dispirited you are likely to want to give up. In counselling or psychotherapy, relapse can be viewed as a guide or even a necessary (unhappy) step for managing situations. This can help clients to change their attitudes toward the process. Being forewarned is being forearmed. William R Miller and Stephen Rollnick stated –

People often ‘recycle’ through the stages many different times before reaching success; thus a ‘slip’ should not be considered an utter failure, but rather a step back. Many people progress from contemplation though preparation to action then maintenance, but many will relapse. ⁰⁸⁶

Furthermore, Kim Halford also said –



After an argument the risk of relapse is high. All couples are likely to have at least some negative interactions with their spouse. In some couples a very negative interaction can lead partners to give up on the relationship.⁰⁸⁷

As well as the research into relapse rates, we know that effective therapy for couples works when the process and content of changing mechanisms is aligned with the client's modes of being... when the schema (the internalised representation or the ideas and beliefs) of the client's world matches the therapeutic intervention. Kim Halford said –

Maximising therapeutic momentum involves matching the therapeutic process in session to the affective states of the partners... the therapist needs constantly to monitor the affective expression of the partners... therapy needs to sequence the order in which problems are addressed to enhance the therapeutic momentum.⁰⁸⁸

What works for one person may not work for another. It is very helpful for each person to recognise and understand how their partner 'works,' just as it is also crucial that the therapist knows and understands the ramifications of this theory.

Putting it into practice

Who is the most important person in the room? In every room each of us is the most important – we must survive and we must prosper. Learning to be responsible for yourself before being able to take

care of others – apply the oxygen mask in the airplane rule – always put yours on first (note – complete action within one-tenth of a second) before assisting others.⁰⁸⁹ As we move from being babies into adulthood, the opposite of being cared for must prevail as we grow up so so we can be caring loving individuals in an adult relationship with another adult. Caring *about you* while caring *for you* are different – caring *about* you is feeling affection while caring *for* you is looking after. In a sense we usually combine these aspects when in relationships. A mature adult connection emphasises the individuality of the other and shows affection and love more than ‘looking after’.^a

Although therapists research people’s behaviour and acquire particular knowledge of ‘particular human behaviours,’ therapists still have their viewpoint garnered from their life experience – informed by their morality, philosophy, religion and so-on. Your therapist is not a blank slate; whatever they say is influenced by things they believe. Their ability to help is greatly enhanced if they have a wide world-view, a curious enquiring mindset, a fair non-judgemental attitude and a caring, empathic and sympathetic disposition.

If a therapist is not aware of their biases they may inadvertently influence the outcome of therapy badly for their clients. These factors lend strength to the concept of the client seeking out a therapist that suits them. When a good ‘fit’ happens therapy outcomes are usually better, faster and longer lasting. It is suggested in *Heart and Soul of Change*⁰⁹⁰ that the ‘good fit’ is an important requirement for a helpful influence on the outcome of therapy for the client.

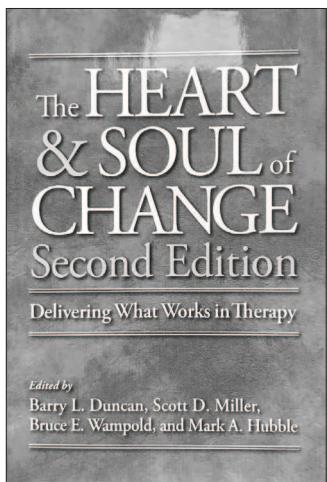
You definitely want a therapist you are ok with but who will still challenge you on your beliefs and dilemmas.

Does therapy even work?

You will know your therapy is working if things start to make sense to you – your relationships will improve. However, remember change occurs slowly. Finding a therapist who knows what to do, who fits your purpose and utilises your mode of learning is the first step. Your therapist will be a teacher and a resource. Therapy occurs between the therapeutic

- a. Relationships falter when neediness predominates. Both partners need to have sense of togetherness and separateness. The needy or demanding partner forces their opposite party to withdraw. The needy person must pull back and give space for the partner who feels smothered to take steps toward. Both must play their part in this exercise.

conversations and the psychotherapeutic techniques your therapist uses. Though your relationship is professional, there is a good chance you will feel a closeness in the room; you are talking about intimate details of your life and relationship. Scott D. Miller et al. considered the question ‘*Does therapy work?*’ in *Heart and Soul of Change* –



The answer to the question ‘Does therapy work?’ is a resounding ‘Yes.’ Psychotherapeutic treatments have been subjected to rigorous clinical trials, and the benefits are demonstrably large. The effectiveness of psychotherapy exceeds that of many accepted medical practices. Moreover, and important for clients, it appears that psychotherapy delivered in naturalistic settings produces outcomes comparable with the outcomes in clinical trials. Psychotherapy is truly a remarkably effective healing practice.⁹⁹¹

This concept of the ‘fit’ is not only applicable to finding a therapist. It is a good idea to use it for all your relationships. Learn to recognise and follow your hunches. Learn to be the expert in your life.

The knowing of things

Knowing that *what goes in is probably going to influence what comes out* may encourage you to take note of your own biases, ideas and hunches – your own knowledge base is the foundation for your good living. Does it feel right? In order for this to be well answered you will need experience, instinct and the ability to take a risk, and above all be able to remain true to yourself; this is authenticity.

Your therapist is not the fount of all knowledge. Therapists report their ‘hunches’ and ‘I figures...’ and ‘is it like this for you...?’ sometimes ending up with both feet in their mouths.

Have a go. Distinguish between what you think is right or wrong for you. New ideas can help you discover new ways to see things, new ways to think things and new ways to react to incidents in your life. This information is critical for you to apply any changes you choose – to live better, more effectively, more happily and less hand-to-mouth.

'Short and Sweet' for difficult conversations

Mutual respect is an essential ingredient for a great relationship. When we know each other very well a simple raising of an eyebrow might indicate *Let's get the hell out'a here*. However, if the other party is triggered, then this eyebrow raise might be seen as demeaning. If you or the other person are triggered by a particular subject it is likely those conversations are going to be difficult. You can bet there is something going on underneath the words and actions. Nobody throws a phone or a pot unless they are bothered. Badly bothered.

The 'Short and Sweet' table (*below*) is a simplified example. It can be followed when dealing with difficult conversations. If you have difficult things to talk about this can help with those conversations... with your partner, child, parent or friend, helping you to avoid nagging for what you want, or them nagging for what they want.

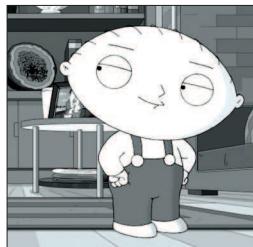
Short and Sweet for difficult conversations	
Thinking	Speaking
Short – Allow yourself time to gather your thoughts, then state using 'I'	I would like to discuss Bobby's school for next year.
Sweet – Respect your partner's world-view and allow them to state their ideas, feelings, fears.	What do you think? Would that suit you?
Partner replies – Respectfully	I think it's a good idea. Can we do it tonight. I'm worried we will disagree and end up fighting. How's that for you?
You Reply – Respectfully.	Lets do it when we can really sit face-to-face discuss this. How about tomorrow night, after dinner around 8. Is that ok?
Respect self and other by being aware of how your words will sound to the other person.	Change the wording: What do you think, how do you feel about that, what would work, tell me what you want, is that how you see it?

Using this kind of model others will learn that you listen to them and consider their feelings. We all want to be fairly heard. When this is understood your friends and partners will begin to reciprocate. It is a process and will have to be practised for the effects to show. If you know, for instance, that your partner is worried about the expense of sending your children to a private school or has a strong preference for a particu-

lar education system, be careful how you approach these volatile issues.

Disagreement is not bad in itself as long as respect from both sides is a given. Caring about your partner and friends means knowing about the things that may be triggering them. Yes, it is their job to take care of their own anxieties but learning to self-soothe comes from being around people they can trust. You can help them by being that person. Trust comes after a long series of events that prove you are trustworthy.

Even if the conversation starts off in a bad way with a demand or a nag, you can change the direction of the conversation by acknowledging the words, ideas or feelings (especially) of the other person. That acknowledgement alone can calm the mood. (*See Stewie's therapy session on – 36.*) 'Phew – – –.'



Years of resentment and bitterness cannot be wiped away with one word. Your attitudes in relationships may need weeks or months of therapeutic practise before you can see effective outcomes. Not forgetting that an occasional argument is perfectly normal for all the reasons discussed in this book – we get sick, we get tired, the boss was a bastard today, the kids are noisy, we have to catch the next train... however, there are very few nasty or evil people who just want to punish you.

Developing Empathy

Appreciating another person's point of view is an adult position. When you understand how others feel it is empathy. People who have this trait are warm and friendly while also assertive and independent. Empathy helps us get along in the world because we can see things from the another person's perspective. Their *schemas* are perhaps born of their parent's DNA or beliefs and ideas or societal expectations. This helps us understand how the other person may feel in certain circumstances. Expecting everyone to follow the schema that drives you is sometimes expecting too much. If you ruled the world things would be very different. Unfortunately, you don't rule the world and you are unlikely to. That is the case for most people. If you are appreciating this paragraph and can see the logic – you are already being empathic.

Sympathy – empathy

It is important to know when to feel sorry for yourself. Learning how to be empathic begins with self-knowledge. When your expectations are dashed, and you show sympathy and understanding for yourself, you are more likely to be able to express those feelings and recognise them or share the sadness in the experiences of others. Frederick Rosen on Jeremy Bethan –

Sympathy, as something distinct from the perception of utility, made propriety and benevolence possible in civil society as well as ensuring a continuing commitment by the citizens to the observance off the rules of justice. Sympathy – the modern equivalent would be empathy with our fellow citizens was for both Hume [David] and Smith [Adam] an integral part of the conception of self-interest.⁰⁹²

Empathy is generally learned as a child interacting with their early carers; this is also where the child learns to cut-off or withdraw when hurtful things are experienced, and their knowledge of empathy may be damaged. Unreliable or absent parents can engender feelings of betrayal and abandonment and these may be carried over to adult relationships.

Marriage and relationships

Married at First Sight, (MAFS) (Channel 9, Sydney) often reveals the worst way couples can interrelate. This ‘show’ spawned wonderful headlines like ‘*Married At First Sight*’ 2019: Jessika says she’s getting lots of attention from Aussie sports stars⁰⁹³ giving us a beautiful insight into the expectations the contestants have of themselves and their prospective partners.

They can also show us that those who are triggered by their partner’s words or actions are probably feeling pain and disconnection experienced in earlier circumstances. One MAFS contestant, every time it came to commitment, would say *I’m shitting myself. I just don’t know...* wanting to break up with her partner every time they got close. A wild reaction was the usual response to these trig-



Jessika Power MAFS

gered emotions she was experiencing. When reactions are out of the ordinary it is often the result of an old wound. When calm, there is an adult discussion. When you realise your triggers you have a chance to review the source and act differently. Knowledge, thought, action.

Empathy is a core component of a good relationship.
Developing sympathy, empathy, understanding, having multiple world views and giving a fair hearing to everybody all help us to live well together – these qualities will help you develop caring and loving relationships.

Adult relationships need adult nurturing

Relationships don't just happen. A common mistake people make is that just because we fall in love – *We will always be in love, you will always love me, and we will always be happy together.* Time and events change things dramatically. This is a given. The job of a child is to live in the world soaking up all the experiences they can, while being guided by their parents and other adults they encounter. The job of an adult is to be the parent and adult for themselves.

Females mature earlier than males. What do young males do other than take risks while females take care? A 2013 study using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) showed that the pre-frontal cortex (responsible for decision making and social behaviour, among other things) was fully developed by age 21 in women; for this men takes until age 25 years.⁰⁹⁴

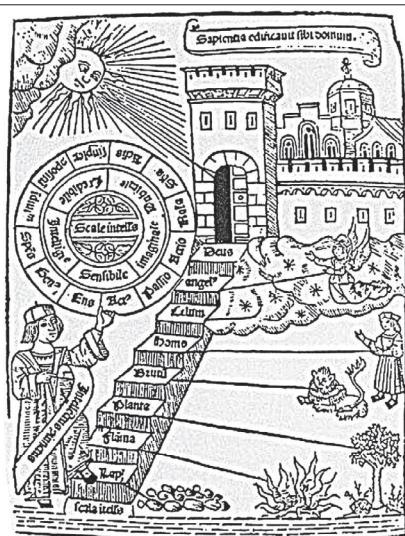
When you fall in love, your ‘child’ is in control. This is why many relationships falter after a few months, sometimes weeks, sometimes days, sometimes even hours. Although it’s perfectly normal to fall in love, it is the failure to realise you are hoodwinking yourself that gets you in trouble. You are not seeing the full picture.

It is good to be aware when having that loving feeling (child) that you can also scrutinise the proceedings (adult).

Natural selection is for the self and the other

Luckily there are ways for the individual to add to their arsenal of relationship skills. Murray Bowen's research and teachings imply that your

child determines the future of mankind. It is imperative they do a better job than their generation. According to the *Darwinian Principle*, the fittest of the species survives. In turn, presumably, the fittest species survives. However, it is Bowen's theory of *differentiation of self* principal that will likely determine the child's ability to advance civilisation.⁰⁹⁵ This is not the only explanation for the meaning of life as attested by the *Great Chain of Being (above)* developed by Plato and Aristotle among others.⁰⁹⁶ (See St Thomas Aquinas Pseudo-Dionysios classification of Angels^b – 58-59.)



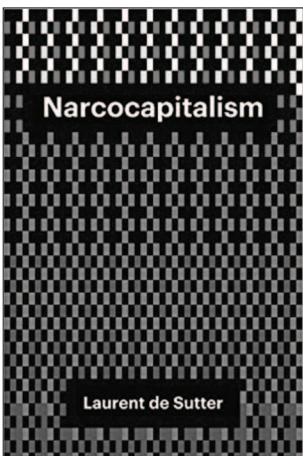
1579 drawing of the *Great Chain of Being* from Didacus Valades, *Rhetorica Christiana*

Over the centuries, philosophers have determined that the secret to happiness is to first know oneself. It has been said in several ways, e.g., one must love oneself before it is possible to love another; to have empathy (loving, compassionate sympathy) for others we must first develop loving, compassionate sympathy toward oneself; and without self-love there cannot be real 'self' – the person who does not pay attention to his or her own functioning is a shell seeking to be filled so the 'love' they experience is simply a 'filling up' from the other – that source drawn upon will soon dry up if this goes on for too long; it is an exhausting and fractious process. This is described as the pseudo-self, a false version of yourself. We strive for a solid, real, authentic self as the foundation great and exciting relationships.

Antidepressants

Laurent de Sutter traces the discovery and implementation of anaesthetics in 1846 by William T. G. Morton, (1819-1868), in his book *Narcocapitalism: Life in the Age of Anaesthesia*. De Sutter follows through the years to today where the drugs used to combat depression are creating a

- b. *The Chain of Being* essentially provided a map or plan or 'answer' to the problem of what or who are we; The St Thomas Aquinas classes of angels included: Seraphim, Cherubim, T Thrones (Ophanim), Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, Angels. (P.S., This is an excursus.)



state that brings the client into line with the general societal expectations of ‘good behaviour’ (not excitable). In doing so we may be doing ourselves a disservice –

... what we were entitled to expect from cocaine was precisely what the anxious inhabitants of the ruins of global capitalism hope to get from the pills they swallow all day long – to feel nothing – above all not their stomach. Narcocapitalism is the capitalism of narcosis, that enforced sleep into which anaesthetists plunge their patients so as to unburden them from everything that prevents them from being efficient in the current arrangement – which means work, work and more work.⁰⁹⁷

— Laurent de Sutter (1977-) ⁰⁹⁸

Humankind has always sought to alleviate pain by removing themselves consciously from painful physical experiences or unconsciously (by denial) from psychological experiences. Where it becomes pathological is when we remove ourselves from difficult experiences and thoughts as a determinant to *ignore terrible social injustices to self or others*. What works well for this end is the mandatory communication set in every household;^c today it is the television set, or perhaps in the form of the ‘inexorables’: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram. As well, nearly every person has a ‘telescreen’ in their very hand, from babies to grandparents. Parents give screens to their children to ‘quieten them down.’ What’s the difference between that and ‘soma’.^d In *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, published in 1932 –

... 60

c. Big Brother’s Telescreen in George Orwell’s 1949 novel, 1984.

d. ‘...there is always soma, delicious soma, half a gramme for a half-holiday.



Sir Thomas Aquinas 1476 by Carlo Crivelli (c. 1430-1495) 'classifying all beings'.¹⁰⁷

Ralph McInerny on St Thomas of Aquinas –

Rationality involves the back and forth of argument moving from one thing known to another, and advancing in knowledge by such movement. Thus, for Thomas, while angels and God can be said to be intelligent, they are not rational.

This movement in understanding is necessary for human beings because as animals they only ever have a partial grasp of the natures of things, insofar as their knowledge depends upon always incomplete and partial sensible experience of the world. But it is sense experience, as well as the self movement that springs from it, that places human beings within the genus animal. So human understanding and willing is intrinsically bound up with the sensate activity of an animal; as a result, rational is the form that it takes in that animal.

Reason does not cause eating as something separate from it, and as an efficient cause; on the contrary, human eating is not adequately described formally unless it is described as rational eating. To fail to eat rationally is not a failure in its cause, but in the eating itself. And the human animal is not adequately described except as a rational animal, rational providing not another substance or expression of a fissure between soul or mind and body, but the fully adequate description of the human substance. Reason does not distinguish us from animals; it distinguishes us as animals. So according to Aquinas, while it is true that the activities of intellect and will are not the actualities of any physical organs, they are nonetheless the activities of the living human animal. It is Socrates the animal who knows and wills, not his mind interacting with his body.¹⁰⁸

And if ever, by some unlucky chance, anything unpleasant should somehow happen, why, there's always soma to give you a holiday from the facts. And there's always soma to calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering. In the past you could only accomplish these things by making a great effort and after years of hard moral training. Now, you swallow two or three half-gramme tablets, and there you are. Anybody can be virtuous now. You can carry at least half your morality about in a bottle. Christianity without tears—that's what soma is.⁹⁹



— Aldus Huxley (1894-1963)

Antidepressants and mood-altering medicines are often prescribed not because someone is ill but because they are entirely healthy – albeit in a way that was not to the liking of one person or another; as shown in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.¹⁰⁰ These drugs are designed to give you a break from your depressed feelings so that you can tackle some of your issues in the therapy room. *The Aged Care Royal Commission* has revealed the use of antidepressants to quieten elderly residents – a persistent rumour for years substantiated by that inquiry.¹⁰¹ Undoubtedly, the ‘medication’ changes the condition for the consumer ‘... *by manipulating the mode of coordination of the user’s organs, in order to reprogramme them for other purposes...*’¹⁰² But to what end? Making those changes to suit whom? In the case of the contraceptive pill – the reproductive organs cease ovulation, a chosen outcome by users.

In the case of antidepressants, the chosen outcome is the cessation of sadness, despair, melancholia and depression. However there is little consideration for the reasons behind these sad feelings – *we must be very happy at any cost, without consideration of why we are lost*. From an article in the New York Times by Benedict Carey and Robert Gebeloff –

Long-term use of antidepressants is surging in the United States, according to a new analysis of federal data by The New York Times. Some 15.5 million Americans have been taking the medications for at least five years. The rate has almost doubled since 2010, and more than tripled since 2000.¹⁰³

One outcome of this huge increase in such a short time is the dilemma and difficulty of withdrawal from antidepressant drugs –

But the rise in long-time use is also the result of an unanticipated and growing problem – many who try to quit say they cannot because of withdrawal symptoms they were never warned about.¹⁰⁴

Antidepressant and anti-anxiety medications are prescribed where they necessary. Consult your doctor before making changes to your medication.

Mental imagery

To help you understand the pushes and pulls of the experiences you have in relationships all of your life, your therapist may train you to use systems to help you, including mindfulness and mental imagery. Mental imagery gives you the ability to focus on particular past experiences in such a way that you can see and understand how these past experiences mimic and influence your responses to present experiences. We are all suffering a little bit from post-traumatic-distress. This is not to suppose everyone is in need of dire attention to ‘fix’ these feelings. However, they will undoubtedly have some effect on how you feel and act. The surprising thing is how easy it is to be influenced by the sound or sight of something and how quickly it can cause distress. Stuff you have done stays with you for ever. And it is stored and retrieved we-know-not-how. Douglas R. Hofstadter states in his book, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* –

One of the most remarkable and difficult-to-describe qualities of consciousness is visual imagery. How do we create a visual image of our living room? Of a roaring mountain brook? Of an orange? Even more mysterious how do we manufacture images unconsciously, images which guide our thoughts, giving them power, colour and depth? From what store are they fetched? What magic allows us to mesh two or three images hardly giving a thought as to how we should do it? Knowledge of how to do this is among the most procedural of all, for we have almost no insight into what mental image is.¹⁰⁵

This process is partly what we are looking for in the ‘therapeutic’ environment. It is good to know what goes on when we do things, functionally or dysfunctionally. We can see this in our own behaviours and often even more easily and clearly in the behaviours of others. This latter

is often how we judge our friends and compatriots; and, of course, how we fear they judge us; or even worse, how we judge ourselves.

There is research being done that shows tapping into the experiences recalled after ‘lucid dreaming’^e can assist in desensitising certain triggering events from the past. *‘People have been experiencing and writing about lucid dreaming for thousands of years. Now with the advent of brain imaging, we have been able to learn much more about what goes on during them [dreaming]... Imagine halting a recurring nightmare by choosing a different ending...’*¹⁰⁶ Is this the beginning of the end of the ‘stuff of dreams’ or possibly a way clients can help themselves in find a solution to their anxiety and angst; enabling a tool such as the NLP *Fast Rewind* to assist living life thoroughly?

That first meeting in therapy

Individuals and couples will often come to counselling after considerable pre-counselling consideration. There are millions of websites and magazines distributing relationship advice which may have been read before an appointment is finalised. Even then, keeping the appointment is an anxiety building enterprise. Once the appointment is kept finding yourself facing the inevitable revealing of your problems can be difficult. All kinds of suggestions are made to assist couples to better relate and communicate, improve their sex life, budget their incomes effectively... as if these were the root cause of the problems.

It is certainly helpful to get on better with each other and have a balanced budget but there are usually much more complicated reasons for a relationship breakdown. This book keeps pointing out that the individual must be in good form before any relationship is enjoyable and rewarding. Where do we learn to be true to ourselves, or not be ourselves, if not in our family?

**If you experience ongoing depression and anxiety
you are advised to immediately consult your
doctor or health professional.
Emergency numbers page 219.**

e. Thought to have been referred to by Aristotle: where the dreamer has some autonomy over the progress and outcome of the dream.

My Place Poem

Pshhh. I feel the wind zoom
past me as I wake up slowly.

I see the huge wavy sea just
outside my window.

I run down the tall, curvy
stairs to take a look.

I feel lazy and tired as I lay
down sleepily and sink into my
soft couch.

I am free. I am alive.

Max 8, (2011-)

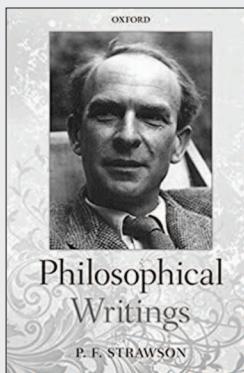




Family ¹¹⁰

4 — Family

The central commonplace that I want to insist on is the very great importance that we attach to the attitudes and intentions towards us of other human beings, and of the great extent to which our personal feelings and reactions depend upon, or involve our beliefs about these attitudes and intentions...



The object of these commonplaces is to try to keep before our minds something it is easy to forget when we are engaged in philosophy, especially in our cool contemporary style, viz. what it is actually like to be involved in ordinary interpersonal relationships, ranging from the most intimate to the most casual.¹⁰⁹

— Peter F Strawson (1919-2006)

As said earlier, the family dynamic is a major influence not only on our current relationships but also on all future relationships. From genetically acquired characteristics and early experiences imprinted from our time with our parents (or primary/immediate caregivers) and our environment (culture, society), we are raised, attuned, (hopefully finely tuned) to these influences that remain with us for the rest of our lives. The bonds made between child, mother, father and all early caregivers are critically important for the child's emotional development.

*Adult being
made here*

should be swinging above every bassinet.

The parents' love and care for the child grows as the child learns to trust their parents. If that is a given, then it seems quite important to know what happened well and what went badly in those early years.

Parent child completion

This innate trust (or learning not to trust) between parent and child resonates between them as long as they both live. This is the stuff of many hilarious (and sometimes heartbreakng) stories in literature, movies, operas and life. We've all experienced the jealous/frustrated/adoring mother, the mother-in-law jokes; the daughter/son-in-law difficulties. The mother-child dynamic is *difficulty embodied in love*. John Armstrong describes how this dynamic can lead to contentment in *Conditions of Love* –

When suckling goes well, the infant is in a significant way completed by the mother's breast and arms – and such completion is a poignant, and universally recognised image of contentment. Indeed, right through childhood the infant has a periodic sense, we might powerfully imagine, of complete contentment in the presence of a caring and attentive parent.^{111 a}

Where the mother/child attachment is well established the 'adult' will be available and secure later in adult relationships; separateness and togetherness will be an integral component of the connection. However, if the mother does not allow her child to grow into adulthood, being overprotective or ignoring/abandoning (by intention, mistake or circumstances), this poses problems for both. Where the effective nurturing bond is missing, the child has difficulty self-actualising (reaching their full potential) later in life. This incomplete/dysfunctional attachment in childhood causes dysfunction in adulthood. It is nobodies fault.

The neurotic is nailed to the cross of his fiction.

— Alfred Adler¹¹²

We create our story to explain our circumstances sourced from our feelings (often misinterpreted, misunderstood), born of memory – remodelled or recast from that emotional reaction to old experiences which we now believe, swear-by, as we negotiate our life path. Mistaken

a. See also the John Armstrong quote on -3.

beliefs, for which ‘... *we shall look for and find confirmations...*’ (*Karl Popper* – 29). The adult who scolds themselves for making a mistake, believing they are foolish or an idiot, is more than likely re-experiencing a childhood event as feelings, not necessarily current events – for example, when a parent or teacher chastised them for tripping and dirtying their clothes. While surely this is not a hanging offence. It can seem like a death sentence if the child is frightened, seeing the anger and frustration from the authority figure looming over them. These feelings can hang around in the mind for years. Later on, that terrible event becomes exaggerated, permeated, imbued and added to over-and-over each time somebody tells them off and the child-adult-child is drowning in emotion.

Now, when a bus driver looks impatient or the partner snaps or a friend makes a snarky remark or someone rolling their eyes over something that has nothing to do with them, or someone saying, ‘*Don’t be silly, darling,*’ can flood them with anxiety, shame or guilt. Just because they call you an idiot, does not make it so.



Believing in ourselves when we are told differently

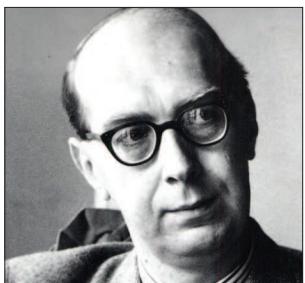
We take it as gospel when we are taught that we are fools if we are told so by our parents and caregivers. Future dysfunction beacons. Should we blame mum and dad? Philip Larkin wants to in his well known poem

(which should sit in front of every politicians seat), *This Be the Verse* from his *High Windows* collection, published 1974,¹¹³ extract –

They fuck you up you mum and dad,
they may not mean to but they do...,
it deepens like a coastal shelf...

— Philip Larkin (1922-1985)

Larkin’s poem highlights the generally held belief that we influence our children, a lot, from the way we are, the way we behave. These behaviours become embedded (...coastal shelf...) in our genes, were embed in our



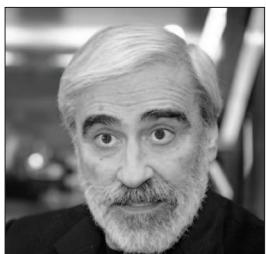
parent's genes. The final lines, '*Get out as soon as you can, Don't have any kids yourself*', is Larkin suggesting we should try to escape that influence, live our lives removing these toxic patterns; don't pass them on. Larkin is not suggesting we do not have children, but rather be aware how easily we can influence them. That twelve-line poem is a large part of this chapter, perhaps even this book. As depressing as it seems, we humans are highly suggestible beings. The moment we feel threatened, we react by implementing an immediate response if in danger, or negotiating a calm response where appropriate.

As a baby we are desperately attempting to get the attention of our mother so we can be fed, live another day, and eventually reproduce.

It is a scientific fact that each of us exist in the *centre of the known universe*. We understand this as an adult. Meanwhile, for the child the family is a miniature universe which sets the traditions that give the child and the family members a sense of belonging, their identity. This process is a practical one, *We don't talk about money at the table... We never discuss family matters with friends... Thank you Daddy for cooking...* these rituals are the systematic building of 'family,' 'tribe,' and 'community.' Within this safe community the child knows they are well supported. This does have some side effects, according to David Morris Schnarch –

This indicates that the child's memories of events leave distinct footprints in the adult's life story, some of which have been emphasised, retold or recast over the years – the impact of wishes and fears. In family arguments the mother or father may emphasise the other parents' 'mis-

guided attitudes,' especially during separation or divorce. Time distorts according to our inclinations, leanings, or mistaken beliefs. We retell the story through a distorted lens, not wilfully but inevitably.



— David Schnarch (1946-)

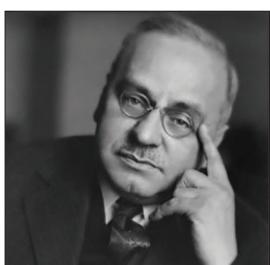
Memory's legacy

Understanding comes when we realise, we can change how we experience ourselves and others in the world; when we are curious of our own

experiences and behaviour, as well as those of our family, friends and colleagues. Memories play a huge part in knowing and loving ourselves.

Alfred Adler emphasised the importance our memories play in our lives. His work with children illustrated this clearly where he suggested children's logic was as real to them as the ground they stood on. Not real but realistic one might say. His view was that memories are 'chosen reminders' of that real ground, their foundation for their life. This is vitally important to remember as we try to sort out the realities from the fictions of our past; a past we sometimes cling to because they are our certainty –

(A person's) memories are the reminders they carry about with them of their limitations and of the meanings of events.



There are no 'chance' memories. Out of the incalculable number of impressions that an individual receives, they choose to remember only those which they consider, however dimly, to have a bearing on their problems. [Emphasis added.]¹¹⁴

— Alfred Adler (1870-1937)

Biobehavioural synchrony

Scientists have long studied how humans and animals are primed for certain behaviours. Family psychology and social researchers constantly refer to the origin of these behaviours. Children have the innateness of their mother and father in their every move. We can often see in our sister the traits of our own mother. Our brother sometimes reacts just like our father – we are pre-programmed and things are added to us as we are being formed, born, and live by every experience we encounter. The first two years of our lives are crucially important. We cannot escape this. We carry all that early experience on to later relationships. Ilinat Gordan and Ruth Feldman report in *A Biosocial Perspective on Synchrony and the Development of Human Parental Care: Handbook of Infant Biopsychosocial Development* –

In humans, synchrony has been mostly researched within the context of affiliative bonds, which are defined by being both selective and enduring, particularly the parent-infant attachment relationship.

Within the parent-infant context, synchrony denotes the temporal coordinated relationship of social behaviours between partners.

Inspired by an ethological framework which described how synchrony in mammals is moved to the intimacy of the parent-infant bond, synchrony is meticulously observed in naturalistic interactions.

The building blocks of synchronous behaviour are microcoded within the basic building blocks of human social behaviour, including gaze, arousal, vocalisations, proximity and touch modalities. Synchrony describes the coordination between these various dimensions of non-verbal social behaviour and their physiological biomarkers.¹¹⁵

We derive our character from the family genes and their experiences as well as our own. The Philip Larkin poem haunts these pages. We learn many things – how to speak, dance, talk, fight, sulk, mope, worry, panic, laugh, lie, hide, seek, freeze, run, play piano and sing, among many other traits – from our families.

Survival at any cost

The human imperative is to live and multiply. We were born this way. Larkin's poem is more significant when seen as a description/criticism of our society – how we are organised to be conservative, keeping the status quo where possible. The alternative might be revolution born of desperation – current living conditions causing desolation, low expectation. Revolution might mean annihilation or survival. This is existential horror. However, we can pretty well avoid most feelings. We have television.

Curiosity may save your life

While we can be curious of our own quirks, we can also observe others, realising they are somewhat equally as odd as ourselves. The Delphic Oracle, 350 BC teaches us first to *know thyself* – get to know how we *operate, think, judge, and decide*. Then empathy helps us understand how others *operate, think, judge, and decide*. What are their reactions, what triggers them? Observing self and others helps us gain insight into the human condition. We are all merely, yet fantastically, human. It is the thrust of impending doom that sometimes alerts us to the necessity for change. The affair that tempts us, threatens the end of our marriage or family break-up, might cause us to reconsider our family dynamic and where it leads us.

Seeing the mistake as instructive

Both functional and dysfunctional behaviours are designed to teach us how to get things right, to thrive, to live well and long as we learn from our mistakes and successes. The well differentiated adult has usually had a balanced education and upbringing. Nothing too excessive by way of praise, very little punishment or blaming for the inevitable mistakes. Anxiety arises in appropriate places, at appropriate times. as the child learns a balanced lifestyle.

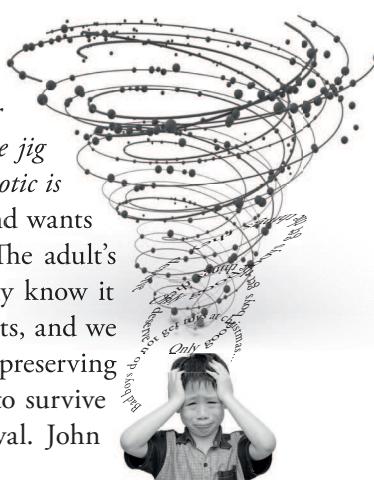
You are meant to be quick to react when you hear the screech of car tires – it may be a dangerous situation. There are other times you will want to shout out loud simply from frustration.

An elderly man walks down Park Street in Sydney. Pouring rain. Five fifteen in the evening. He has two plastic bags full to the brim with groceries, one in each hand. He is soaked and he is in a hurry. As he passes by he exclaims loudly, 'Get out of the fucking way—' We feel for him, stepping to the left a little so his path can be little easier. He touches a chord in us. We're not sure his exclamation was having the desired effect on others – all of them also desperate to get out of the rain to safety.

Tools, skills and knowledge to respond or act helpfully, fairly, justly and calmly is the aim, whatever the situation. Why do things go wrong? Why we are susceptible to inappropriate thoughts and actions?

Reaction or response

What happens to the child who is often chastised but rarely praised? The adult may end up with the *impostor syndrome*, always fearing they will be found-out: *The jig is up*. Remember the earlier Adler quote – *'The neurotic is nailed to the cross of his fiction.'* The eager young mind wants to survive, sucks up anything to aid this process. The adult's triggers are usually buried deep within us, we hardly know it is happening until the tears appear or the anger erupts, and we spoil the exciting date or friendship with our own life preserving reactions. 'Life preserving' because we are designed to survive these events that are deemed a threat to our survival. John Birtchnell writes in *Relating in Psychotherapy* –



Automatic responses do not have to be quick. We are not normally aware that, when we walk into a dark but familiar room, one of our arms has reached out to exactly the right spot on the wall to switch on the electric light. If the switch is moved, even by ourselves, every time we walk into the room for days or weeks afterwards our arm reaches out to the wrong spot on the wall.

Most actions or sequences of actions that are carried out repeatedly and routinely become automatic in this way; sometimes this is referred to as ‘going on automatic pilot’. ¹¹⁶

Some automatic reactions can send us down rabbit holes we have great difficulty climbing out from. These seemingly innate or embedded responses can be debilitating, influencing our connections for so long that we become increasingly accustomed to their outcomes and we accept them as – *Part of my personality I do not want to change because then I lose an integral part of myself that I know well, I am comfortable with.*

Memories trigger us, reminding us emotionally of times when the teacher berated us for something we inadvertently did wrong, or even entirely right but misunderstood. It is far more likely the berating will be remembered long after any praise is given; it remains as a survival trigger. It is clearly appropriate to shout at someone about to fall off a cliff, it will be a reminder not to go near a cliff edge again. Shouting in anger when you are anxious, however, will only serve to frighten someone.

The inappropriately chastised child (or adult) may end up being frightened. But worse still, that child may later in life embark on an intimate relationship and, in fear of doing wrong, suck up to a person who is charming and lovely, even if it is false. The ability to identify genuine care and respect may be diminished because they so desperately need to be liked, approved, loved. It is like ordering food when you are really hungry.

Bonds created from our family and our closest loved ones are – ‘...but an expansion, Like gold to airy thinness beat,’ as John Donne writes in *Forbidding Mourning Valediction*. (See – 156.) ¹¹⁷

The family experience colours and shapes the perceptions of the child which is carried into adulthood; decision-making processes in adulthood may be based on unmet needs, now dysfunctional needs as the adult, rather than the rather lovely qualities that are found in a mutually adult,

equally differentiated relationship. Where the child fails to have the nurturing experiences necessary to form differentiated bonds, dysfunctional behaviours become standard later in life. David Schnarch in *Constructing the Sexual Crucible* said –

Object relations capacities (i.e. the capacity to sustain resilient and meaningful emotional attachments in later adult life) emerge during the first three to four years of life. This involves the capacity to tolerate loving and hating the same person and to value others for attributes beyond their need-satisfying-functions. Good experiences with primary figures result in the emergence of a unified central ego having (a) the capacity for creativity, sexual involvement, and self-assertion, and (b) a residual of ‘good’ objects which increase the individual’s ‘relational potential’.

Less fortunate experiences result in (a) difficulty tolerating ambivalence towards partners and inability to relate to them as separate individuals, and (b) self-rejection, defensiveness, anxiety and/or depression.¹¹⁸

Infants soak-up everything they encounter – unconquered continents begging to be inhabited – every molecule of the infant is cultivating every movement, sound, feeling, taste, sight, smell, fear and comfort in order to develop into a fully formed child, then adult.

We remember events from our childhood that were good or bad according to our understanding; are now good or bad according to our biased retelling. And so it is with the new-born. Schnarch claims how easily a negative early environment plays out badly for the adult in the complicated life. There are ways to outwit the wily childhood shadows that follow some people all their lives. Memories demand to be heard whether true or false. (*See Karl Popper – 29.*) Francis Bacon says in *Novum Organum* –

The human understanding when it has adopted an opinion (either as being the received opinion or as being agreeable to itself) draws all other things to support and agree with it. And though there is a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects, in order that by this great and



pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusions may remain inviolate.¹¹⁹

— Francis Bacon (1561-1626)¹²⁰

When good or bad events occur chemical and electrical impulses direct every thought, action and emotion we experience. Humans live in a wonderful world. Our emotions are at the beck-and-call of the trillions of synapses in our brain giving rise to a myriad of feelings – good, bad, indifferent, cataclysmic, ecstatic, sad, guilty, regretful – all in a flash, often many at the same time.

Emotional, with a little reason thrown in for luck

We are subject to good and awful things criss-crossing in and out of us on an ongoing process. We study for exams thinking of the concert we are going to tonight as the newspaper falls open revealing Donald Trump, Leader of the Free World, extolling his latest love affair with Kim Jong-un^{121 b}—

"I was really being tough and so was he. And we were going back and forth, and then we fell in love. OK? No really. He wrote me beautiful letters... They're great letters. We fell in love."

In August 2019 Kim sent another ‘beautiful’ three page letter to Trump offering ‘a small apology’ for his (North Korea) tests. Trump celebrated this n announcing they’ will meet up again. North Korea issued stamps celebrating the Summit Trump and Kim attended in Singapore 2019. How can we reconcile these wildly different positions in the everyday aspects of our life? For some it’s easy. For others – they will act out in front of friends or family or even complete strangers, not realising the source of their erratic behaviour. Does erratic describe Donald Trump’s behaviour?

b. Is this ‘unmet needs’ of the child being fulfilled as an adult, albeit dysfunctionally.

These reactions are not dissimilar to the effects on people who have been involved in a traumatic experience. Post-traumatic stress disrupts many people for a lifetime. Some shut-down, withdraw or minimise their emotional output. Others act out in aggressive ways or with alcohol, drugs, repeated sexual experiences or excessive spending and so-on.

Institutionalised abuse

Many ‘acting out’ examples are seen in revelations of the institutionalised abuse from church and community groups – children horribly abused; probably by abused from horrible childhoods themselves; heads filled with broken ideas of love and attachment, (‘*fucked up by...*¹²²’).

In Australia the reports from the *Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Abuse* (2012) and the *Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services* (2017) show the remarkable degree of dysfunction in our leaders – distancing themselves from ethical, reasonable behaviour. ^c Corrupt and fraudulent attitudes alongside the unethical behaviours of public figures and administrators revealed by those two inquiries leave us aghast. These individuals are unlikely to be charged, and if they are found guilty will likely receive minimal sentences, as we saw with the 2008 Global Financial Crisis where only one banker, as of 2014, Kareem Serageldin, Managing Director/Global Head of Structured Credit in the Investment Banking Division of Credit Suisse Group was jailed, receiving a sentence of 30 months. ^d

Yet abused victims carry the effects for a lifetime. Financial losses are bad enough, but the repercussions of physical and sexual abuse are even more debilitating; careers and relationships often suffer greatly. Many victims say they cannot have a relationship of any proper functioning, decency, fulfilment or longevity. Many in relationships report that their dysfunction ruins whatever intimacy and closeness they attempt, leaving them in despair and depression.

The adult position is *to be aware, be mindful* – to actively influence

c. *The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* 2019 was begun only after ten years of media investigations and reports and 70 government reviews. Final report due mid 2020.

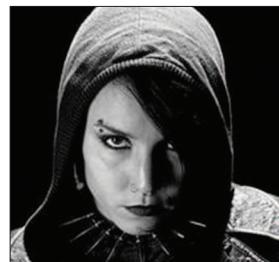
d. The world has morphed into an oligarchic entity; little competition in business, a few major banks dominating the market, governments run by those who can afford to advertise their way into power, use of ‘fake news claims’ to obfuscate issues. All the while most of us are OK; doing *OK*; getting along **OK!**

events from a differentiated individuated adult position. Being mindfully aware and present does not come easily. Although it's very difficult to come out of the abused childhood without some form of dysfunction, for the individual there are ways to lessen the harm. Long, hard and compassionate care administered lovingly can turn this around.

Good and bad dynamics

It is a good idea to view the Family Dynamic as neither right nor wrong, good nor bad. It just is. It has happened that way, now what can I do to ameliorate the consequences? To see some family dynamics playing out read books, watch films. Novels are especially telling examples of how we operate when we are connected – *The Girl with Dragon Tattoo*¹²³ and *Call Me By Your Name*,¹²⁴ for instance. The main characters in these stories are rich with reaction and response, dysfunction, love, responsibility, care, mistake, fear... all the usual suspects of human feelings – all founded in family dynamics.

Lisbeth Salander in *The Girl with Dragon Tattoo*¹²⁵ (*played by Noomi Rapace in the film, right*) suffered a grotesque childhood. Her reactions and feelings are as extreme as her experiences. As she comes into contact with difficult people she reacts appropriately. When someone is kind she does not know what to do. It puzzles her; her logical brain struggles with her distancing behaviours as she craves connection. This confusion pushes her to distance herself and be cold. She has a lover who is threatened, hurt; her reaction is to be very protective, albeit extreme in her actions. Her intelligence serves her well. All survival instincts to the fore. She is a definitive study in how to survive under extremely difficult circumstances.



Marzia—‘Friends?’ — ‘Forever?’

Elio in *Call Me By Your Name* is also well served by his intelligence – he is precociously skilled at the piano, his upbringing bathed in respect and love. His first romantic relationships are clumsy and loving; although he is inexperienced there is no doubt he is imbued with all that is required to navigate a wide range of human emotions. After falling in love with Oliver he mopes around, love-sick, not having a clue what this experience is – maybe wanting to be like, or even be, Oliver. Elio is suffering from ‘over falling in love’. Remember though, this is his first experience of this

emotional roller-coaster. The only other time he has experienced this kind of loving was when he was born and he had the intimacy his mother gave him. Elio's every contact with the others is loving. Even when it goes disastrously wrong he and his family and friends display the humour which nourishes his pathway to living well.

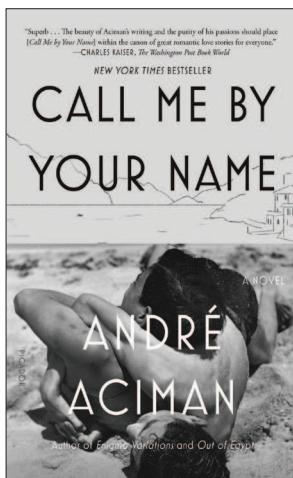
When Marzia and Chiara (who are in love with Elio and Oliver respectively) are left behind when the boys go away for the weekend as lovers, Elio's mother invites Chiara to dinner that night – ‘... and bring Marzia.’ she adds. The two girls are immediately embraced by an extended family who comfort them in their loss.

In both of these stories the early family dynamic dictates how the child-as-adult will probably be. Lisbeth is distancing, cold, calculating, and suspicious – her loyalty carefully administered to protect those she just might be able to trust, even if only for now. She doesn't realise it is the qualities of the others she wants or admires.

In contrast, Elio has no fear in trying new things, perhaps because his experience is grounded in trust. He dives into every situation, as uncomfortable as it is, trusting the other people. His friends are always trustworthy because he is trustworthy. When he tells everyone at breakfast – ‘I nearly had sex with Marzia last night,’ his father simply replies – ‘Why didn’t you?’ Later, Elio experiments with having sex with a peach, successfully – ‘I see you’re embracing the plant world now,’ says Oliver. Relationships and emotions, also neither good nor bad, right nor wrong, they are what they are. Samuel, Elio’s father speaks the speech of the year when Elio returns berift of Oliver in *Call me By Your Name* –

What lies ahead is going to be very difficult. Fear not. It will come. At least I hope it does. And when you least expect it. Nature has cunning ways of finding our weakest spot. Withdrawal can be a terrible thing when it keeps us awake at night, and watching others forget us sooner than we’d want to be forgotten is no better. If there is pain, nurse it, and if there is a flame, don’t snuff it out, don’t be brutal with it.

Withdrawal can be a terrible thing when it keeps us awake at night, and watching others forget us sooner than we’d want to be forgotten is no better. We rip out so much of ourselves to be cured of things faster



than we should that we go bankrupt by the age of thirty and have less to offer each time we start with someone new. But to feel nothing so as not to feel anything — what a waste... Most of us can't help but live as though we've got two lives to live, one is the mock-up, the other the finished version, and

then there are all those other versions in between. *But there's only one.* How you live your life is your business, just remember, our hearts and our bodies are given to us only once. And before you know it, your heart is worn out, and, as for your body, there comes a point when no one looks at it, much less wants to come near it. Right now, there's sorrow, pain. Don't kill it and with it the joy you've felt. ¹²⁶



Elio and his father,
Call Me By Your Name, André Aciman.

Triumph and Disaster

Be curious about how things work; ask 'why' at every turn. We are not the instruments that dictate most of what goes on. Keep in mind lots of things just happen. Events transpire and other people act; both without any control on your part. Be open to the many experiences coming your way. That is, at least in part, the aim of having a healthy attachment in relationships – living a differentiated life where triumph and disaster are treated the same. Hard determinism ^e might argue that we are not responsible for any event, emotion or feeling that we experience because all is 'predetermined by previous events and causes', ad infinitum. How or where that all began is 'the unknown.' Meanwhile, you can have agency over your feelings and the consequent actions you take when you are being mindful. Rudyard Kipling (*opposite*) highlights the nature of this in his poem, *If– (see opposite)* ... 80

e. *Hard* or *metaphysical determinism* holds that humans have no free will and all life is made possible or exists due to external factors. This is inflated to mean that humans have little or no ethical responsibility or accountability.

If, (1895)

Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise—

If you can dream— and not make dreams your master;
If you can think— and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;

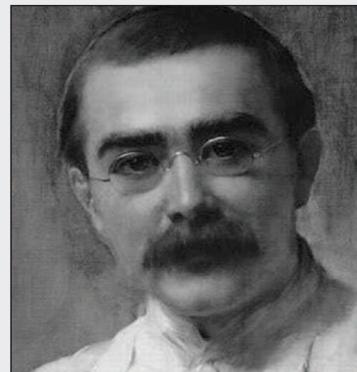
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools—

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew,
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you, Except the
Will which says to them— 'Hold on— '

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings- nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;

If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And— which is more— you'll be a Man, my son— ¹³⁴

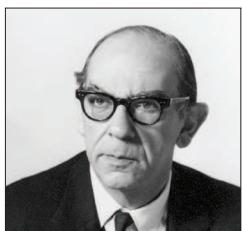


Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

as does Elio's father – ‘...if there is pain, nurse it. And if there is a flame, don't snuff it out, don't be brutal...’ (previous page).

When we have knowledge, we can be creative – thinking about things differently. Better still, doing rather than thinking. At least do as much as you think. Isaiah Berlin in *The Roots of Romanticism* said, of Johann Gottlieb Fichte and his view of knowledge –

Our lives do not depend upon contemplative knowledge. Life does not begin with disinterested contemplation of nature or of objects. Life begins with action. Knowledge is an instrument, as afterwards William James and Bergson (Henri Louis) and many others were to repeat; knowledge is simply an instrument provided by nature for the purpose of effective life, of action; knowledge is knowing how to



survive, knowing what to do, knowing how to be, knowing how to adapt things to our use, knowing, in other words, how to live (and what to do in order not to perish), in some unawakened, semi-instinctive fashion.¹²⁷

— Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997)

This ‘knowing’ is where sadness and gladness run alongside each other alongside every breathwe take and expel. (*If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster, And treat those two impostors just the same... ,*’ If ‘by Rudyard Kipling, (see-79). . It might be that uncertainty accompanies every stage of that journey. Our experiences are interpreted according to our education, our consequent knowledge and outlook and our influencers – friends and visitors to the home bringing in ideas from all quarters, books, visits to galleries, concerts, film nights, plenty of talking around the table. Each new thought springs forth a myriad of possibility for the enquiring mind.

Call Me By Your Name is a good example of this rich environment. We add to the genetic pool (see *Catherine Bracic*, – 30) as we experience our life. Not forgetting the negative side of the ‘comprehensive’ education: we are all getting the government prescription of the day: information biased left or right depending on the day. This *compulsory prescription* (which was later adopted throughout the world) was initiated in the German education system in 1809 as a ‘freedom and right’^f to an education by Gottlieb Fichte and Wilhelm von Humboldt –

f. Although, when freedom and right ‘entitlement to’ becomes ‘compulsory’ or an obligation there arise questions of ‘freedom’ of choice.

Education is to be democratic in nature and universal and compulsory in application ... [it] is the very life-blood of the State [because] ... the individual is not only an individual; he is at the same time a member of a community and as such must be educated to take his place in it; otherwise the future of that community is doomed. ¹²⁸

We may not all have what Elio has, but we can always encourage experiment as an antidote to the poison and rot of TV, the craziness of social media, the curse of the ‘selfie.’ Kendall Jenner (originally of Keeping up with the Kardashians TV tell-all fame) has built an empire through her social media accounts (spruiking her ‘*buy this to look like me*’ products), which are ruining generations of minds – ‘*With no fewer than 143.5 million followers across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.*’ ¹²⁹ Twitter is possibly the inanest of them all. Nothing new here: Alan Ginsberg – ‘*I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked.*’ ¹³⁰ Jenner, 21, is at the time of publication the youngest self-made billionaire in the world. How to change these influences... Reading engages the brain in unique ways. From the journal *Brain Connectivity* –

Neuroscientists have discovered that reading a novel can improve brain function on a variety of levels. The recent study on the brain benefits of reading fiction was conducted at Emory University. The study titled ‘Short- and Long-Term Effects of a Novel on Connectivity in the Brain,’ was recently published in the journal *Brain Connectivity*. According to the study, reading is a lifestyle choice that is also driven by a desire to unplug from a constant stream of visual information... One of the benefits of getting outside yourself by putting yourself in someone else’s shoes through a novel is that it improves theory of mind. ...The changes caused by reading a novel were registered in the left temporal cortex, an area of the brain associated with receptivity for language, as well as the primary sensorimotor region of the brain. Neurons of this region have been associated with tricking the mind into thinking it is doing something it is not, a phenomenon known as grounded, or embodied cognition. ¹³¹



— Gregory Berns, Distinguished Professor of Neuroeconomics, Emory University, Atlanta.

It seems simply reading about others is **nearly the same as interacting** face-to-face with them – it arouses our empathy; Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) says morally aware (empathic) children have had the experiences of mixing well with peers.¹³² As well, to do very well in your life you will need to be different to the average Joe/Jo. Writing in the Winter (2009) edition of Stanford Social Innovation Review and reviewing *Iconoclast*, by Gregory Berns, Robert J. Sternberg points to the three major mental roadblocks that people need to overcome if they wish to be iconoclasts. *'First, see things differently from other people – see what others do not see. Second, conquer your fear of failure, of the unknown, and of ridicule. Third, be socially intelligent: Figure out how to interest people in your ideas and how to sell those ideas to opinion leaders.'*¹³³ Sternburg also points out that iconoclasts' brains are wired differently.^g

The 'Friends?' – 'Forever' handshake

Call Me By Your Name illustrates intelligence, caring, nurturing and concern for the benefit of the family, community, and the species. (*Jean Jean Liedloff – xx*) Things go wrong things dip near to chaos but a way-out appears. Marzia cycles off, she can't speak after being rebuffed by Elio, who couldn't find the words to say 'no' to her – he can only hold out his arms in silence (*see opposite image 1*). Later Marzia meets up with Elio as his loss of Oliver engulfs him, and she offers her hand (2) – 'Friends?' Elio's response, as he takes her hand, fresh tears in his eyes – 'Forever-' he replies (3). These two young friends already know a hell of a lot about love and loving each other.

Those who are not longing to be taken over for lack of own completeness, nor wanting to take over the other in a misguided effort to teach them how to live better, those people are already living well. An adult cannot take the beloved's beauty and serene nature by osmosis as a child does with their parents – nor by purchase; these qualities are elusive. You have to develop your own truth, intelligence and serenity. When unmet needs spill into adulthood great neediness arises.

Personal-development begins with learning what is not, so far, known. Turning to the classics will, at least lead you to where you may find ideas as to how others have resolved issues. Novels teach us all kinds of things, including about love. At the worst it will give you a break from 'reality' a moment or two for you to step back and see how others live their lives.

g. *Iconoclast*: a person who boldly moves forward worrying not how other people judge them. From the greek: *eikon* "image," and *klastes*, meaning 'breaker'.



Page 83-85: Stills from film *Call Me By Your Name*.¹³⁵ Page 83: 1. Elio unable speak, can only hold out his arms to say no to Marzia; 2. Marzia: 'Friends?' Elio: 'Forever-'; 3. Marzia and Elio: hug in 'forever friendship'; 4. Oliver pensive knowing he is leaving for USA; 5. Elio contemplates and finds acceptance in last frames of film.

Page 84-85: Elio and Oliver in Rome.



'How wonderful, to walk half drunk with a Lemonsoda on a muggy night like this'



around the gleaming slate cobblestones of Rome with someone's arm around me.'

André Aciman, *Call Me by Your Name*



Anais Nin (1903-1977) ¹³⁶

5 — Love

Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word ‘love’ here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace – not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth.

— James Baldwin
The Fire Next Time, (1963)

Love never dies a natural death. It dies because we don’t know how to replenish its source. It dies of blindness and errors and betrayals. It dies of illness and wounds; it dies of weariness, of *witherings*, of *tarnishings*.

— Anais Nin

What is happening when we fall in love? Then fall again-and-again? Loving brings us to a powerful, intimate, ongoing connection; to a rewarding experience we could never achieve being alone. To have any serious attachment loving must have *immanence* – longevity, meaningfulness, *intrinsicality*, substance, prescience, awareness, humility.

Many authors present compelling ideas about healthy, unhealthy, fulfilled, failed and unrequited love. Scour the classics if you want to know how to love. The ancient Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Koreans and others wrote prolifically about how to relate – many ancient texts, although often only in partly recovered form, reveal ideas to live well, love well and have good fellowship.

According to Greek mythology, Aristophanes explained that Zeus made three genders: male, female and androgynous (sun, earth and moon).

‘For another thing, the shape of each human being was a rounded whole, with back and sides forming a circle. Each one

had four hands and the same number of legs, and two identical faces on a circular neck. They had one head for both faces, which were turned in opposite directions, four ears, two sets of genitals, and everything else was as you would imagine from what I've said so far... They were terrible in their strength and vigour; they had great ambitions and made an attack on the gods.³ ¹³⁷

When these creatures decided to climb Mt Olympus to attack the gods, Zeus feared their power and split these four-legged, four-armed, two-faced creatures in half in order to weaken them – and to be forever in search of their other half. Later, out of pity, Zeus allowed each half to access its opposing sexual organs for the purpose of procreation. ¹³⁸ *Aristophanes* went on to explain the human imperative to find our ‘other half’ –

This then is the source of our desire to love each other. Love is born into every human being; it calls back the halves of our original nature together; it tries to make one out of two and heal the wound of human nature. Each of us, then, is a ‘matching half’ of a human whole...and each of us is always seeking the half that matches him. ¹³⁹

All good myths aside, humans like to be together, to love and be loved; it is instinctual. There is a biological and psychological impetus that moves us to form intimate connections. The balanced individual combines the love, sex and friendship aspects in the relationship. Neither sex nor friendship dominate the couple’s connection. The enthralling kind of ‘falling in love’ is as important as the reasoning-logical aspects of the ongoing bond, developing different connections and attachments as time goes on. Some people get such a thrill from the falling they immediately discard the object of their passion on attaining it, ever in search of the new thrill. This reminds us of Zeus’ myth – the split, and then the need to be connected – the anxiety maybe playing out in the form of neediness in the relationship and hence the ever-constant thrill seeking that can lead to problems like sex addiction. This is the adult trying to meet the ‘unmet needs’ of the child.

Aristophanes’ theory is only hilarious if we are to take it literally. We don’t of course, as we don’t take any myths literally. However, the implication that there is only one person to fill this need can cause anxiety beyond the mere human impulse to be connected. We want a balance in relationships and finding someone we can connect with in our own street is a hard-enough task, let alone finding our perfect mate some-

where in the world of seven-and-a-half billion people. This might suggest that *falling in love* is also a myth; it might be better described as *losing our mind*. There are so many things we need to know about a person if we are to decide to go ahead, make it reality, make a commitment – things impossible to know in that instant recognition we sometimes feel when we fall.

'Falling' implies 'not in control'. We also often say we are 'crazy' for them or 'mad' about them – these are slang words describing a loss of reason. This most important experience is also fraught with disaster if all you can think of is the 'wanted one'. This is now an obsession, overwhelming all other aspects of your life. This is where you may self-sabotage and behave in a manner that will ruin the connection.

A person who only likes ‘house music’ and oral sex will not be a good fit for a person who only likes classical music and S&M. Those are extreme values, but the point is clear – we need a variety of compatible interests for a relationship to prosper. Each person must also maintain their own interests. Any formula can be argued for or against, any exception to this argument can be reasoned.

Falling in love ‘...is often a disaster, ...doesn’t that prove conclusively that we are meant not to do it, ...science showing the way and all that’, – has us asking, ‘... shouldn’t we be more circumspect when it comes to love?’ The inclination here is to lean in that direction – excepting that along the way of falling in and out of love we do learn to negotiate the tricky world of relationships. We find great solace, sometimes excitement, tranquillity, peace and fulfilment in the company of one another. The Zeus myth might be a way of explaining why we end up working very well in partnership, despite the difficulties; when we are seeking to complement (not complete) each other. However, contemporary times give us so much to play with that we may be too distracted to be able to concentrate on the simple things of life.



The one self-knowledge worth having is to know one’s own mind.
One cannot remain in love unless one perpetually falls in love.

— Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924)

Chemical warehouse of pleasure

How we are sold the idea of falling in love

Testosterone, oestrogen, progesterone, oxytocin and vasopressin play important parts in sexual arousal and ongoing attraction in males and females. Orgasm triggers the neurohormones, oxytocin and prolactin as well as endorphins. We humans/animals are a chemical hothouse when it comes to sex exciting our muscles and brain to work in overdrive.



The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.

— Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961)

Neuroscientific research anticipates ‘love-drugs’ will soon be available to supplant the early ‘in love’ feelings as they inevitably wear off – when desire has faded, why stay, unless you have kids. Falling in love may be necessary with its addictive nature replaced by oxytocin released during pregnancy and nursing playing a significant role in early and *ongoing* attachment to the new-born.

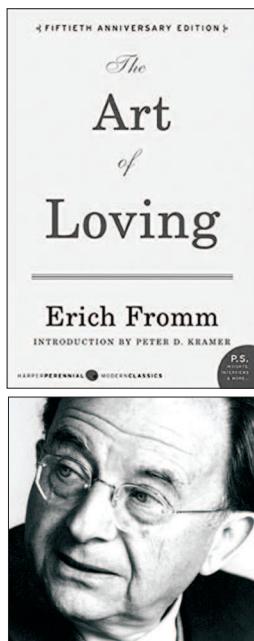
When people fall in love blood flow to certain areas in the brain; chemicals (dopamine, adrenaline and norepinephrine) flood the brain and pleasure is immediately experienced. Dopamine and oxytocin are about as addictive as alcohol and cocaine. These drugs are quickly released into our system. Seeing how this addictive quality can affect us mere mortals who are simply looking for a ‘love hit’ is a surprising twist on Anna’s plea – *‘I’m just a girl, standing in front of a boy, asking him to love her.’*¹⁴⁰

As with most of our needs there is a world of instinct, biology, science and mechanics moving our every thought and action. Falling in love is stimulating our biology and our intellect. It is not just lust. It’s also ‘an idea.’ The idea of being connected may be for security, solace, delight, out of fear, a desire for completeness or a need for relief.

Born to be attached

The overpowering ‘cultural construct’ of heterosexuality is fast fading. Everyone wants to attach as intently as every other person on

the planet – male, female, heterosexual, homosexual, transgender male, transgender female, cis male, cis female, non-binary, transsexual, non-gender, gender-fluid, gender-queer, demigirl, demiboy and so-on... all seek attachment. Does this following extract from Erich Fromm remind you of Aristophanes? Fromm says, from *The Art of Loving* –



The desire for interpersonal fusion is the most powerful striving in man. It is the most fundamental passion, it is the force which keeps the human race together, the clan, the family, the society. The failure to achieve it means insanity or destruction – self-destruction or destruction of others. Without love, humanity could not exist for a day. Is love an art? Then it requires knowledge and effort. Love isn't something natural. Rather it requires discipline, concentration, patience, faith, and the overcoming of narcissism. It isn't a feeling, it is a practice.¹⁴¹

— Erich Fromm (1900-1980)

Erich Fromm's dedication to *The Art of Loving* was immense. However, much as we may agree on the theory that loving another human could be an essential part of the fully lived life there is some baulking at his idea as '*insanity or destruction (of the self or of others)*' where the unloved condition occurs. And it does occur much more than we realise. When people don't want to be connected with another human it may be reasonable – maybe something has influenced that decision – early life experiences, religious or political beliefs. Immanuel Kant thought that our knowledge depends on the environmental impact it has on us as well as the way we order or perceive that impact. Objectively, things happen; subjectively, we appraise, judge, decide, react or respond. It is rarely the same perception for all of us. When our perceptions align we may love that we love that in each other – our completed half? On first dates we agree on pretty much everything, not thinking of Kant all that much –



Ich soll niemals anders verfahren
als so, dass ich auch wollen könne,
meine Maxime solle ein allgemeines
Gesetz werden. ^{142 a}

Kant also held the belief that friendship is the greatest form of love. We want to touch and be touched.

Dysfunctional outcomes in a relationship, e.g., breakdown, verbal altercations, violence and domestic abuse etc., have that same ‘legitimacy’ as functional behaviours. They are as real as each other. However the influences that lead to dysfunctional or functional

behaviours are quite different. Dysfunctional connections can lead to rape, murder, paedophilia, among others. There is also the problem of pornography. Men and boys from 16 to 60 report they are addicted to pornography. To raise these issues in public causes embarrassment to many people. Dysfunctional connections require moderation – care, medical help, psychological help, psychiatric help, imprisonment – for the sake of the community.

With attachment what is required is not to blindly follow, but to maintain separateness and togetherness simultaneously within the connection; this is a complicated management process. Being born to be attached is a tricky road to navigate. We need this connection, yet sometimes we don’t see the potholes lying in wait. We need to add intelligence, care and respect for the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. Love is responsibility – it is a task, a commitment, a trial, a joy, sometimes a disaster.

Love... beautiful love, unconditional love. We’re born knowing it, and receiving it. And yet what messiness awaits us.

— Deborah Moggach, *The Carer*

a. *I should never act differently than that I could also want my maxim to become a general law.* Kant’s influence on philosophy (how to live well) can’t be summed up in a few words, however, those few words are very good. Or, to put it another way, *Do unto others as you would have them do to you*, the Golden Rule.

Why not look to others for completion?

The biosphere, and the various ecosystems that coexist harmoniously within it, includes humans. In that sense, looking toward others and them look back implies a type of ‘dependency’. The concept of ‘falling in love’ is part of that. Falling in love is an important process in the circle of human life. Humans would have died out aeons ago if this imperative was not, well, imperative and ongoing. There’s something very human in the act of falling in love. Something in the stars that pushes us to the inevitable kiss, the inexorable sexual union. This inexorability is a challenge – without care and responsibility these impulses and actions have unforeseen outcomes. Falling in love is viewing life (and especially your love) through a distorted lens. Not, as we are romantically inclined to say ‘rose coloured lenses’. It is much worse than that. We see our prospective partner as ‘our completion’. Dangerous territory.

We would hardy propose our dogs are ‘in love’ when they copulate on the street corner. Yet aren’t we merely (slightly?) a more sophisticated animal. On a more personal, human level the impulse to connect can have a lot to do with an innate feeling of not being a completed human – back to Zeus and the Aristophanes tale. It is manifestly true that there is some consideration in completing ourselves as we grow into adulthood and as we do we help complete the other whilst attaining independence and interdependence – living separately and together at the same time. This is a balancing act we must perfect in order to live well, live thoroughly.

Humans are nervous when alone. *Will it rain today?* is the least of our problems. *Will I survive today?* is a far more worrying thought. The instinct to survive plays on our mind – we all know that in a group the chances of surviving the disasters that may lie ahead will be greater than if we go it alone. In earlier times, usually a group of about 150 people made up a tribe and survival depended on them depending on each other. These days, there is an inevitable tendency for us to rely on each other – *a little bit*.

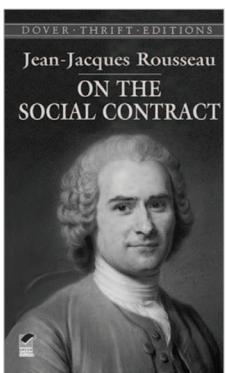
We can look to others for reassurance and completion – *a tiny bit*. We can look to others to help fill in the gaps in our personality – *a minuscule bit*. The complaint from the partner that is fiscally responsible is that their partner is not. On the other hand, their partner may be terrific at coming up with exciting entertaining ideas to help further their combined life experience. Get over your tiny hurdle of seeking absolute

security and work together to have an interesting future, whilst securing yourselves (your speciality) and enjoying the fruits of your labour (their speciality), in the present.

How well each of the partners operate separately determines how good the togetherness is in the relationship.

In order to achieve connection and fulfilment each person must not only be aware of their strengths and weaknesses but be embracing of their partner's weaknesses and strengths. View your partner as a teacher. This is the benefit of teaming up intelligently. Two spend-thrifts would be miserable; two misers would be miserable (take notes Harry). So, let's not crucify our partner for doing things we would never do – they just might have a better handle on some things than you. We might not even know where that handle is? Celebrate the incompleteness of self and others and achieve completeness together. '*I complete myself...*', says Sandra Bullock; I'm not looking to be completed but complemented, added to, better by combination – without dependency. (*See Japanese pottery repair, Kintsugi – 149.*)

Being completed by the other will likely make you dependent on the other. The other person completing you impedes your development – like a teacher who tells you what to do rather than asking you how you would do it. A great education system produces thinkers. A poor system produces followers. It's a form of intellectual abuse. A demeaning abusive system (to take it a step not too far) is often established when one political party or person (dictatorship) is in power for many years. As suggested by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *The Social Contract* –



The same situation occurs when members of the government separately usurp the power which they ought to exercise as a body; for this is no less than infraction of the law, and it produces an even greater disorder. For then there are, so to speak, as many princes as there are magistrates, and the state being no less divided that the government, perishes or changes its form... When the state is dissolved, the abuse of government, whatever it may be, takes the general name of anarchy.

More precisely democracy degenerates into ochlocracy [government by the populace; mob rule], aristocracy into oligarchy, and I would add that royal government degenerates into tyranny...¹⁴³



Greta Ernman Thunberg, Swedish climate activist (2003-)

A paternalistic, chauvinistic economic philosophy of expansion and Western colonialism continues to heavily influence all earthly matters. Meanwhile China and India continue to expand rapidly, (*see chart –xxii*). It is true that many people are elevated from poverty, yet their discontent remains, even grows, until today we are mired in politics of shame – wealth for the few driven by greed and misuse of power seems to be entirely acceptable. The middle class is huge and sated; the upper class, rich and small, and powerful; the poor, voiceless. Not so fast say some.

Politics god-dammit–

The current (2019) Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison¹⁴⁴ scathingly chastised school children recently for protesting about the parliament's lack of action on climate change, saying –

What we want is more learning in schools and less activism in schools... Each day I send my kids to school and I know other members' kids should also go to school but we do not support our schools being turned into parliaments...¹⁴⁵

What should schools be doing other than teaching thinking? What do the kids say? Well, Greta Thunberg (*above*) says¹⁴⁶ –

There are no grey areas when it comes to survival. Either we continue as a civilisation or we don't. One way or another, we have to change. Countries like mine and Australia must start reducing

our emissions dramatically if we believe in equality and climate justice. The adults have failed us. And since most of them, including the press and the politicians, keep ignoring the situation, we must take action into our own hands.¹⁴⁷

Greta Thunberg says – ***How dare you?*** to Andrew Bolt from his *Herald Sun Throne* with his blog-tweetting regarding her mental health, in a very demeaning manner globally diagnosing from his very great height a proactive intelligent 16 year old – *'No teenager is more freakishly influential than Greta Thunberg, the deeply disturbed messiah of the global warming movement... Of course, she's going by racing yacht [sailing to New York for the 2019 Global Climate Change Summit], because she refuses to fly and heat the planet with an aeroplane's global warming gasses... That typical refusal to compromise is guaranteed to help create another round of frantic media hype for Thunberg, who is one of the most astonishing Messianic figures in world history – and I don't mean that in a good way. I have never seen a girl so young and with so many mental disorders treated by so many adults as a guru.'*¹⁴⁸

Thunberg's, adult response – *'I am indeed "deeply disturbed" about the fact that these hate and conspiracy campaigns are allowed to go on and on and on just because we children communicate and act on the science. Where are the adults?'* Greta and many children will find little help or scientific response to her awareness campaigns from these media-shock-self-serving 'adults' who act like tiny frightened children in big bodies with tiny intelligences stamping their feet, throwing tantrums. Greta crossed the Atlantic ocean to the 2019 climate change conference in New York, sailing in a zero carbon emission yacht; her choice to help avoid the carbon emissions caused by planes.

What do you really want?

Seeking completion might explain the way we look for mentors, advisors, confidants, mother and father figures to help guide our way. Pop and



“

People are suffering. |
People are dying.
Entire ecosystems are
collapsing. We are at
the beginning of a
mass extinction and
all you can talk about
is money and fairy
tales of eternal
economic growth.
How dare you.

Greta Thunberg
16-year-old environmental activist
to world leaders at the United
Nations climate summit

USA TODAY

#HowDareYou

movie stars can elicit such huge loyalty in their followers that fights can break out, fans faint at the thought of seeing or touching their object of desire. Fans dress like them, imitating their look and mannerisms. Some leaders are renowned only for charisma, inviting us to look up to them. No wonder mere mortals can fall foul by adoring someone who shows the slightest bit of interest in them. Perhaps the greater the need to be loved the easier it is to fall; the novice's folly. Practice loving.

Design a pathway for what you want. How will you execute that? What are the ramifications for others?

Romanticism and Love

A complication of events, ideologies and philosophies along with the pragmatism of a contemporary life land us in this *messiness*, (Deborah Moggach) we call falling in love. Some of us fall in love with love itself: the Romantics. If we take a political stance, we have the right to fall even though we probably do not realise what is happening to us. The Greeks knew a thing-or-two about love with seven types of love identified –

Philia defined by Aristotle – for friendship, loyalty among equals, family, brotherly love. Sometimes used generally for any kind of love.

Éros defined by Plato as passionate or erotic love. *Éros* can refer to beauty within a person or of a thing, or an 'ideal' beauty.

Agápe specifically refers to love of family – children and spouse. Thomas Aquinas further expounded *Agápe* 'to will the good of another.'

Ludus is the love we call playfulness. This is the child exploring, curiously poking into everything. The day-to-day activities benefit greatly from this kind of loving.

Storge refers to the tenderness or empathy parents naturally hold for their children or all people.

Pragma describes the long lasting love of a couple in marriage, not referring to the romantic at all, a pragmatic loving.

Philautia is love of one's own self. the most important love of all.

Finding a way to describe how you love might be made easier if we agree that our attraction to others may include several strands of these feelings. Two that stand out are – 1. passionate madness (Eros); and 2. platonic, a transcendence and ecstasy through non-sexual adoration of the beloved. This latter Greek love (born of Plato's writings) was ... 100



John Keats (1795-1821)

La Belle Dame sans Merci, (1819)John Keats¹⁶²

O what can ail thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful, a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said –
I love thee true.

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gaz'd and sighed deep,
And there I shut her wild sad eyes
So kiss'd to sleep.

And there we slumber'd on the moss,
And there I dream'd, ah woe betide —
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
Who cry'd—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall—'

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke, and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.



La Belle Dame sans Merci (1893) John William Waterhouse.¹⁶³

almost exclusively between men and non-sexual. According to Sophocles, a Greek dramatist of the fifth century B.C., love is both passionate and frightening. As stated by Sharon S. Brehm, *Intimate Relationships* –

...Love is not love alone, But in her name lie many names concealed; For she is Death, imperishable Force, Desire unmixed, wild Frenzy, Lamentation.¹⁴⁹

Roman love was viewed as '*...a torment that occurred outside of marriage.*' In the 12th century courtly love would see troubadours and knights paying homage to 'courtly' ladies. John William Waterhouse painted this knightly-maiden scene (*see – 99*) – a married lady preferred, adding to the intrigue and illicitness of that loving. This love was specifically adulterous, albeit perhaps entirely non-sexual. This is often the claim made by the modern 'adulterer' – '*My wife doesn't understand me, but my new fresh lover does. We talk a lot. That's why this happened.*'

Before the 17th century marriages were more often arrangements made for the benefit of the family; romance was the last concern. Romance was seen as a doomed entity, ironically all the more *romantic*. For instance regard the love stories of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, Richard I of England and Philip II Augustus of France, Héloïse d'Argenteuil and Peter Abelard, Richard and Mildred Loving; and in literature, Romeo and Juliette, Guinevere and Lancelot, Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy... all romantic stories, often deadly. At the beginning of the 18th century freedom for the 'individual' started to become possible. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *The Social Contract* (*see – 94*) set out to establish the responsibilities and rights of the individual; sophisticated and mature societies still struggle with this concept. Today we see romance as the natural story, our expectations and dreams are not to be ignored. Nobody expects their love to be 'forbidden love' and the freedom to express individuality is, to a certain extent, tied to this concept.

In Bed-The Kiss, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1892), (*opposite*) depict the times of Toulouse-Lautrec's milieu; it is more likely a passionate yet non-erotic scene, where girls of the night would sleep together for safety. Nevertheless, it is a private and intimate scene of the times, albeit painted to be viewed .

Now, in the 21st century the privacy of sex, marriage, relationship or love has all but been annihilated by social media. '*I can't give up my Facebook, how could I tell if my lover was cheating on me?*' No longer is there any mystery in that first sexual encounter, let alone any later encounter.



In Bed: The Kiss (1892), Henri Toulouse Lautrec.¹⁶⁴

Trust has been annihilated along with romance. Donald Trump extolled his power of being famous as a norm and when it was broadcast worldwide – ‘*When you’re a star, they let you do it... Grab ‘em by the pussy. You can do anything...*’¹⁵⁰ – it made little difference to his being elected to the highest office in the ‘free world’. With such cultural signifier writ large there is no surprise current ‘star’ footballers, film-stars (actors, producers), entrepreneurs, internet would-bes, and so on, believe that ‘one’ can do anything: individualism without community responsibility.

For pre-internet behaviours, view the scene in *Call Me By Your Name* where Elio first has sex with Marzia. The web has shown us all how it should be done long before we are mature enough to know what the hell a libido even is. The Kardashian soft porn exhibitionism with the Calvin Klein advertisements where the American royal family of *nouveau-riche-glitz*, seemingly to emulating the British Royals in style (substance) and vacancy, lounge provocatively in underwear presenting body images that are unattainable to most without lots of surgery. Authenticity doesn’t rule when you are prepared to go under the knife to create the illusion



Jane Fonda (1937-)



Vanessa Redgrave (1937-)

of youth and beauty. Jane Fonda, actor, model, activist and all round good and estimable human, currently spending four months in Washington being arrested every Friday for protesting about climate change, aged 82, says –

On one level, I hate the fact that I've had the need to alter myself physically to feel that I'm OK," she says. "I wish I wasn't like that. I love older faces. I love lived-in faces. I loved [sic] Vanessa Redgrave's face." ¹⁵¹ Vietnam Image. ¹⁵²

Societal norms within each culture establish customs for young people to meet and form partnerships. Hindu custom recognises eight forms of marriage: *Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatiya, Gandharva, Asura, Rakshasa* and *Paishacha*. The last two are forbidden, because force is involved, but are recognised for the sake of children. For the rest, they mostly rely on family discussion and agreement, the giving of a cow, bull, ornaments or cash. It is likely that Hindu customs allow for considerable thought before a bond is established; couples must buy into the idea. In Western tradition, far less ceremony is awarded to marriage. People meet under all kinds of condition which allows for passion, impulse and liberated (the Pill) sex.



Above: Jane Fonda gestures after being arrested at Capitol Hill, Washington October 18, 2019, 50 years after her Vietnam War protests. Below: Fonda at an anti-Vietnam War conference in the Netherlands in January 1975.



We wouldn't want to fall out of an airplane; we jump out because we have a safety net, the parachute, which we employ before we splatter on the ground.

The Fisherman and the Syren (1858), (detail right, main image – 105)¹⁵³ by Frederic Leighton is a sensuous depiction of both the male and female, the rush of seduction (and addiction) permeating every fibre of their beings; a theme that became popular in the nineteenth century. *The Fisherman*, ‘taken’ by the Syren’s beauty and presence, is a highly romanticised painting. *The Fisherman and the Syren* was painted with reference to the poem *The Fisherman*, written in 1808 by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (see – 104), can be read, saliently, ecologically – ‘*Why lustest thou my brood, With human wit and human guile, From out their native flood?*’ Although, the ecologist Alexander von Humboldt (1769 - 1859) had been spreading his message high and low at the time (see – 124) referencing ‘*one willing to be taken for his beliefs*’ reminding us of our privilege to witness this dramatic and exhilarating scene. The fisherman’s Christ-like pose is reminiscent of the adage: ‘*The neurotic (is) nailed to the cross of his fiction.*’ The internet makes this image accessible and can be seen by millions – still it is a private moment.



There is barely a hair on either figure; a harbinger of modern times where hair *removal* clinics and *regrowth* clinics are currently on every alternate street corner while, advertisements litter our television screens late at night for both positions.

We irrepressibly idealise our expectations of our partners, just as they idealise their expectations of us; our projections of the ideal beloved is entirely ridiculous. If these impulses are not monitored, the disappointments can be catastrophic, especially for the sentimental among us who find it difficult to shake their idealistic views of the world. The complexity of love and passion through the stages of our lives is rarely tackled reasonably. Boundaries, abandonment, over-stimulation, over-caring, and over or under-developed sense of self during our upbringing all these play out in every one of our friendships and romantic relationships. The romantic in us has a vivid imagination and the ritualised and formulated ideals inherent in all mass movements (advertising, religion, politics) further our desires for perfection. The cult like fashion of our ... 106



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
(1749-1832)

The Fisherman, (1779)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The waters rush'd, the waters rose,
A fisherman sat by,
While on his line in calm repose
He cast his patient eye.
And as he sat, and hearken'd there,
The flood was cleft in twain,
And, lo – a dripping mermaid fair
Sprang from the troubled main.

She sang to him, and spake the while –
'Why lustest thou my brood,
With human wit and human guile
From out their native flood?
Oh, could'st thou know how gladly dart
The fish across the sea,
Thou would'st descend, e'en as thou art,
And truly happy be –
'Do not the sun and moon with grace
Their forms in ocean lave?
Shines not with twofold charms their face,
When rising from the wave?
The deep, deep heavens, then lure thee not,
The moist yet radiant blue,
Not thine own form, – to tempt thy lot,
Midst this eternal dew?'
The waters rush'd, the waters rose,
Wetting his naked feet;
As if his true love's words were those,
His heart with longing beat.
She sang to him, to him spake she,
His doom was fix'd, I ween;
Half drew she him, and half sank he,
And ne'er again was seen.¹⁶⁵



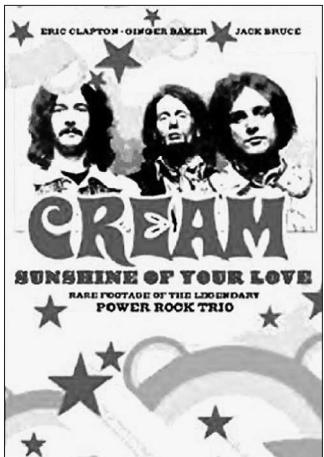
The Fisherman and the Syren (1858), Frederic Leighton¹²⁰



Lady Gaga at the Met Gala 2019 from elegant to disrobed.¹⁶⁶

hopes and dreams can be as frightening as extreme political movements where one person has an hypnotic control over groups.

Is there a story where romance is not, at the very least, a minor sub-plot if not a major storyline? Hardly any. The protagonists usually display a vastly unrealistic view of their loving, often selling out their family or friends or property in order to impress the beloved. Magdalena Kozená, Sir Simon Rattle and the Berliner Philharmoniker present a luscious selection of orchestrated songs by Ravel, Dvorák and Mahler, demonstrating beauty, longing, love and romance. Opera usually involves the death of love, loyalty or royalty – sometimes all three. And if you think that we are only talking about classical Renaissance themes in literature, painting or song, think again. A study by Chad Swiatowicz, University of Florida, found that many of the most popular songs from the modern and classic era were devoted to the subject of love and relationships –



Swiatowicz analyzed the lyrics of the year's 10 most popular songs listed in Billboard's online archives for two eras, 2002-2005 and 1968-1971. He found that 24 of the 40 songs in the modern era — 60 percent — and half the songs of the classic era were devoted to the subject of love and relationships –

From "Sunshine of Your Love" in 1968 to "Crazy in Love" in 2003, and "I Can't Get Next to You" to "I'm With You" from 1969 and 2003, the songs are

variations on similar themes. Some were cheerful and celebratory of love, while others sounded a more pessimistic tone, addressing the temptation of infidelity or the insecurities of being at a lover's beck and call, Swiatowicz said. The subject of infidelity came up far more frequently in the modern era, perhaps because younger people were more likely to grow up in families where parents had divorced, he said.¹⁵⁴ (Image 155)

Themes of love, unrequited love, despair, longing and so-on are truly 'classical' in their nature – from early Greek, Elvis Presley to Lady Gaga (*opposite*). How could Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta avoid being a nuevo-romantic – unconventional, provocative, original and influential? With her involvement in charity work to empower the young, women and LBGTQ+ communities, she influences, and intends to continue influencing people's thinking, feeling and behaving for quite some time.

'I love you.'

Are we programmed to live for the whispered endearment from our partner, or do we carry on for our own part pondering just when will be the right time to say it? It is the determining moment in the relationship – the commitment, perhaps, to loyalty, longevity, monogamy. So much is at stake as these three words escape our lips, so much uncertainty. Who will know what this will mean in ten days? Ten years? Twenty? It has great implication. It is a conundrum for even the most balanced, differentiated, well-adjusted adult to juggle when finding a partner who might be on a similar life path to them and with as much sensibility.

Many stories present the heteronormative ideal of the nuclear family; although recent political/social events and writings reflect a wider appreciation of the sexual continuum. It is no longer only a heterosexual world – other unions (homosexual, transgender, bisexual, polyamorous and so-on) are recognised and any person who wants can team with another like-minded person and have a family without too many disapproving looks. Ironically, an individual who does not want to ride on the inclusive bandwagon may be left far behind, shamed for their 'closed-mindedness.'

The romantic – the pragmatic

One Hundred Love Sonnets: XVII by Pablo Neruda (see – 188) is a fine example of a romantic, loving and immersive theme, an experience that is encountered momentarily, occasionally. It cannot be sustained. The

romantic in us does not look for the rational explanation and will relish the operatic flourish, the dreams of eternal closeness; the white-picket-fence-brigade have long-appropriated romance. Others are less enchanted by the flowers and spontaneity of romantic – organise, plan, probe, think, train – these words are everything to the pragmatic.

Pragmatics live for things being in place, for routine. Rarely bored, the pragmatic is rattled by the romantic's plea for exotic restaurants or holidays in rarefied places. Romantics long for the TV series exemplifying courtly figures in domestic dramas, while the pragmatic prefers to see David Attenborough documentaries.

Immanuel Kant speaking about love, in a rough draft of his *Letter to Maria von Herbert in Spring 1792*, he recommends we remember the truest form of love is friendship: prosaic and poetic in the same breath –

Your deeply felt letter comes from a heart that must have been created for the sake of virtue and honesty, since it is so receptive to instruction in those qualities. I must do as you ask, namely, put myself in your place, and prescribe for you a pure moral sedative. I do not know whether your relationship is one of marriage or friendship, but it makes no significant difference. For love, be it for one's spouse or for a friend, presupposes the same mutual esteem for the other's character, without which it is no more than perishable, sensual delusion. ¹⁵⁶

Triggers that b(l)ind

Growing up we may have moments when we are fearful or feel abandoned or unjustly criticised; or we think societal norms set up conditions that we 'must' live up to. Children cannot understand that there are often universal beliefs about what is female and male – boys don't cry, girls definitely don't want to be boys. This dissonance is deep within us; feelings and emotions not expressed. There are no forums to question these imposed ideas, often seen by the majority as ideals. Later, as teenagers and adults, these feelings may be triggered by seemingly innocuous events. We are often blind to the origin of triggers – our boyfriend is late for a date or an exam paper is badly graded, someone criticises an unrealised belief we hold and we are mortified with embarrassment or anger; inexplicable anger seen by the outsider – visceral to the person experiencing it. This will affect especially the intimate connections. These early experiences we 'transfer' or project onto others (expect others to be what we idealise) when we feel frightened, abandoned or judged.

Most of our relationships contain elements of dysfunction – crossing boundaries, reacting to anxieties, projection of unrealistic expectations, transference of emotional anxieties – all seeming quite chaotic especially in the midst of the romance and practicalities of love. Those in the ‘successful’ relationship will know these dysfunctions are operating and will be managing them.

Very few of us escape from our family dynamic without some scars. Triggering occurs as we are reminded of the affection/love/hurt/rejection we experience as children.

Trigger – Transference

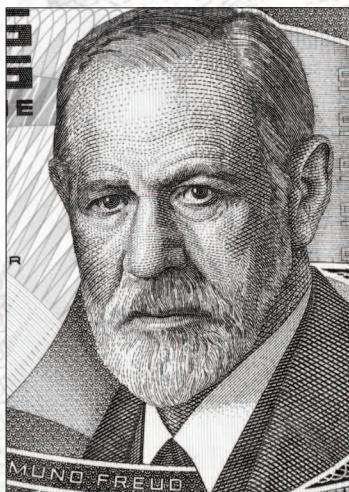
Our ‘constructed idea’ of our friends and family can be confusing, especially regarding the beloved. Transference, an unconscious process, is a Freudian theory, a phenomenon first described in his clinical psychoanalytic process. In this instance it describes how we are primed to project onto the beloved the ideas and feelings we have missed in our upbringing. Transference usually occurs without our noticing. The experience is usually quite difficult to identify as it seems so much part of your self. In *On Freud's Observations on Transference-Love*, the authors describe the evolution of Freud’s theory –

Freud was the first to describe transference love, to theorise about its precursors in our developmental lives and its meaning in the psychoanalytic process, and to make a connection between transference love and real-life love. But an understanding of the erotic transference did not spring full-blown even to Freud ... Freud only gradually appreciated the significance, embodying his insights in the 1915 paper *Observations on Transference-Love*.¹⁵⁷

— Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

We happily and blindly project our expectations and feelings onto another person. It is a perfect storm. I want this experience, so I make you fulfil my dream. It is often an unmet need from the childhood experience. In the romance domain this interference will most certainly result in great diffi-

Images: Sigmund Freud, Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis.
Portrait on Austria 50 schilling banknote.





Madam X - Madonna at Eurovision 2019
bizarrely out-of-tune in more ways than one.¹⁶⁷

culties between the partners. We are triggered when expectations are not met. And sometimes we will continue loving whatever the hell eventuates – ‘... *He has also ruined my life, so I can’t help loving him — it is the only thing to do...*’ (*Oscar Wilde on Lord Alfred Douglas, Bosie, his lover, – ii*).

Music, media and love

The ‘Me’ generation is the Baby Boomer; born between 1944 and 1964, narcissistic although innocent of guile. It feels that everyone today has an attitude that embraces anything to the god of profit; presenting shocking ideas to this end. We are inundated with sounds from the moment we wake to the iPhone or radio-alarm. We are bombarded with ‘music’ or advertisements in every mall, shop, corridor, railway station... Kylie and Jackie O, renowned shockjocks of Sydney radio, each recently signed multi-million dollar contracts for the next five years; in the process lowering the general IQ of Australians immeasurably. Background music is no longer ‘music’, as is attested to by the proprietary name by which it goes – *Muzak*[®]. The aim of *Muzak*[®] is to provide music of a type (mood) to encourage consumers to spend more time, more money. The *Muzak*[®] brand was purchased in 2011 by Mood Media in a deal worth US\$345 million. *Muzak*[®] and ‘muzac’, (and quite a lot of ‘pop’ music) is to music as pornography is to sex. Nuance and feeling is destroyed in the process; producing sexualised homogenised sound and imagery. Madonna, affectionately called ‘Madge’, (*above*) was most certainly not the first to sexualise almost everything she touched. When will it dawn on us that the use of emotional blackmail to entice us into overuse of the credit facilities so freely offered is killing us. Spend and you will feel good.



Robin Thicke and ‘Rape Culture’
Thicke blowing smoke in models face.¹⁶⁸

Robin Thicke’s (*blowing smoke opposite*) number one pop song *Blurred Lines* was banned by YouTube in 2013 because it showed Thicke dancing with models in near-to-invisible thongs, a tasteless garment invention only superseded by the pole dancing craze; which came first, we will never care. The lyrics to *Blurred Lines* normalising blurring the lines between consent and ‘no’ are near enough to be able to frighten the bejeebers out of any father with a young daughter and boyfriends, both whom are the market, normalising sexual dominance and sexual power –

‘One thing I ask of you, Lemme be the one you back that ass to...
...I’ll give you something big enough to tear your ass in two....
Nothin’ like your last guy, he too square for you, He don’t smack
that ass and pull your hair like that...’¹⁵⁸

Pornography

Pornography and violence running through contemporary relationships can not be ignored. The terrific, horrific mount of pornography that is so easily accessible leaves us panting –

35% of all internet downloads are porn-related. (WebRoot); 34% of internet users have been exposed to unwanted porn via ads, pop-ups, etc. (WebRoot); People who admit to having extramarital affairs were over **300% more likely to admit** consuming porn than those who have never had an affair, according to a 2004 study in Social Science Quarterly.¹⁵⁹

Online pornography availability

Every Second — 28,258 users are watching pornography on the



internet; **\$3,075.64 is being spent** on pornography on the internet; **372 people** are typing the word ‘adult’ into a search engine.

Every Day — 37 pornographic videos are created in the United States; **2.5 billion emails** containing porn are sent or received;

68 million search queries for pornography- 25% of total searches- generated; **116,000 queries** related to child pornography.

How Online Pornography Affects Americans –

About 200,000 Americans are classified as ‘porn addicts’; 40 million American people regularly visit porn sites; **35% of all internet downloads** are related to pornography; **34% of internet users** have experienced unwanted exposure to porn content through ads, pop up ads, misdirected links or emails;

One-third of porn viewers are women. ¹⁶⁰

This hyper-sexualised world leads to high rates of teenage pregnancy and the inevitable loss of intimacy and connection in relationships. Rape and violence toward women is increasingly invading the safety and peace of everyone. The internet has made it possible for a plethora of sexual activity to be available in bedrooms without other members of the household knowing anything about it. Groups band together to produce and exchange under-age pornography and any number of deeply disturbing pornographic files. The normalisation of demeaning sexual acts through pornography leads to many men and women expecting their girlfriends/boyfriends to participate in real life sexual acts mimicking the virtual images they consume are acting; getting angry when not agreed upon; finding these activities increasingly unfulfilling.



Women and men report being left feeling fat, ugly, unlovable, not being able to participate in the practices shown in porn. Or, worse still, not being invited to participate in their partner's sex life at all. Men report a hollow feeling jacking off to porn often experiencing the need to go further and visit massage parlours and brothels.

Pornography (soft and hard) is insidious in advertising. None of these influences engender a meaningful connection with others and pornography raises expectations above anything reasonable. The men offering 'forbidden nights' dehumanise sexual love. A washboard stomach like the men pictured above may be good for doing the washing (really doing the washing not 'the washing'). At best a bit of light titillation or at worst, raising that bar for men (and women). It is a laughable and frightening image, yet millions want this. Bigger gyms proliferate; another form of legalised and encouraged 'soma'. ^b

Widespread sexual problems have increased over the past fifty years or so (especially since the internet) and 50 to 60 percent of men and women experience sexual problems, while most people report they expected or hoped for a satisfactory sex life well into their old age. While it is normal to have some problems with sexual activity from time to time (ill health – stress and age can all play a part in this), usually well-maintained emotional intimacy and connection will provide an opportunity for partners to be supportive and physically intimate relationships can be ongoing.

b. *'...the warm, the richly coloured, the infinitely friendly world of soma-holiday. How kind, how good-looking, how delightfully amusing every one was...' (See Aldus Huxley's 1984, page – 60)*



Above: Tom Ford's Spring 2003 Gucci advertising campaign.¹⁶⁹ In the Daily Mail, English journalist Bel Mooney called the ad "*predictable, exploitative, upmarket sleaze*"; John Beyer, director of Mediawatch UK, called it "*damaging to society*." The easily offended were scandalized.



A woman's exposed pubic hair – what's next, equal pay for all? Even Ford's own successor, Frida Giannini, took issue with the ad, calling it "wrong-headed" in a 2006 interview with Cathy Horyn. "*To be honest, what Gucci had become, well, a footballer's wife is not the customer of my dreams.*"¹⁷⁰



Walt Whitman (1819 - 1892), age 37, frontispiece to *Leaves of Grass*,
Fulton St., Brooklyn, N.Y., 1855, steel engraving by Samuel Hollyer
from a lost daguerreotype by Gabriel Harrison.¹⁷¹

6 — Partners



Do I contradict myself? Very well, then,
I contradict myself; I am large – I contain
multitudes.¹⁷²

— Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

Walt Whitman was first depicted
on 5 cent stamp in 1940.¹⁷³

Is it disconcerting to take on board that you might need a life coach? The Greek model of mentoring makes sound sense. Every therapy session in every clinic is best started with the therapist confessing '*I know nothing. There's nothing original coming out of this mouth,*' which hopefully raises a smile or laugh. Socrates studied philosophy and the asking and answering of questions, creating a stimulating environment for critical thinking; this is the beginning of modern Western Philosophy. Socrates –

I am wiser than this man, for neither of us appears to know anything great and good; but he fancies he knows something, although he knows nothing; whereas I, as I do not know anything, so I do not fancy I do. ...¹⁷⁴

It is a good position to be in – we might all be enlightened by conversations that begin with such a preamble. Your friends are a vibrant source for you to draw upon to learn how to be in the world. They observe you, commenting on your actions, reactions, responses – critically, supportively, even dauntingly at times. If you can't trust these people to be forthright, who can you trust? You can also be a coach, mentor, teacher and guide to your partner and friends. We all know what is good for others,

especially as we have to put up with the ramifications of all the crazy things they do. Nothing to ‘do’ here except be a friend.

Friend, partner or ‘coach’

There is a problem if the ‘coach’ is only critical. Having someone barking at you all day and night might be disconcerting. We also don’t want our coach mollycoddling us. The reasoning behind this arrangement is to accept critical assessment alongside positive reinforcement. It is a tidy package if done right. The tone of the words flowing back-and-forth between teacher and student, friend and friend, can make or break the situation.

Learning to *be loved* is instinctual. Learning to love someone else is an *art* to be learned and practised. Some of this will be drawn in by the baby through experience. To have the attention of another focused on ‘you’ is learned as a baby. For the first few years all the baby knows is how to be loved. The infant does not know how to love back. If there is a grasping of the hand or arm around the neck simulating a hug, it will be entirely for the infant’s gain, most likely for more food or comfort. The baby automatically clasps the finger you offer. You can see the child whose parents guided well from the beginning – using manners, recognising our need for instant gratification, learning to reciprocate, learning why we share, and so on. Children will not know how good it is to practise these traits. That is realised later. Therefore, the early experiences are sometimes accompanied by encouragement, tantrums and tears.



Where instruction is careful, fair, loving, and setting fair boundaries, the upsets are less. We are born to attach. Knowing how to manage the attachments and the flow of feelings, expectation, disappointments and frustrations that arise in the intimate relationship is an entirely different coloured fish. The hard-wired lessons we learn, whether functional or dysfunctional, can sometimes make us (be or seem) intransigent.

Heinrich Von Kleist’s essay *On the Gradual Production of Thoughts Whilst Speaking* reveals a way of thinking through the mysteries of life by

talking – overcoming ‘struggles with fate’ using knowledge, freely questioning all considerations. The ‘doing’ is our saviour.¹⁷⁵

In the essay Kleist quotes a fable (*The Original Fables of La Fontaine – The Animals Sick of the Plague*¹⁷⁶) where a fox has to talk his way out of being killed by the lion and other animals as a sacrifice to thwart the enclosing plague. He proves his point with a classic speech, made up as he went along convincing the crowd ‘... that the donkey, the bloodthirsty donkey (devourer of grass and plants) is the most fitting sacrifice...,’ because he has ‘admitted a foul guilt, entering a monastery, stealing a blade of grass,’ not the fox or lion, (thought both have already admitted they are killers, marauders). The crowd tear the donkey to pieces; the fox concluding that his spontaneous speech (... thinking out loud...) was his saviour. Talking, even to yourself, facilitates better understanding. With others, it is the rapport, the play between us that is enlightening and educating – moving our ideas forward, broadening our understanding.

You and your partner –
a little bit teacher and pupil for each other.

The learned experience.

Though your best teacher is yourself, the one sitting beside you may also have some smart things to show you, even if it smarts you to think you have to learn; you do need to learn; or for that matter the person you’ve chosen to be your lover may also need educating. You don’t want to ‘change’ your partner, and you are certainly hoping your partner doesn’t want to ‘change’ you. After all, you’re a complete, loving, kind, generous, educated person, chosen because of your loveliness. So, change me? Unlikely! Me change you on the other hand... well, yes, perhaps a little. *Those towels you drop in the bathroom. The pepper grinder you never refill. The toilet paper, where ...*

‘Partner’ implies ‘partnership’ implies ‘cooperation’ implies ‘negotiation’ requires ‘diplomacy.’ Partners negotiate all the time. As an individual the moment you wake up, solving problems is the norm. Every move



Heinrich Von Kleist
(1777-1811)

you make is intentional. *Do I pull the sheet up or push it back?* At the bus stop – *Do I step forward or step aside for someone else?* When the waiter approaches – *Do I speak, or do I ask if the other person wants to order first?* Being as much yourself as you can and at the same time being there for the other person is the trick. All these decisions are an inevitable part of daily life – you are a decision-making machine. In a partnership this all demands diplomacy. Precision is bound to slip-up occasionally.

Being the best version of yourself

The concept of being the ‘best version’ of yourself was recently mentioned by a client in the *choosingchange* clinic. There is no way of knowing who thought of this idea. Probably ‘a personal growth plan guru’ involving strict adherence to some marketable philosophy. Be aware of how easy it is to want to change to suit your partner or change your partner to suit you; or for them to want to change you to suit them. Don’t take it personally. The person entreating you to change is possibly externalising their shortcomings, things they desperately need or want for themselves. You are probably doing the same thing to them.

**The best version of yourself
is the person you want to be *for yourself*.
Not to make them happy but to allow you to be happy.**

Better yet – ‘*When you are content to be simply yourself, don’t compare or compete, everyone will respect you,*’ (see *Lao Tzu – 35*). We are sometimes not true to ourselves for the sake of peace – to remain in a partnership because the alternative is no partner, which equals loneliness. Being the best version of myself is only to be uttered by me, to me, for me. (*See Dag Hammarskjöld – 133.*)

The expectation that we will always have a lover or partner who is wonderful to the extreme comes from the experience the baby has in the arms of their mother and father pouring love into them. The baby does nothing but receive love. If this is to be the origin of your expectations in the romance department, think again. You are still a baby in this area of emotional growth. Think of the way lovers have cute nicknames for each other. Remember the teasing when you are wooing your lover-to-be. See how they react when you ‘baby’ them with extra attention. Rarely are you fobbed off. Mostly it is welcomed, even encouraged.

The meaning we make of this attention is:
I am loved therefore I am loveable.
 We should be loveable, full-bloody-stop •

This is one of the early experiences we have of ourselves as independent, self-aware beings. Eventually, although we welcome the help of an adoring parent or lover or friend, we are able to survive alone, without outside validation. We want to get to the point where we can safely and assertively say – *Ego igitur puto.*^a

Asking for what you want

Have a good sense of the kinds of things you want be free to pursue those wants and express those ideas. Moreover, being open to others' ideas allows you to share, negotiate, and celebrate commonalities while managing any differences. Express what you want and ask what they want; let others know your needs and let others tell you their needs. This facilitates a caring and loving dialogue. The United Nations is not there to *make*



Worlds collide at the UN. Greta Thunberg watches as Donald Trump passes her by September 2019.



Donald J. Trump 
@realDonaldTrump
She seems like a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future. So nice to see!
twitter.com/wired/status/1...

peace but to *keep peace*, to help stop nations from obliterating each other. It is the least peaceful place in the world. In fact, the UN is designed to bring people face-to-face who are already in the middle of conflict.

a. *I am therefore I think.* Also: *Cogito, ergo sum* the philosophical proposition by René Descartes usually translated into English as 'I think, therefore I am.' As Descartes explained, 'we cannot doubt of our existence while we doubt...' Also phrased: *dubito, ergo cogito, ergo sum* ('I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am'). What is doubted is the original enquiry. René Descartes: 'So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.*'

Perfectly good arguments are the ones constructively managed. Be happy to face someone who is emotional and unruly with their facts; listen to them carefully, try to understand their position, affirm their position, correct any mistakes in their argument with great care and respect.

Acknowledge other people's feelings.
You still may not get what you want.

Our partner being our coach

Our partner will see and know things we are quite likely to miss or ignore (*We look for confirmations... – Karl Popper see – 22*). You may feel compelled to fight to the death for your untidiness, but if you don't see how badly it affects your partner, who has been raised in a house by a mother who is fanatical about everything being in its rightful place and reacts to your untidiness, you are missing out on giving them what they really might want from you – an understanding of their feelings. Your partner is being triggered, hoisted on the petard of their mistaken beliefs... remember Alfred Adler – '*The neurotic is nailed to the cross of his fiction.*'

Mothers, fathers, teachers, priests, prime ministers, pop stars, presidents (let's not go there) all say things we assume are in our best interests. Malcolm Fraser said, quoting George Bernard Shaw, '*Life is not meant to be easy*' (possibly true, albeit quite depressing). However, when we realise the full quote is '*Life is not meant to be easy, my child; but take courage – it can be delightful,*' it is a completely different proposition – at first it is discouraging, then it turns out to be hopeful, realistic, helpful and wonderful.

Partnerships bring possibilities to the table. Welcome disagreements, for they might just be the genesis of advancements. The outcomes may make a world of difference to you. You, my loving friend, bring me fuel that provides thought and inspiration.

The independent spirit

Alcmaeon of Croton, 500 BC, one of the most eminent natural philosophers and medical theorists of antiquity, pioneer of dissection for the

discovery of internal causes of illness, first promoted the idea of *pneuma* being the soul or breath or spirit essential for the individual to live. He is posited to be the first ever to write a book on natural philosophy, *On Nature*. Surviving quotes attributed to Alcmaeon include '*The earth is the mother of plants and the sun their father*' and, possibly, '*Experience is the beginning of learning*', although the latter may have been written by Spartan poet named Alcman. Alcmeon is also thought to have differentiated between the *mind* and *senses* and that this was a sign of intelligence distinguishing man and beast.¹⁷⁷

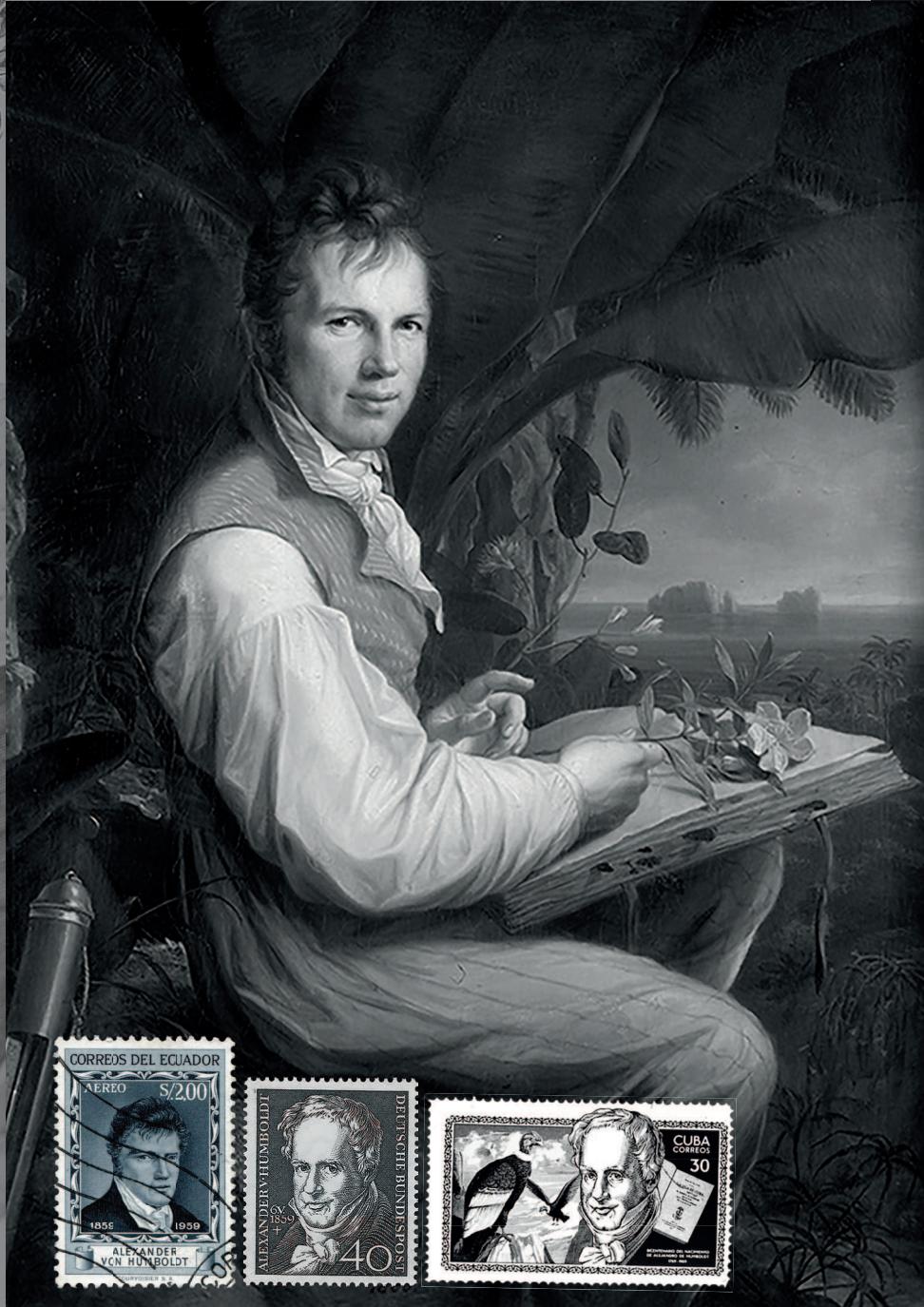
The Stoics used the term '*breath of life*' to describe an essential life force in animate and inanimate objects. This '*breath of life*' can be regarded as the force of nature, discoverable to us all, where we are open to or allowed such access. It would seem that choice might be necessary for each of us, unless determinism is de rigueur, for this to be accessible. Your breath must be your sense of self, your spirit, your authentic self. This being available for your partner to see creates a tension that is palpable, exciting, stimulating and fulfilling for both of you. The '*curious*' lays claim to a fulfilling life; not being sure where it will lead might be the best thing about it.

This is what you shall do; Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul... and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and every motion and joint of your body.

Extract: from Preface of '*Leaves of Grass*'

by Walt Whitman (1885)

7 — Alexander von Humboldt



Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich Alexander, Freiherr
(baron) von Humboldt (1769-1859)¹⁷⁸



Illustration from a 1808 botanical volume of the 34-volume
*Voyage de Humboldt et Bonpland.*¹⁸³

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) (*opposite*), a most passionate man, and according to writer Andrea Wulf in her book *The Invention of Nature, The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt*, he is *The Lost Hero of Science*. Hardly known today in any sphere, in his time was very well known. His personality, from childhood was marked with curiosity, a characteristic as profound as it was enduring. He was described as a ‘*Prussian polymath, geographer, naturalist, explorer, as well as an influential proponent of Romantic philosophy and science*’. He travelled the world speaking with kings, presidents and prime-ministers enthusiastically extolling his ecological message. He is credited to be the first person to recognise how human cultivation (deforestation) affects the environment. Few figures in history have had so many landmarks or discoveries named after them. The memory of Alexander von Humboldt is kept alive not only in this 50th Anniversary year of 2019 but also in atlases and encyclopaedias. His name appears on the moon; a large plain named after him – *Mare Humboldtianum* (Sea of Humboldt).¹⁷⁹



The Humboldt Glacier, in Merida, Venezuela is disappearing at a faster rate than expected. AP

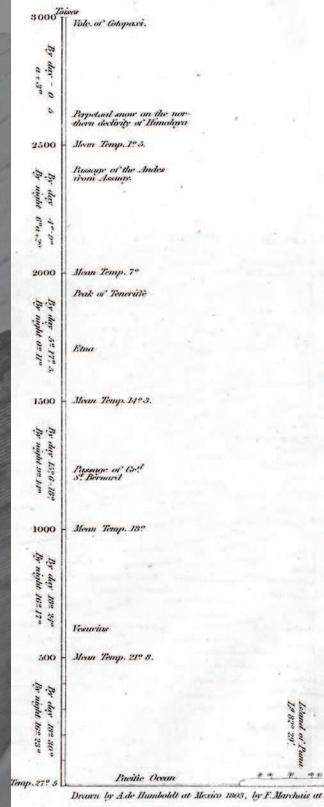
Temperatures are warming faster at the Earth's higher elevations than in lowlands, and scientists predict that the Humboldt glacier [named after Alexander von Humboldt] – an ice sheet in the Andes Mountains – could be gone within two decades.

'On the rocks left behind when the glacier retreats, the scientists think that a new ecosystem resembling the *paramos* may eventually begin to develop. But there are many questions still to answer: Will it take



decades to form new soil? Can plant and animal species that thrive at lower elevations also survive further up-slope? Will they be able to adapt to continually changing temperatures? Venezuela has the world's largest known oil reserves, but an economy hitched for decades to global oil demand has proven unstable. Llambi believes he has a special obligation to help inform the public of the impacts of climate change in a country where the boom-and-bust cycle of fossil fuel exploration has shaped nearly everyone's life.' 'Our university is in Merida, which has long been called 'the city of eternal snow', he reflects. 'We are discovering that 'eternity' is not forever, and that's what we have to get used to in a world with climate change.'¹⁸⁰

7 — Alexander von Humboldt

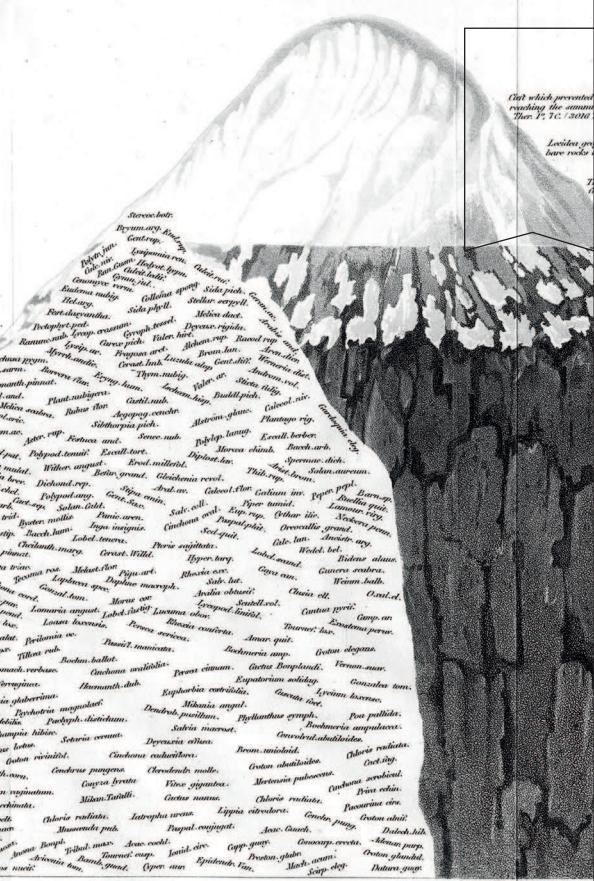


Drawn by A.de Humboldt at Mexico 1803, by F.Marjolin at Paris in 1824

London, Published by Longman, Rees

Journey towards the summit of Chimborazo
By Alexander de Humboldt, Aimé

A sketch of the Geography of the Plants in the Andes of



Journey towards the Summit of Chimborazo

Journey towards the Summit of Chimborazo, Attempted on the 23rd June 1802. By Alexander de Humboldt, Aimé Bonpland & Carlos Montúfar. Copperplate profile chart, 24 x 37.4 cm. From vol. 3 of Humboldt's Personal

Humboldt, attempted on the 23rd June, 1802.
Aime Bonpland & Carlos Montufar.

of Quito, between the 0° 20' of N. Lat. and the 4° 12' of S. Lat.

wanted the travellers from
summit - Bar 167. 2 lines
3016 Toises

dead geog. on the
rocks of trachyte.

The travellers began to bleed
from the eyes, the lips & the
gums.

Lake of Yanacocha.

Plains of Sieyan

Plains of Lina

Plains
of Chimbuc
Tunco

Made Suisse on the
summit of Montblanc.

Pass of Népal Ghaut
(Himalaya)

Perpetual snow on the
sides of Mexico

Farm of Antioquia.

2000
Perpetual snow on the
southern slopes of
Himalaya.

The peak of Nevado
the highest summit
of the province.

1500
Town of Quia.
Perpetual snow on
the Apus.

Town of Asunci.

Town of Loja.

1000
Town of Popayan.

Rio de Doma.

Guaduquile.

500
Town of Granada.
Table land of Yauco.

Table land of the
Gentiles.

Level of the Amazon
at Tingoypata.

Grand Paro.

Cleft which prevented the travellers from
reaching the summit - Bar 167. 2 lines
Ther. 1°, 7C. (3016 Toises)

Leucidea geogr. on the
bare rocks of trachyte.

The travellers began to bleed
from the eyes, the lips & the
gums.

Printed, Orme, Brown & Green, Paternoster Row, 1822.

Engraved by Sud Hall, May 1822.

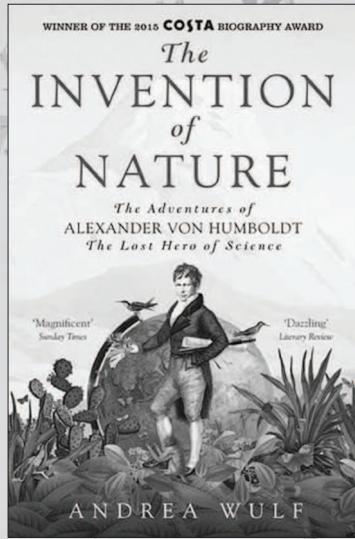
Credit: Courtesy of Smithsonian Libraries, Washington, D.C.

Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent, during the Years 1799–1804, trans. from the French by Helen Maria Williams (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1822) [Rare Books Division]. One of the most famous of Humboldt's landmark linking of plant life to altitude. ¹⁸¹

7 — Alexander von Humboldt

Alexander von Humboldt knew King Frederick William III, Czar Nicholas I, Henry David Thoreau, Thomas Jefferson, Walt Whitman, Charles Darwin, François Arago... His illustrations are remarkable. He described and charted thousands of plants and landforms as he travelled the world. His love of illustrating nature emerged from his early life –

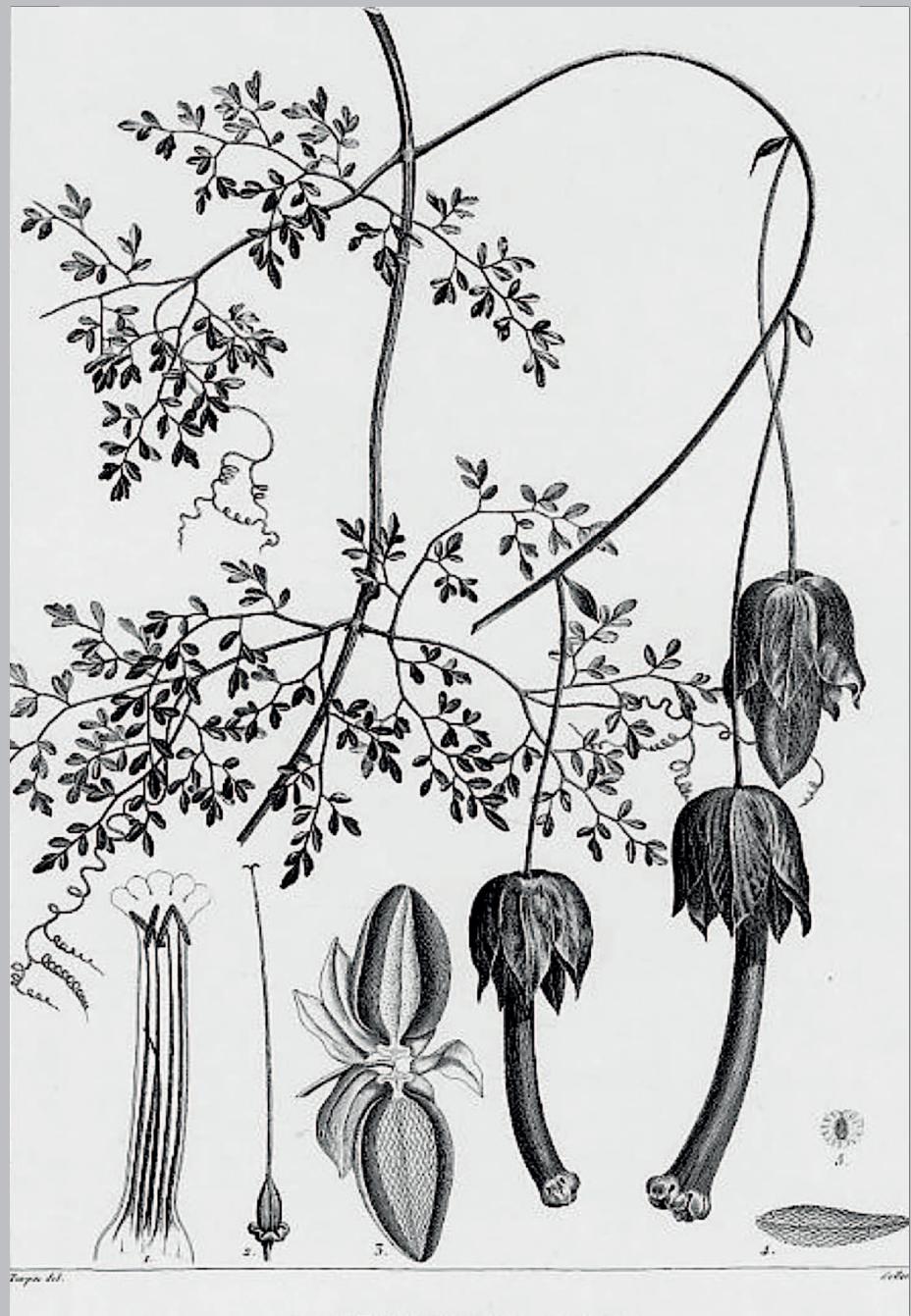
Alexander's restlessness and outdoor wanderings – collecting and labelling beetles, flowers, shells, and stones were favourite pastimes – led his mother to choose for “the little apothecary” a more bureaucratic career. In 1789, he matriculated at Göttingen University, where he met and formed a strong friendship with naturalist-ethnologist-revolutionary Georg Forster, who had accompanied his father on Captain James Cook's second voyage of exploration around the world. After spending time with Forster, traveling to London and back through revolutionary Paris, Humboldt seemed to have found his calling; thereafter he pursued a relentless, self-imposed program of study, both curricular and extracurricular, to become a scientific explorer himself.¹⁸²



The Invention of Nature, The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, The Lost Hero of Science – Andrea Wulf.



Alexander von Humboldt: The Botanical Exploration of the Americas – H. Walter Lack



Alexander von Humboldt: *The Botanical Exploration of the Americas* – H. Walter Lack

Excerpt from *Hermeneutics: Facts and Interpretations in the Age of Information* by John D. Caputo



John D. Caputo
(1940-) ¹⁸⁵

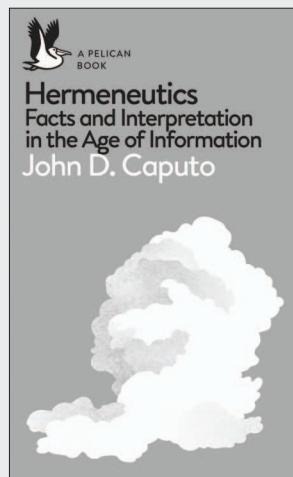
The ever-stirring, indistinguishable pre-understanding each one of us has of ourself as an existential being disturbs the tranquillity of everydayness, haunts us with a vague uneasiness, a deeper, indefinite ‘anxiety’ more disturbing than any definite ‘fear’ – we fear the dentist but are anxious over our very being-in-the-world – reminding each one of us, in our singularity, of what we each know but will not say – that our life is a misunderstanding,

a misinterpretation, that we know better and that we are, each one of us, solely responsible for our being. We always and already know that, but we are inclined to suppress it. We know that we are not like rocks or tables (existential). We know we are not imprisoned within a fixed essence; we know that existence means freedom. We know we are not a finished actuality but a being possible. We know that the meaning of our Being has not been assigned from all eternity, that our Being is to interpret our Being, to be our Being, to exist.

The pre-understanding summons the misunderstanding before itself and calls upon it to assume its authentic potential for being.

That is the existential-hermeneutical circle – to be true to the being we always and already are. The idea is not to get rid of the circle but to enter it in an authentic way, to penetrate our deepest presupposition, our truest pre-understanding of ourselves. St. Augustine again – I went in search of You and all the time You were within.

Noli foras ire – don’t go abroad – go within, where the existential truth lies. ¹⁸⁴





Never, for the sake of peace and quiet, deny your own experience or convictions.
— Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961) Secretary-General United Nations 1953-1961

8 — Authenticity

We seek to understand so we make sense of our world. This chapter might have been called *Enlightenment*, for that is probably what is needed and achieved by being authentic. While we all have different ideas of what success might be, it is likely that acceptance by society and the love and esteem of everyone we know is usually toward the top of the list. For some it is also to be loved even by those we don't know. However, '*to be true to the being we always and already are*' (*opposite*), is the more difficult path because that requires us to be honest with ourselves.

For many, no matter how famous or accepted they are, the esteem of others can never enough. There is still something missing. It was reported in 2000 that Sir Elton John, a most successful recording and performing artist by all accounts, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars (293,000 British pounds) on flowers in a 20-month period. When questioned during court proceedings about whether it was possible that he could have spent this amount of money in 20 months on flowers alone, Sir Elton simply responded, '*Yes, I like flowers.*'¹⁸⁶

As crazy as it sounds Elton is being authentic. However, that kind of spending is unlikely to be simply because Sir Elton ‘likes flowers’. He couldn’t have even been seeing the thousands of flowers, let alone smelling them roses. He did not understand that at the time, even if others could, no-one dared to tell him. We do things that give us away. Some people spend, some dance all night and every night, some withdraw and become isolated and fearful.

Finding the courage to step outside is very difficult without enlightenment. The difficulty is, enlightenment usually occurs as you step out, or shortly thereafter.

In shopping centres you’ll see hundreds of people attempting to gain authenticity – by shopping – these days it is an event. Shops, formerly places to gather supplies, are now created in such a way that every inch of their design exists to encourage visitors to buy more. High-end shops have a line of people queuing to enter. The impetus to queue to enter a Gucci store is the result of a beautifully constructed marketing exercise – make it exclusive, make it unattainable, make them wait. The better the marketing the longer the queues – the guard grants permission to enter,



the mouths of consumers salivating in anticipation. Once inside, you are able to buy authenticity in the form of a \$3000+ handbag. There is another store called HYPE selling sneakers, always busy with buyers, with the byline *PREMIUM LIMITED EXCLUSIVE – ‘No sneaker-ing in– . Huge queues outside Sydney store as shoe-obsessed shoppers line up for new \$199 Adidas NMD trainers.’*¹⁸⁷ By the time this is read that ‘style’ will have long been replaced by an even more expensive and alluring sneaker.

There has always been dysfunction in societies (...*they fuck you up your mum and dad...*’ Philip Larkin) leaving us with expectations that can never be fulfilled. We are all sensitive humans striving to find ourselves and be connected. Allowing the true expression of our feelings is a human right. However we are all subjected to varying degrees of pressures to conform under threat of losing our job, losing our friends, losing our money or losing our relationship. This process of fitting-in kills off our essence, the meaningfulness of our life. There is little chance of expressing your authentic self when you are fearful of losing yourself.

**It takes patience and experience to know
yourself and then courage to act it out, to be yourself**

... 138



You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive...

This past, the Negro's past, of rope, fire, torture, castration, infanticide, rape; death and humiliation; fear by day and night, fear as deep as the marrow of the bone; doubt that he was worthy of life, since everyone around him denied it; sorrow for his women, for his kinfolk, for his children, who needed his protection, and whom he could not protect; rage, hatred, and murder, hatred for white men so deep that it often turned against him and his own, and made all love, and trust, all joy impossible – this past, this endless struggle to achieve and reveal and confirm a human identity, human authority, yet contains, for all its horror, something very beautiful.

I do not mean to be sentimental about suffering – enough is certainly as good as a feast – but people who cannot suffer can never grow up, can never discover who they are. That man who is forced each day to snatch his manhood, his identity, out of the fire of human cruelty that rages to destroy it knows, if he survives his effort, and even if he does not survive it, something about himself and human life that no school on earth – and, indeed, no church – can teach. He achieves his own authority, and that is unshakable.¹⁹⁴

— James Baldwin,
Reflections November 17, 1962 Issue,
Letter from a Region in My Mind



James Baldwin (1924-1987)¹⁹⁵

Fronting-up – the real me

What is it that prevents us fronting up with the real ‘me’? Usually there are fears and doubts about us that help us to decide what is the right thing to do, guide us. When these fears permeate our essence, they can become inhibitory, stopping us from feeling free to express our ideas. These are often born from those early experiences in the family that colour and mould our personality. In order to survive we think we must fit in to group activities, be liked, be loved.

As a child you will see mums and dads encouraging their children to ‘*Go on, go over and play*’, with someone who looks terrifying because they are screaming around the back yard with a huge dog. The shy kid has an enormous task ahead – trying to fit-in can be a life-long challenge. Every day that child meets with these trials (or opportunities) to mix and mingle with others in order to be a part of a socially cohesive community. The trick is to be cohesive on your own terms. As the old saying goes – *Step out into the uncomfortable place where growth lives*. The child is taught how to do this by their parents. As we begin to realise where our frustration originated, we also realise what we must do to progress. No pianist plays packed houses without years of study. Hours of daily toiling at the keyboard are required to perfect the technical skill required to establish a repertoire and present themselves at the concert hall and confidently play, by memory, the many pieces on the program. Years go by before a personal style and interpretation is established. If you want to be a concert pianist you must study, practise and do it hard. It is the same for every activity. Championship only occurs as you practise.

Overcoming your obstacles is an obvious aim – it makes sense to work out what is not working and find a way to make it work

Maya Angelou

What did Maya Angelou do when she was raped by her mother’s new boyfriend? She told her grandmother; the man was arrested, charged, found guilty, and sentenced to one day in jail. A week after he was released he was beaten to death in the back lot. From this, Maya learned that if she speaks a man’s name he will die. And so she remained selectively mute for five years, speaking only to her older brother.



My mother's new boyfriend raped me. I was seven. So I stopped talking for five years. In those five years I read every book in the black library. When I decided to speak I had a lot to say.

— Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

Against all odds and with the support of her grandmother, her self-belief, and her ability to ask for help when she needed it, Maya Angelou became a writer, poet, singer, dancer, filmmaker, actor and activist. At the first inauguration of US President Clinton, Maya Angelou read her poem *On the Pulse of Morning*, written after closeting herself in a hotel room, writing down everything she could about America, she 'pushed and squeezed it into poetic form'. From the poverty of the deep south, Angelou rose to conquer all her obstacles by being herself. It may have taken a while. It certainly took courage. Her writings and speeches are filled with ways to be in the world, to grow, celebrate, step into the unknown, to believe in yourself, and take notice of those around you who show you love and support. We are not always able to be around the people we love. Sometimes we must set free those whom we love. Love is to *not* hold on, to *not* imprison, to *not* demand of.

Shakespeare's Hamlet – Polonius gives advice

This above all – to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man. ¹⁸⁸

Being true to yourself is impossible in a world of Instagram and Facebook demanding you post at least three *smiley-smiley-facey-selfie* each day to the world. Rarely are there photos of unhappy people unless it is a joke or for cruel intentions. Politicians deliberately lie – media training courses are mandatory for new members of any parliament or board of directors; teaching obfuscation techniques to have the upper hand; anybody who is making lots of money selling big-ticket items are also likely to do this.

Advertising has become a legitimised means to obscure truth, convincing you to ‘need’ many goods and services that are entirely unnecessary. Some may even be harmful. The bigger the profit to be made, the bigger the lie. Many will try to sway you emotionally or psychologically to do things that might undermine your relationships with your partner or family, or even yourself. This is the current dilemma: to be real or to play the game. Do you dare to buck the trend and say what you really think as Dag Hammarskjöld said – *Never for the sake of peace and quiet deny your own experience or convictions?*¹⁸⁹

I am obliged to speak, but can I say that?

In *Call Me By Your Name* by André Aciman, Elio refers to a fairy tale his mother has been reading to him and his father from *Heptaméron*, the 16th-century collection of fables by Marguerite de Navarre –



The handsome young Knight is in love with the Princess, and she, too, is in love with him – even though she seems to be not entirely aware of it. Despite the friendship that blossoms between them – or perhaps because of that very friendship – the young Knight finds himself so humbled and speechless that he’s totally unable to bring up the subject of his love. So one day he asks the Princess, point blank – *‘Is it better to speak, or to die?’*

The princess hesitates because she is not sure what he wants from her. Eventually she says, *‘It’s probably better to speak.’*¹⁹⁰

Elio says to his parents – *'I'm not sure I can be as courageous as that.'* Sure enough, very soon, Elio plucks at his courage and moves into a world that is exciting, frightening and extremely uncomfortable; as a result, he finds his life turned upside down, albeit in a wonderful way.

Life is complicated, wonderful, challenging and sometimes a terrifying experience. This is difficult to appreciate as we traverse the bumpy road to self-actualisation. We can never know when good or bad things are going to happen. We do know things will happen, we can sometimes even have an idea of when or where. Breakfast will probably be perched on the edge of the kitchen bar as we search through our bag for our phone we forgot to charge last night so we'll have to take the charger as well... *what time is that bus?* Then the orange juice spills on our diary because 'somebody' knocks it over.

The authentic person says, '*Buggar it*'; the inauthentic sighs inwardly, '*ALWAYS (sic) for the sake of peace and quiet I shall deny my experience and convictions...*', saving their frustrations to be unleashed in the form of a snarky remark to someone else; like to the driver of the late bus when their Opal Card refuses to register.

The person who buries their frustrations and mistakes will inevitably let it out somewhere. For some it may be indigestion, for others a stiff neck. Many will just be grumpy or unhappy; many get depressed. The tension mounts up and if released it is often unleashed dysfunctionally, impeding happiness and satisfaction in life.

To be authentic you will be transparent. Your inner beliefs, ideas and feelings will match what you say and do; your philosophies must be obvious, your way of life must be observable. How you live your life is how you will truly feel – the liberated, enlightened you – you as you are. Risky? Yes. Rewarding and fulfilling? Yes. Authentic? Yes.

The more I try to change myself to suit you the less there is of me. The more I try to change you to suit me the less there is of you. In both cases the less there is of us.



Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)



In the ethical view of life, then, it is the individual's task to divest himself of the determinant of interiority and give it an expression in the exterior. Whenever the individual shrinks from doing so, whenever he wants to stay inside, or slips back into, the inner determinant of feeling, mood, etc., he commits an offence, he is in a state of temptation.¹⁹¹

— Søren Kierkegaard
Fear and Trembling: Problema II¹⁹²

The biggest danger, that of losing oneself, can pass off in the world as quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc. is bound to be noticed.

— Anti-Climacus Søren Kierkegaard¹⁹³



Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) ¹⁹⁶

9 — Undefended Love

One's life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation and compassion.

— Simone de Beauvoir

How we relate to others is born on how we learned to be loved. We begin learning about love as receivers of love. Babies are selfishly interested in their own needs – a necessary selfishness because they can't look after themselves. The first few critical seconds/minutes/days/months... learning years are filled with a self-serving ideology. Mary Ainsworth's – *My advice to mothers is not to miss an opportunity to show affection to their babies,* is precisely because every cuddle is a turning point in a baby's development.^a

Nobody chastises a baby for being needy, that's the meaning of baby... neediness. However, some of us have progressed little from this state. Parents are continually holding back their frustration and suppressing their own needs for the service of the child. Adults who act out their frustrations by throwing the phone at the hotel receptionist because they are not getting their way are simply following the rules they learned as kids. We are supposed to learn from 'consequences' every time we chuck the phone out the car window. Bugger. The phrase '*throwing my babyish reactions out with the iPhone*' could not be more appropriate.



a. . UNICEF street poster publicising childhood development 2019.

Differentiation describes the way individuals manage the *togetherness and separateness* within a relationship. Remembering these traits are learned from those attachments formed in early childhood. As undifferentiated adults we can frequently relapse into a 'child-like' state. As differentiated adults we learn to notice our frustrations early, using other less reactionary, more responsive behaviours. As time passes and we grow, we learn to be more mindful and relapse less often into our child-like behaviours. We are more relaxed, letting things wash over us as we realise with more certainty that most things that happen will not kill us. The difficulties we face often contribute to the development of a greater sense of self and acceptance of the crazy things going on around us. The realisation that 'this will not kill me' is an important one, because very few things are going to annihilate us and most people are only too willing to help us. Still, we must survive is our cri de coeur for our very lives depend on it.

No wonder we have difficulties loving others without a huge degree of selfishness embedded in the process. We fall in love as teenagers, revisiting the care and attention our mothers and fathers bestowed on us for our first twenty years. As we practise our growing sexual awareness and care and affection to-and-from the beloved we will make many mistakes.

Until we perfect the appropriate techniques they are often a clumsy way of connecting; we are rebelling from that loving we had with our parents while at the same time making these new connections. Success will almost entirely depend on how good we are at being 'in relationship' with our family; what boundaries were set by that disciplining loving mother and father. These family connections are templates for our intimate relationships as we become adults.

Later, these elements still play out strongly in our connections. We are born to be connected... to both our advantage. The expectations from our partners is the same as ours... to be attended – to have our every need satisfied... *a little bit*. If you are lucky and well differentiated, you will play that part for your partner and hopefully they will play theirs for you. The markedly different experience of well differentiated individuals in intimate relationships compared to less differentiated individuals was explained by Michael. E Kerr in *Family Evaluation* –

Well differentiated people can tolerate and enjoy intimacy and aloneness. Less differentiated people, when intimate, tend toward enmeshment and/or fusion, in which they will experience a terror of engulfment that compels them to take flight.¹⁹⁷

Love undefended

A mutually satisfying relationship is not something you get entirely from a book. However, there are some tips you can gain. For example, employing attributes of undefended loving and a respectful adherence to relationship and cultural norms can help bring a couple to a healthy and rewarding sense of intimacy.

Feeling deeply when you are near your partner is a sign that the closeness and connection is far more than just a healthy sex life. You will experience a profound meaningful understanding of your own being and be able to share that depth of feeling with your partner.

You will not just be sharing daily activities, the schooling of your children, or the frustrating time you are both having at work – love and care rises above the ordinary. The planning of a life together requires you and your partner to be very open about your experiences, being able to share these with each other. When you are both open and transparent, intimacy will flow between you. No longer are you pretending or hiding yourself or parts of yourself that you don't want the other to see. You will have ownership and the courage to assert your experience and convictions; you will be empowered by these very connections you create.

Using your intelligence, reason and common sense you will be able to navigate the ups and downs of any relationship. You might even employ the same tactics you use at work to negotiate, live-with, even enjoy, the idiosyncrasies (craziness) of your colleagues. That is not to suggest you adopt a Machiavellian system of exploiting others. Rather, use your skills and loving care for one another in a manner that is forgiving and understanding. This will be rewarding.

Your partner may be a lot like you – a flawed, frightened human being seeking to find their way in a flawed (yet somehow perfect), frightening (yet embracing and warm where we allow it to be) universe.

Our defences

As we become more exposed to one another through the sharing of intimacy, the defences we usually employ to keep us separate are gradually dissolved. When we first meet we are full of expectations, hopes,

dreams, fears and possibly some shames. Many unknown emotions start to percolate to the surface. While we may not know how to handle some of these feelings, as time passes and trust builds, we become quite expert at stumbling into uncomfortable circumstances, confident that we will survive. This kind of relationship is a deep, robust entity that stands by us in difficult times. Now we are standing 'naked' in front of our partner with nothing to hide. Even when things go wrong we can stand there assured of support and love, no matter what happens. This experience with the intimate partner is a lot like the one we have/had with our family. That is why sometimes old grievances and fears crop up.

We are perfect within a universe that stretches, shrinks, flows, floods, poisons, nurtures, crashes, reconstructs with every glance, every step we take. Each mistake can bring further understanding. Every experiment we make helps us find a truer path. Building a resistance to the sometimes-deflating aspects of 'failure' furthers our advancement in the universe. A universe in which we play a minuscule part; but minuscule as it is, it is the most monumentally important thing we can do to make life better for ourselves and for everybody else around us.

The position to take as adults is one of undefended love. When things happen to us in relationships they are likely to be a mixture of good and bad. There are likely to be times when you are fed up and discouraged, when you will lose sight of the true nature of your partner, even the true nature of yourself. These times will cause you to make decisions wildly out of kilter with your principles. In these times you will say and do things that may hurt the other. Here is where the Forbidden City architectural model may prove helpful, (*see – 5*).

Being in relationship

An effective adult relationship relies on some tools that will enable a couple to resist blaming, accusing statements. The relationship you already have is the perfect place to learn *how to be in a relationship*. Our frailties – dependences, attachments, functionalities, dysfunctionalities, are rife in all of us. There is no better place to examine them than when you are really close to them, when they are occurring. Being in the relationship will allow you to observe the better functioning as well as the malfunctioning aspects of you and your partner. You will be able to discuss them and alter your positions accordingly. This might be better accomplished with a therapist's help, but there is still much you can do to help yourselves before and after you attend a therapy session.

**It is better for you to have in the back of your mind
that the work to establish and maintain a great relationship
is an ongoing practice.**

Trying to maintain that magic feeling you felt when you first met will be exhausting. You may well need some help from the pharmaceutical companies to maintain that degree of loving feeling. This may also be accomplished, and often is, with the use of alcohol, cocaine, Viagra, sex, ice, chocolate, sometimes a combination of them all. David Morris Schnarch says –

Contemporary society provides people with lots of musts and ‘shoulds’ about sexuality... all people must want sex... find(ing) it pleasurable ... must be in context of intercourse ... must be erections, orgasms, etc. ...

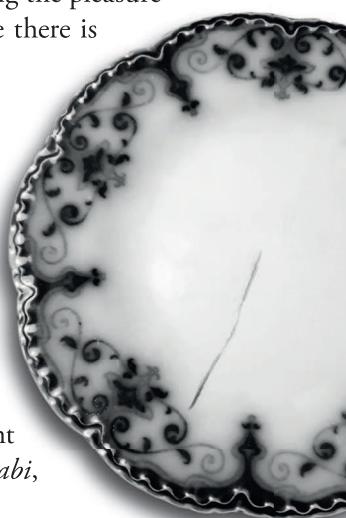
Sometimes couples enter treatment not so much because their functioning differs from that of their contemporaries but because they think it does. Society makes little provision for education and experiences to facilitate the achievement of commonly accepted musts.¹⁹⁸

For some the relationship is such a challenge the only way to function in a ‘normal fashion’ is to block out stuff that is hurting. This will keep the darkness at bay but also makes it less likely that you will truly enjoy an authentic life; by avoiding the pain you are also denying the pleasure of true engagement. *Where there is pain nurse it.*^b Where there is joy celebrate.

Kintsugi — broken pottery

Kintsugi or ‘golden joinery’, the ancient art of Japanese pottery repair, brings back to life unwanted pieces with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold or silver. Sometimes the finished bowl or plate is made up of several mismatched pieces brought together to make a new whole. This centuries-old method creates a finished piece even more valuable than the original. This ancient technique reflects the Japanese philosophy of *wabi-sabi*,

b. . Andre Aciman, *Call Me By Your Name*.



seeing something beautiful in flaws and avoiding distress by seeing something reused rather than discarded. Is there some lesson here for the relationship hopeful? ¹⁹⁹

Life is not meant to be easy

It seems those who live life fully yet ‘relaxedly’ have the most fun – not taking life too seriously. Although, taking care, living in the moment, keeping healthy and fit, nothing to excess, knowing yourself, being mindful and good and kind, being yourself, being authentic... these are indications of taking life seriously but easily. There is nothing so refreshing as to meet someone who allows you to know them. It is the small things about the other person that are so endearing. Those who close-off, withhold themselves or build defences will leave us feeling the cold. *Who was that person? I know so little of them and now they have gone.* It’s the one who placed a chocolate on the saucer when we had coffee that we remember. The one who thoughtfully asks, *How was your day?* instead of rattling on about theirs. Or who asks, *Is everything ok?* when you are feeling tired. Such seemingly inconsequential recognition of you are far better than a huge bunch of flowers or a diamond bracelet. ^c

All the while, during these lovely moments when a warm spell is cast on you, there is the dishes and laundry to be done before you go to bed. All that domestic trivia completes the scene in the basic relationship. No longer are you running into each other’s arms, the highly sexualised coming together as it was in the beginning. The undefended relationship has now evolved into a settled understanding of each other’s funny ways.



You are two involved individuals, open to accepting your own and your partner’s considerable incompleteness with an understanding that exceeds pure love. The more you *need* sexual excitement and the romantic atmosphere the more difficulty you will have in a domestic relationship. The very thing you wanted is now very every-day, monotonous. Are you going to be happy with a loving partner, parent to your children, companion, best friend with occasional sex? This requires great differentiation.

- c. Although, diamonds are a girl’s best friend, I am told.

Each of us has our wants and needs. Recognising that there are no absolutes will enable you to find a partner aligned to your beliefs and dreams

The problem with sex

Couples in long term relationships often report the difficulty of having ongoing fulfilling sexually active lives. People get bored with the same partner or same position or the same whatever we now do as a matter-of-fact. There are ways to spice up the act but they can seem a bit silly unless you like dressing up or role playing. Some like to bring in other people on short or long-term arrangements; polyamorous relationships seemingly becoming more common. Have they always been? Probably. Just more noticeable.

The couple who have a good friendship, a good work engagement, a good parenting connection and a good sex life will be compassionate and talk to each other – a lot. It is quite likely this family are healthy, both physically and mentally. Good food, regular exercise, regular involvement in physical activities, low consumption of alcohol and party drugs, regular self-care, regular breaks during the day at work, strong interest in sports, the arts, regular visits to museums, galleries, concert halls or local music clubs... and so on. Is this a boring scenario? Does this seem pedestrian? Are you already running, screaming, from the room?

This is not the first time it has been suggested that the simple pleasures will bring you the greatest joy. Much can be learned from Epicurean philosophy – not the Epicurean philosophy of fine food - but the Epicurean philosophy of good friendship, good thinking, wise consideration, as informed by the *Letter to Menoeceus* by Epicurus –

When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or wilful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of merrymaking, not sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest disturbances take possession of the soul. Of all



EPICVRVS.

this the greatest is prudence. For this reason prudence is a more precious thing even than the other virtues, for ad a life of pleasure which is not also a life of prudence, honor, and justice; nor lead a life of prudence, honor, and justice, which is not also a life of pleasure.

For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them.²⁰⁰

— Epicurus (341-270 BC)²⁰¹

There may be a very good argument for the long-term loving relationship based on

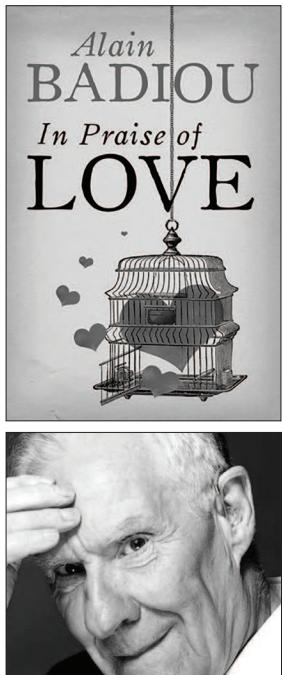
friendship and common interests. Marriages start out triumphantly – it's all so new, so very sexy; there is hardly any good reason to think that this will not be the standard forever, which is why therapists see so many people in such distress when the 'magic' disappears. It's mostly smoke and mirrors. Marriages are breaking up at an alarming rate. More and more, people are reporting episodes of high anxiety and depression.

Sharing a flat or house or even a mansion with another human is a fraught experience – *It is my domain and I want the plates stacked in this manner not that, and, what's more, the knives go in the dishwasher pointing up not down and anyone who thinks different is not for me.*

Remaining curious and loving toward your own (self-soothing) and your partner's (partnership-responsibility) wants and needs brings an intimacy, a fulfilling connection.

As good as it is to suggest these ways to live well in a domestic relationship, you both have to agree on the manner in which this is going to work. For example, the concert pianist will need to travel for most of the year. Does the family go with them? Does the partner forgo a career, the comforts of the home base and seeing friends regularly for the sake of the following the concert diary? It takes some pretty special adulthood for this kind of relationship to work well. Each person, each couple, each arrangement is different. Marriage or partnership is not (just) a magical

garden. In the book *In Praise of Love*, by Alain Badiou with Nicloas Truong –



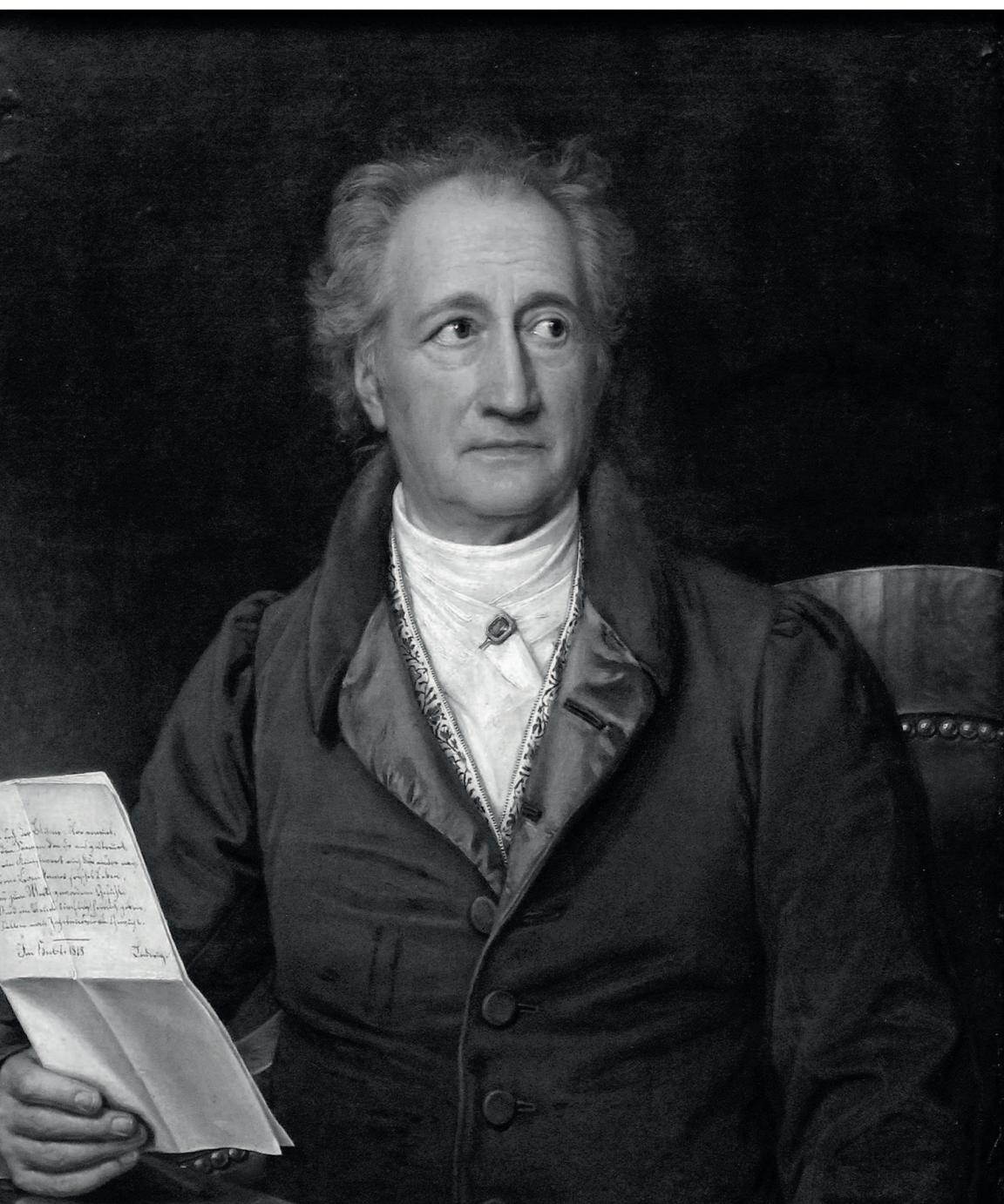
In love the individual goes beyond themselves [sic], beyond the narcissistic. In sex you are really in a relationship with yourself via the mediation of the other. The other helps you to discover the reality of pleasure. In love, on the contrary, the mediation of the other is enough in itself. Such is the nature of the amorous encounter – you go to take on the other, to make him or her exist with you, as he or she is. It is a much more profound conception of love than the banal view that love is no more than an imaginary canvas painted over the reality of sex.²⁰²

— Alain Badiou (1937-)

What is wanted is a good match

Find someone to be in a relationship with who matches with a lot of your needs only occurring if you are both strictly authentic from the outset. This requires you to be lovingly, honest and frank. When first experiencing love, we take it for granted. Where we are lucky, our parents adored our every move – feeding, wiping, warming, soothing and playing. *What's this thing called love?* you might ask. *It is a lovely thing. It's very comforting.* *Why am I not getting it now?* Because you think it requires someone else to give it to you, unselfishly.

Undefended loving: giving, supportive ethos that will enhance you with each encounter. You will never stop loving. Undefended love, appropriately applied, is its own reward. It begins with your giving.



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) ²⁰³

When the sound and wholesome nature
of man acts as an entirety, when he feels
himself in the world as in a grand, beautiful,
worthy and worthwhile whole, when this
harmonious comfort affords him a pure,
untrammelled delight: then the universe, if
it could be sensible of itself, would shout for
joy at having attained its goal and wonder
at the pinnacle of its own essence and
evolution. For what end is served by all the
expenditure of suns and planets and moons,
of stars and Milky Ways, of comets and
nebula, of worlds evolving and passing away,
if at last a happy man does not involuntarily
rejoice in his existence?

He who cannot draw on three thousand
years is living hand to mouth.

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning
*Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet,
A breach, but an expansion
Like gold to airy thinness beat.* ^a ²⁰⁵

—John Donne (1572-1631) ²⁰⁴

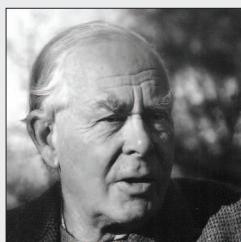
a. . "John Donne's 'A Valediction: forbidding mourning' concerns a sea voyage, and uses the image of a circle as an antidote to the abyss of loss and separation. He pictures the invisible but precious bonds which link carer and cared-for, lover and beloved in an attachment relationship as slender threads of gold."

10 — Attachment

The stark nakedness and simplicity of the conflict with which humanity is oppressed – that of getting angry with and wishing to hurt the very person who is most loved.

We do as we have been done by.

Thus, just as animals of many species, including man, are disposed to respond with fear to sudden movement or a marked change in



level of sound or light because to do so has a survival value, so are many species, including man, disposed to respond to separation from a potentially care giving figure and for the same reasons.²⁰⁶

— John Bowlby (1907-1990)

The emotional bond — how loving works

Common sense will tell us that the quality of connection between humans depends largely on the degree of trust, contentment and satisfaction between each other. However, we may not realise how attachment plays a part in this equation. John Bowlby's theory of attachment, *the early emotional bonding between baby and caregiver*, resonates in our relationships throughout our lives. Being born to be attached comes with substantial responsibilities.

The pioneering enquiries into child and ethological studies by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth are covered extensively in Bowlby's research, culminating in the trilogy *Attachment and Loss* in 1969–1982. (*See next page.*)

We learn attachment styles from our mothers, fathers and other significant caregivers. The baby is powerless, soaking up all experiences and

remaining wordless for many months – the experience sometimes leaving them feeling voiceless forever. Babies begin to speak from about eighteen months. These first words will usually start to describe what they want, an extension of the wordless state that has centred around gaining sustenance to survive.

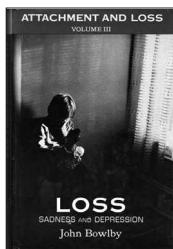
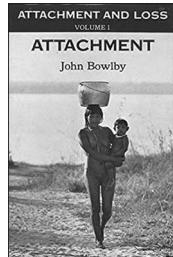
Infants experience rapid brain development at birth, forming strong bonds with caregivers immediately. Upon temporary separation, the bond will usually be restored quickly. However, when separation and re-bonding breaks down, the relevant neural pathways are under-utilised and children deprived of these early experiences often falter in their later development.

The Science of Intimate Relationships by Garth J. O. Fletcher helps to explain this concept –

There are three normative developmental factors, all of which are critical to understanding how and why people form emotional bonds with others – (i) the way in which infants' reactions and behaviours are synchronised with their caretakers from the time the baby is born; (ii) young children's tendency to remain in close physical contact with and proximity to their caregivers, especially when they are upset or afraid; and (iii) the way in which attachment behaviours emerge and develop in a series of stages.²⁰⁷

Self-soothing – the ability to modulate feelings – is a skill babies learn from the bonding-separation-rebonding process. This skill is critical later in life for adult relationships to work well.

For instance, the baby learns to self-sooth by being put to bed when drowsy, they are already sleepy and learn to drop off to sleep themselves rather than have the mother soothing them by rocking. When the baby is raised in a nurturing environment they learn to look after themselves and from this complicated, powerful tool that they carry with them all their lives, assertiveness is born. There are often difficulties with the way babies are raised and *attachment theory* is just one model to explain these difficulties. However, each baby/person's experience is unique.





My advice to mothers is not to miss an opportunity to show affection to their babies.

— Mary Ainsworth (1913-1999)²⁰⁸

Parents always/usually/always want to raise children in a way that will give them the very best start in the world. Complications can occur where the parents themselves had a chaotic childhood or where some other event interferes with ‘normal’ child/mother or child/father bonding. This may lead, for example, to the baby experiencing negative or ambivalent feelings toward the mother if continually disappointed, and that disappointment is not repaired/resolved/corrected; the mother supposedly being the source of all love. This ‘correction’ allows the baby to learn to self-sooth rather than hold on to resentment toward the mother figure. Although, resentment, disappointment and failure are all experiences we suffer from time-to-time.

How we manage these experiences is the mark of our resolve or character, or the skills we have been taught so we can live well.

Early bonds are both precious and precarious. John Donne’s *‘A Valediction: Forbidding mourning,’* (see – 156) pictures the invisible but precious bonds that link carer and cared-for, lover and beloved in an attachment relationship as ‘slender threads of gold.’²⁰⁹

Early bonds are precious and precarious.

When parents experience a chaotic family dynamic, they will more than likely pass that dynamic onto their children. These family dynamics play a huge part in how the adult ends up experiencing the world. We will pass on our experience to all the people we influence. This passing on of the family dynamic is so subtle that it is sometimes referred to as ‘hidden understandings.’ We assume it is truth when we play out these norms our parents teach us. Our influencers affect our lives in many ways. Negative norms are sometimes taken on more readily by the person who has low self-esteem or a poor sense of self. Jeremy Holmes considered the effect of the family dynamic in *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory* –

People brought up in unhappy or disrupted homes are more likely to have illegitimate children, become teenage mothers, make unhappy marriages and to divorce. Parents who physically abuse their children tend to have had childhoods characterised by neglect, rejection, and violence. Girls from disrupted homes when they become mothers tend to talk less to their babies, play with them less and look at them less. But not all children from unhappy homes suffer and fail this way. A complex model is needed to explain individual differences that takes into account the child, the parent, events and their appraisal, and the social environment... parent's own childhood ... events around birth ... sex and birth position ... death of parent ... temperament of child ... inner-city areas ... country or small town...²¹⁰

Other environmental factors will also strongly influence how we perceive the world, determining the varied ways we develop – keeping in mind that we inherit much through our genetic variation. These environmental factors determine how we think and behave; in the future we become as needy as our unmet needs. By the time the child is five these are well-formed, sometimes unbreakable ideas, hard-wired into the brain.

What is ‘learned’ may always seem true. Many clients come into counselling rooms reporting they are ‘hopeless’, and this is ‘why I can’t sustain a relationship.’ However, while it may be true that they have not yet been able to sustain a relationship, it may not be because they are hopeless, albeit, they may feel hopeless.

A feeling is different to a fact.

Where feelings are strong a massive influence is experienced. Untested, unconsidered, ‘thoughtless’ feelings can establish a false sense of self; if not discovered and righted a pseudo-self is formed, a kind of mask assumed to shield from the possible hurts and rebuffs most people experience in their day-to-day lives. Mostly this is effective because it allows the pseudo-self to live reasonably well in the community. However, the person who lives only through their feelings lives a lowly differentiated existence; buffeted back-and-forth by whatever atmosphere surrounds them; powerfully influenced by what other people think of them. They may break up a relationship because the father of their lover comments that he ‘...she’s good enough for his son.’ Parents easily pass their ideas onto their children and their children’s friends and so-on.

Jessica felt shamed by her fiancé remaining in touch with an old girlfriend, whom he had been engaged to seven years prior. His ex-fiancé occasionally emailed him from another city in another state asking how things are going. He would reply with full details about his forthcoming marriage. It turns out, Jessica's mother had told her, when she was thirteen and had broken up with her current boyfriend, that she shouldn't stay in touch with the ex because it is disrespectful to her new boyfriend.^a

This lesson Jessica's mother taught her became a *sacred family truth*. Jessica struggled to believe that her lover/fiancé who had been in a relationship with his ex-fiancé for several years could still be 'friends' after ending their engagement seven years ago. This 'pseudo-truth' (mistaken belief) had imploded on her in two previous relationships. Her current one was in dire straits for the same reason. No amount of discussion could change her mind and the couple left the counselling room headed for a break up. The innate ideas, neurotic ideas, or 'mistaken beliefs' as Adler calls them, are highly triggerable, remaining imprinted on our brain, sometimes for eternity. They are there for a reason – Jessica's mother was training her to be safe. It was misguided training, but she was doing the best she could for her daughter to have a good relationship with her new boyfriend. Jessica's mother was probably trained in a similar manner by her own mother.

The process of learning to unhook ourselves from these triggers, where we react in a chaotic manner to a mistaken belief or faulty family or societal norm, can be difficult. We can train ourselves to be less reactive to these false, mistaken, hard-wired beliefs. Yet we are so attached to these ideas that it's like slicing through flesh, muscle and bone as we attempt to detach ourselves. When a limb needs to be amputated the patient can be left with a very real lingering feeling where the severed limb once was. That is what it's like to sever ourselves from these mistaken beliefs. That is the power of these early bonding processes lingering in our brain. As we grow we are likely to take on new ideas, discarding older beliefs; the brain is just as able to change when we are older as when we were young; however, testing has shown that older people learn in a different manner. For example, in a study by Watanabe T. Chang et al.,²¹¹ that compared selective attention ability between older and younger adults '*...the older adults did notably worse than their younger peers; they could not filter out irrelevant stimuli as well. Importantly, the poorer their ability to filter, the more irrelevant stimuli participants learned. ...This brain ability*

a. From choosingchange clinic. Names changed.

is what neuroscientists call stability – high stability allows your brain to sort through new stimuli and store only the important items while processing out any unimportant details.’ When adults learn new ideas there is a greater chance they cannot discard the older mistaken beliefs that may have solidified with time and age.

However, having a curious nature and open mind are basic requirements to get on with others in relationships.

Inherited social expectations

Our expectations can come from our peers, advertising, marketing and many other sources of unrealistic expectations. These distractions take advantage of a brain quick to be triggered, promoting an endless supply of sex and partners willing to play. ‘*We’re only as needy as our unmet needs.*’^b

In a well-founded, settled relationship the transition from the youthful activities of clubbing, drinking and quick easy sex slowly morph into the responsibilities of parenthood and home-making, where ‘settling’ takes precedence. This the usual story. It is the holding onto those earlier expectations of sex whenever it is wanted that can trap many an unsuspecting novice. ‘Settling’ can have heavy undertones, especially for men. Bringing children into the fold also has many unsuspecting outcomes.

The couple who are good at regulating their expectations are more likely to continue with a healthy, sensitive sexual quality in their life. Self-regulation (or self-soothing) is learned early in our lives from our parents – where our parents self-regulate we will probably follow suit. Where our emotions are known, shared and understood there is a strong likelihood of a more harmonious atmosphere between couples. The *sense of self of the individual* – is something learned long ago in the family dynamic, playing out in the later relationships at home and at work.

Everyone you know gets a sense of who you are and how you operate by the way you act. If you sulk, over-exhibit or over-share you are likely to be showing the others a part of a misconceived inner-self driven by mistaken beliefs.

Usually these revelation of the inner-self are reserved for the intimate partner. *Take me as you see me... I am who I am... That’s just me... I must*

b. John Bowlby.

be me to be authentic... are all cries of the heart from those who are not able to see how their actions may be destroying the very thing they are wishing to achieve – a fulfilling, loving relationship.

Difficult times

We inherit our negative and positive personality traits to a large extent from our past; we must learn to live with some of them, modifying where we can change them. It is worth remembering that the universe is a cold hard mother. We come from stardust and we will be that again at some time in the future. That's it. Whatever else you might believe, our time here on earth is a limited. No chance of a reboot. Your chance to improve your lot is only limited to the degree that you pay attention to your attitudes and mistaken beliefs. Even then, says Richard Dawkins –

The total amount of suffering per year in the natural world is beyond all decent contemplation. During the minute that it takes me to compose this sentence, thousands of animals are being eaten alive, many others are running for their lives, whimpering with fear, others are slowly being devoured from within by rasping parasites, thousands of all kinds are dying of starvation, thirst, and disease.

It must be so. If there ever is a time of plenty, this very fact will automatically lead to an increase in the population until the natural state of starvation and misery is restored.

In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.²¹²

The implanted norms

We can compare the first attachment with the mother with the first romantic love attachment – immersive, unquestioned, self-defining, overwhelming. We never forget the first time we fall in love. The secure attachment in childhood produces an adult who does not feel anxious in social situations. An insecure adult will be disturbed when their partner pays attention to others or gets a text late at night. The secure adult sees these events as a normal expression of friendship toward another person.

The degree of sensitivity the child experiences from caregivers will play out later in the care and sensitivity shown to their partner and friends. These incidents go awry particularly when the insecure adult was abused or treated badly one way or another in the past.

Essentially, the early stages of attachment consist of establishing safety. Security is a primary need for humans – this is true for the mother and father as much as the baby.

Parents are seeking to protect; the baby seeks protection. Babies seek proximity maintenance, a safe-haven, a secure base. Children will hang around their parent's knees when a stranger approaches. If the parent teaches the child to reach out, explore, the child may feel safe talking and interacting with other people. The mother who shields the child too much can instil in the child a fear of these events. These experiences will likely continue into adulthood.

Main attachment styles – adult

There are four primary attachment styles: Secure, the majority of us; Avoidant, about 25% of the population; Ambivalent, about 10%; and Disorganized, about 25% of us. These styles are discussed widely in literature. Homosexual, heterosexual and other gender differences are similarly distributed; those on the periphery of accepted societal distinctions may suffer more alienation and subsequently more emotional or psychological or attachment complications. No-one's fault.

- Secure adult – The secure adult rarely experiences abandonment issues. They will find it easier to be close and remain close to their partner. Their expectations are healthy, they can be relied upon. A secure partner offers support and guidance with optimistic views of their partner. When things go wrong, they will have empathy and act calmly to diffuse sadness or high expectations their partner may exhibit.
- Avoidant adult – Closeness and trust are difficult to traverse for the avoidant adult. When people get too close unreasonable anxiety will increase. Intimacy can be problematic for this adult. An avoidant person will withdraw when he or she is stressed. Expectations are that nobody can help and that even when that help is offered it will be useless.
- Ambivalent adult – Derives from early attachment where love and security were inconsistent. The child feels very unsure. The adult will constantly seek reassurance and affirmation of love and their wor-

thiness. The constant need for reassurance sought from this person's partner will likely implode badly on their relationship.

- Anxious adult – Closeness and intimacy come at a great cost to the anxious adult. Their ingrained 'un-loveableness' builds a protective wall that will deflect any approach. This person has negative views of themselves.

These examples are simplified. Each of us has a mixture of these traits that goes toward helping us understand the complexity of the human brain in the relationship battles. The socio-economic and socio-emotional capabilities in the family dynamic play a huge part in the development of each of us. Stresses encountered by families lead to more or less harsh realities in each member of the group. It seems obvious that they will play out these characteristics in their adult relationships. Luckily, if they are smart, they will see patterns and ask questions of themselves when things go right or wrong. They may pick up ways to manage their idiosyncratic ways of relating.

Highly anxious adults will need help. Therapy is an ideal way to help discover the individual difficulties encountered in relationships. Therapists will be able to guide you with ways to regulate and manage your emotions when in relationships. It is an ongoing experience to get better and better at relating. The ancient philosophers also provided guidance in their writings, which are nearly entirely focused on how to live a good life.

The adult who has a splendid first date with an entirely lovely person who seems an almost ideal partner will want to keep the connection. As the 'date' leaves saying – '*We must do this again.*' The already anxious-attached person will likely reply without a break, breathlessly '*When?*' (For J.) This type of response leaves no space for contemplation, no room for doubt. The attachment shown here is anxious-ambivalent. The bond formed here is as legitimate as any, albeit unhelpful where the decisions being made might lead to unhealthy connections.

Other attachment styles

Other styles of attachment include – anxious-ambivalent attachment, dismissive-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant. Each individual will respond appropriately to their learned or osmosed (drawn directly from our parents' styles). We all play out our lives with a variety of responses and reactions. Every culture has their own styles, which infuse their religion

or historical culture. *Birds of Passage*^c shows us how rigid adherence to culture, family and tradition can be fatally dysfunctional.

Few of us fit neatly into any one style. The crossovers are important to understand so we can ameliorate our reactions/responses in order to carry on in a relationship in a rewarding, fulfilling manner. Where two cultures are involved the complications increase. Gender roles are highly organised in each culture, sometimes these will clash in many ways.

- Anxious-ambivalent (preoccupied) attachment – This adult will often live in a fantasy world. The partner will complete them. Hungry for emotional connection, their partner will be a rescuer. This person will say their partner does not love them, will seek connection 24/7 or ask their partner to account for every move. This will likely alienate the partner.
- Anxious-avoidant (dismissive) attachment – This adult may be uncomfortable getting close, always wanting to seek independence. They will suppress and/or hide true feelings, denying any need for connection for fear they will be hurt. Their nature impedes growing close to others.
- Fearful-avoidant – These adults possibly suffered abuse or sexual abuse as children. Their inability to trust others and tendency to view others negatively is understandable. Their self-view can also be extremely negative, they worry for being hurt emotionally. Very unlikely to be overt in expressing feelings, they do not display affection easily.

Our attachment styles or schemas we have inherited (learned overtly,

c. *Birds of Passage*, 2019, (below) directed by Ciro Guerra and Cristina Gallego.



or osmosed) can be altered by adapting different ways of reacting and responding learning from our experiences. Our peers may become a secure base for experiment new ways. This is also started in the therapy room.

The three strands of attachment are family, friends and romantic. Attachment styles will vary depending on these three areas. The source of the anxiety is the same for that in the friends zone, the family and the romantic. The anxious person at home might have secure, close friends and balanced connections at work, but in the romantic sphere the anxiety might flare where this most closely matches their family experience. This example may be different for the next person whose work zone is highly affected.

Parents wield an enormous influence over the children. Where a benevolent atmosphere of care and encouragement exists the child/adult will likely be as or more beneficent – joyous in return. A nourishing education is that which includes travel, exciting and generous experiences to museums and concert halls, let alone Paris, Hamburg, or the Himalayas. It is the enthusiasm in playing a game of checkers and the people playing, not the quality of the board, that advances the mind and soul.

Changing attachment styles

Attachment styles are changeable. We carry aspects of many styles in our personality. As a baby, teenager, adult, in relationships, under stress, in sickness your style may alter. Attachment is simply the description of the bonds we form with others. They vary with different people and at different times. Your mother, father, siblings, lovers, friends, colleagues – each of these ‘departments’ in your life will see different aspects of attachment at play.

The emphasis is on the growth of the individual. How does the person feel and act – by themselves, in the relationship, when things go wrong, when things go right? Some people can’t bear their partner showing them love and affection and this will trigger old events/feelings that will colour current situations, frequently resulting in pushing away or clinging or maybe starting an argument. These people have a low opinion of themselves; their attachment style may be anxious-avoidant or ambivalent or disorganised. The secure attachment allows the individual to feel good about being shown affection, and when not shown affection and love they are able to remain calm and self-sooth.

The individual who knows themselves and develops themselves, is equally curious when things go right or wrong. (*If* by Rudyard Kipling – 79.) In this way, you will be able to maintain a steady, rewarding relationship with friends, family and lovers, remembering there are as many

pushes and pulls in your partner's life as yours. Your partner is also also prone to the influences of attachment styles learned as a child. They also are stressed, fearful and worry about their life and career. It is good to make sure you are not too influenced by their 'stuff'. People who have a dysfunctional attachment style may try to use you to complete themselves; they will deplete your energy and resources as you try to keep yourself in a good place, all the while wanting to please them.

Your partner is responsible for looking after their worries, as you for yours. That doesn't mean we don't help each other – a bit. Determining how much help to give and take comes back to you having the skills to assert your needs while attending their needs. Effective assertiveness skills are critical for sustaining a good relationship.

Orangutan (people of the forest)^{213 d} babies stay with their mother for up to six years, whereas baby sea turtles hatching on the sand immediately begin finding their way to the ocean, not needing attachment quite so much. Orangutan and humans genomes are 97 percent identical. Attachment plays a necessary part in staying connected for the good of human parent and child. Humans have an enormously long period where the baby stays with the mother – 18 years or so. In the beginning humans can't hold their head erect, (*see James Balwin –xxvi*); the attachment to the mother is necessary, partly for the brain to develop. In the womb the baby's brain (skull) can only grow so big or the mother would be unable to give birth – the baby's brain needs early care and attention to fully develop. The growth of the individual begins with the close connection mothers and fathers and other primary caregivers have with the baby.

When he first arrived at IAR Ketapang in August 2016, Gatot was so small he didn't even have all his teeth. His estimated age was just 4 months old– He had been kept as a pet by a local villager who claimed that he had found the baby alone in the forest whimpering loudly. The man said he felt bad for the baby so he took him home... Had he not been rescued by IAR he would not have survived. Another life saved...²¹⁴

Yes – I want to adopt Gatot.^e

ORANGUTAN OUTREACH MISSION

d. Latest research indicates Orangatang may be closest living animal to man. *By contrast, humans share at least 28 unique physical characteristics with orangutans but only 2 with chimps and 7 with gorillas, the authors say.'*

e. <https://redapes.org/my-orangutan/add-orangutans/>

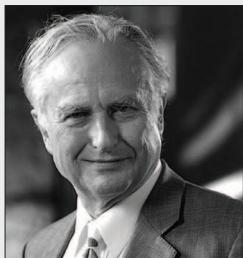


Portrait of beautiful Gatot aged 6 months old.



Portrait of a beautiful baby boy 6 months old. Credit – LindaYolanda

11 — Assertiveness



The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.²¹⁵

— Richard Dawkins (1941-)

If we are to believe Richard Dawkins, from the day we are born there is no one excepting ourselves to establish and maintain our place in the world. Most of us wish it were not so, fantasising that a knight in the shiny armour on a white horse or a long blonde-haired maiden will cross our paths – then all will be well in the world. We can be thankful for the attachment that bonds mother and baby for the first few years, beginning the establishment of fierce individuality and willing acceptance of appropriate love. Every good self-help book will discuss assertiveness, and it is the final chapter of this book because it brings together all of the previous ideas.

The basis for a good relationship is the individuals themselves – assertive and confident – separately and together.

Achieving differentiation is an ongoing process; balance and confidence, allows you to manage mistaken beliefs and thwarted expectations. The previous chapters have detailed many ways in which we learn to see and believe things, sometimes in mangled, mistaken ways. When those mistaken beliefs are realigned you are automatically released from

the strictures of the incongruence you have experienced, and assertiveness takes its rightful place. You will be empowered by this freedom.

Understanding the theories of assertiveness begins with the Delphic Oracle ‘Know Thyself’... learning to accept yourself and love yourself.

Not so simple, you say

By putting in place strategies to bring about assertiveness and confidence you will find it easier to assume that assured self you know is in you somewhere. Establishing good communication styles creates a fair and responsible environment for the building of connection and understanding between people. It makes sense. To relate well is to communicate well. Bad communication patterns, frequently identified by clients in therapy, are a common factor for relationship breakdown. Partners who communicate clearly and often will have fewer misunderstandings, feel greater support from each other and experience a calmer, more creative atmosphere. The arguments will be fewer and softer – the compromises and subsequent agreements will come quicker and far from being disruptive, they will affirm and strengthen the connection.

This kind of open-to-discussion environment allows the free expression of discontent when things are going wrong. You will not be afraid to disagree. You will know there is a genuine caring attention to your partnership. You must both be as free as each other to express your desires. Freedom goes hand in hand with equality, responsibility and respect.

Not many people will give a damn about your needs until you assert them. But be fair in your assertiveness.

It is not a good idea to only use one way of doing things. Once you identify the ways in which you communicate, it is a good idea to also decide the context in which each voice will be used – not forgetting that the stress you are experiencing can bias your ideas and slant your outlook, often demanding immediate attention. When things are stressful they are usually stressful for a reason.

J. Garth et al. in *The Science of Intimate Relationships* tells us that –

...when faced with a stressful event, the brain and the body work in concert using what is termed the hypothalamic-pituitary-adre-

nal (HPA) axis to generate flight or fight hormones like cortisol, which is similar to epinephrine, but has much longer-term effects.

Indeed, for this reason, it is a principal marker of long-term stress in relationships. Not surprisingly, therefore, more negative communication patterns when resolving conflict are linked to the production of cortisol measured in saliva.²¹⁶

We tend to communicate in three main ways – 1. assertively; 2. aggressively; and 3. passive-aggressively (or non-assertively). The first two are direct methods with each having a different outcome. When people are assertive you can be sure that what is expressed is the same as what the person actually wants, with the added bonus that both parties are being respected. This is a fair way of communicating. The aggressive style makes clear what is wanted but with little regard for what others feel or want. The non-assertive communicator seems to want what is fair but is fearful – in order to get what they want they may hint never truly speaking their mind.

When we communicate clearly, factually and calmly, we are being assertive. The actions and facial expressions we use exhibit meanings that are congruent with the words we choose. What you see is what you get. You can believe what you hear because there is a genuine emotional message being transmitted along with the words. Sarcasm is the opposite.

Being assertive will get your message across. An assertive communicator respects themselves as much as the person they are communicating with. Confidence and a healthy self-esteem are the hallmark of the assertive communicator. This person's demeanour is consistent with the exhibited behaviour. They say what they mean honestly, openly and freely, but with care and consideration; expressing their wants and needs constructively, with respect, perhaps even with love.

Non-assertiveness

Non-assertive people may be self-critical; having beliefs and life philosophies that restrict and inhibit themselves and sometimes inhibit others. The non-assertive person believes they are never as good as other people.

The non-assertive person puts themselves last. The inevitable result of this trait can be growing, festering resentment and frustration because they will rarely get what they want out of life. The non-assertiveness usually requires the burying of unmet needs and frustrations. Anger is denied and this person seethes. Whatever flooding occurs will push this person further into misery and depression.

Aggressiveness

An aggressive communication style is marked by low respect for others and usually a depressed sense of their own worth. Low self-confidence and low self-esteem play out for the aggressive person in one or more aggressive communication styles. Displaced aggression occurs when there is no way of immediately expressing concerns or frustrations. For example, you may feel anger at your work colleagues or your boss with no way to express it because of fear of the consequences. That night your partner is the recipient of some sarcastic or hurtful remark about shirts not being ironed, the dinner being late, or the lawn not being mowed.

This is extremely upsetting for the other party because they often have no idea what is wrong. If they are lacking confidence themselves, they may blame themselves and act in a pleasing way (non-assertive) just to keep the peace. It is very easy for a non-assertive person to have a long-term relationship with an aggressive or passive-aggressive person. Each play into the other's personality. Non-verbal aggression can sometimes end up in physical violence.

Verbal aggression is more open but just as destructive and hurtful. Often the words You must... You should.... You have to... You always... You would wouldn't you... You never... You don't... are scattered indiscriminately in the conversations. Blaming, sarcasm, ridiculing, accusing, threatening remarks... *Look what you've done now* – These comments are intended to make the receiver feel belittled and worthless. Sarcasm is a constant in this verbally aggressive way of being in the world.

When sarcasm is used there is usually an abundance of unmet needs and unspoken resentments layering underneath the words. Sarcasm is often defended as being a clever form of wit. Sparingly used for the offhand remark it can be hilarious; best used against yourself, by the way.

Using sarcasm might be a sign of insecurity. The half joking comment. The experience of hostility requires this person to be defensive. This is passive-aggressiveness.

Passive-aggressive

The passive-aggressive personality is possibly the most difficult to live with. Never being quite sure what the person is really meaning, what they are saying or doing. On the surface they are quite friendly, but it is more what is not said or not done that distinguishes this way of behaving. Sometimes the passive-aggressive person is attempting to be in control in the relationship and they will do this in any number of ways. Leaving the light on in the bathroom, not putting the rubbish out at the agreed time, banging the dishes in the sink when it is their turn to do the washing up. There are millions of ways people can be passive-aggressive. If the issue is raised they will likely deny they are doing it to annoy you.

At work a passive-aggressive person may talk about colleagues behind their back, ignore them, or make it hard for others to get their photocopying done – these little things make life in the office difficult. Again, if the issue is raised, the complainer may be referred to as a troublemaker. This belittling lends a decidedly mean streak to the abuser's modus operandi.

There is little joy in passive-aggressive communication; it is hurtful and distressing for the abused, who can be left without a word to say as the rebuffing may well be worse than the original taunts. There is an incongruence in the way the passive-aggressive person views the world. The hurt party has so little they can do to combat the pain and discomfort that the passive-aggressive person inflicts that often the relationship is destructively ended. Things are not what they seem. The air can be cut with a knife... you can't see the fetid air, but you can feel the anger or distrust or fear... or all three.

Recognising your partner may be angry gives you a clue to managing it. When they make veiled suggestions about things, simply mention it face-to-face, assertively, lovingly, in private, picking the moment – knowing that picking that fight may still end in disastrous argument.

Creating a standard mechanism to confront the passive-aggressive person may allow you to discuss things about your relationship. more easily. Once this pattern is established, you may find your partner more willing to speak to you directly about their issues. This will alleviate their frustrations and subsequently reduce the degree of anger they build up. Only then will they feel free to express themselves. Now you are both free to speak.

Being the assertive one

The assertive person is fuelled by confidence – they are do well with a positive, outgoing outlook with all people under all conditions. This person may be an introvert or extrovert. Feeling good about yourself is born of being fair, listening to others, and showing kindness and love to yourself and to others. Speaking for the self is the most telling trait of an assertive person. When you hear people talking calmly and clearly about what they want you can be sure they are confident and caring. Try telling people how you feel and what you want, when you want it, why you want it – what your needs are – remembering to use words like ‘I’, ‘me’, and ‘my’, which clearly tell the other person or people that these are your ideas, your thoughts, your beliefs. In the same breath, be aware of the context in which you are speaking assertively – not talking over or simply criticising or opposing the ideas presented by the other person.

An assertive person also tries to consider the other person’s feelings, needs, wants and desires. Respecting the other person inevitably results in a just, fair communication. *‘It is not only about what I want but also about what you want.’* Using the word *I* rather than *You* gives the other person an understanding that this is your idea of what you want without demanding it of them. Emphasis on ‘what I would *like...*’ as opposed to ‘...what I would like...’ is important.

Thoughtless comments are often blurted out when we are tired or stressed. The word *you* or *your/s* is best used in context after you use *I*, *me* or *mine*. You can be seen as accusing *‘You did it last week...’* usually preceded by ‘...well...,’ which encourages the accused to defend their action. After telling it like it is (what you want) it is always best to enquire of your partner how they feel. What do they want, how do they see things? (*Refer to Short and Sweet – 52.*)

Be clear about what you want. You are allowed to want things. However, be aware that you may not get what you want exactly, or even at all. When you are clear, polite, caring, considerate, warm, confident, open and fair, chances are you will be communicating exactly what you want to someone who hopefully recognises how you are communicating. Remember to speak calmly and clearly in a tone that is conciliatory and friendly. Be genuine in your feelings and in your way of speaking. This is being congruent – what you mean and the way you say it are the same. Being congruent hopefully means you will never be sarcastic again, for sarcasm will alienate everybody. Be open in your mind and in your body

posture. Uncross your arms, relax your shoulders and make comfortable eye contact (not staring or intensely peering into the other person's face).

Be unambiguous: ambiguity can be a most disturbing sensation. It creates a sense of uncertainty, which can be somewhat frustrating because we are not quite sure what is being said.

It is unfair and very controlling to be ambiguous. If I am not sure what you mean then how can I be sure of what I am agreeing to. There is a sense of having a pseudo-relationship with this ambiguity. Clarity is everything in communications. If you are not sure what you want, say that out loud. '*I don't know what I want!*' Say that you are not sure or that you feel you need time to think something through – these are good things to let others know you care and are considering the decision; this is not a sign of weakness.

Telling your partner or your friends how it really is for you is a most rewarding, respectful way of being in the world. Respectful because it is letting people know you trust them to be caring with your innermost thoughts and feelings; rewarding because that respect and honouring of your partner and friends frequently results in a return of that respect and honour.

Be the person you want your friends and lovers to be.

Feeling you are being belittled when you are expressing doubt or that you don't understand something may be the other person's response or reaction. Ask them to try to understand your experience and if that doesn't work you may be working with a difficult person. If it is your boss, this can be a very difficult situation; it may be bullying. When your income is at risk defer to your boss... on work matters. If it is bordering on the personal it can be harassment.

Bullying and harassment

Bullies are difficult to work with but easy to recognise. Once that recognition is refined you will be able to take action immediately. This tells the bully that you are not prepared to put up with this kind of coercive behaviour. Aggressive bullies will talk over you and interrupt. Passive-ag-

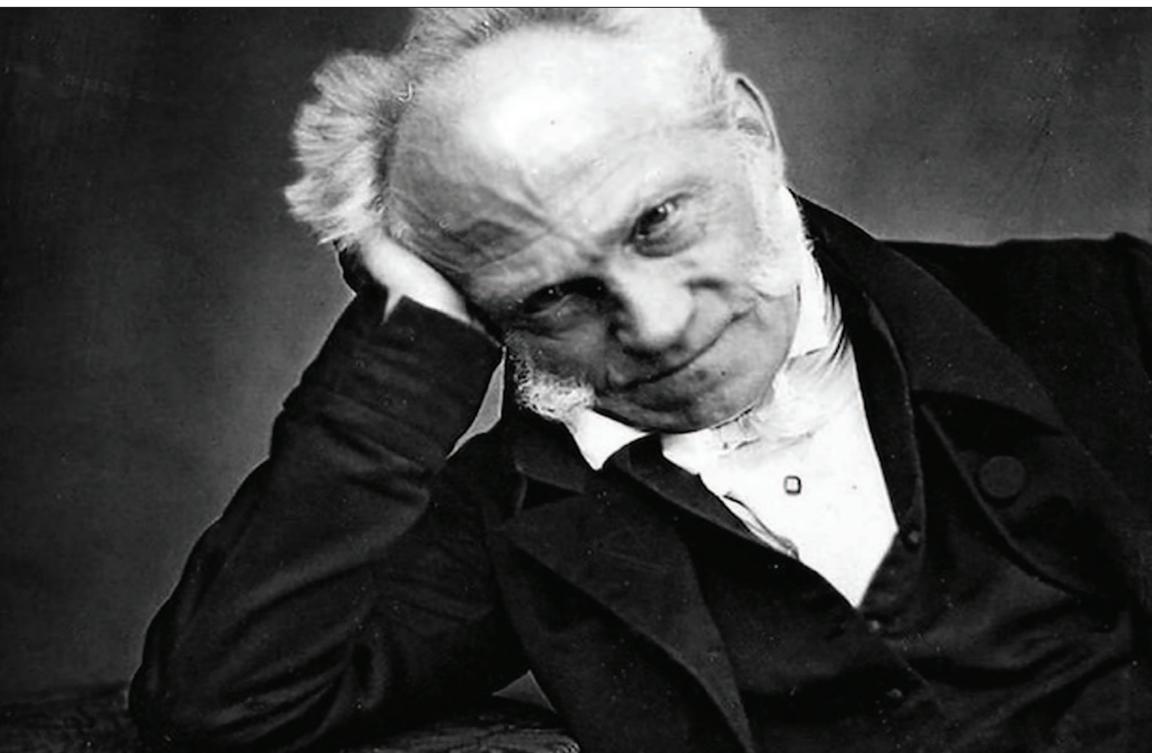
gressive bullies are sweet to your face but working behind the scenes to undermine you; talking negatively about you to your colleagues. Assertive bullies will hear you out and then proceed to ignore most of what you said and express their wants or ideas. Bullies in the workplace, when called out, may be subject to complaints and work-place assessment and negotiations. Where the bullying is termed harassment or violent, the workplace is required to step in and provide protection and a resolution process.

None of this is comforting to the person suffering from these issues. Severe psychological impairment can occur and the best thing to do is immediately speak to your human resources department or your supervisor. Failing to find a successful resolution to the problem make sure you consult your doctor or a counsellor to help you. Official complaints will bring with them their own stresses and you are best to have a number of support people to help you with the process.

Doubt and assertiveness

Confusion arises between uncertainty and assertiveness. However, you can be uncertain *and* assertive. It is thought a person without the capacity to doubt is a fool. That's sure to have been said by somebody famous. Let's look it up. No direct quote but quite a few suggesting that *to doubt shows the intelligence you are applying to the issue*. Applying reason and care to your ideas and beliefs allows you to confidently make your statement. You can argue the point that you are uncertain about. (*See – xix for Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Letters to a Young Poet.'*) Holding an opinion is perfectly reasonable even if all others disagree with you. *Never for the sake of peace and quiet... (see Dag Hammarskjöld – 133).*

Never be afraid of not knowing things. Admitting that you don't understand is the beginning of knowing things.



No man can see over his own height.

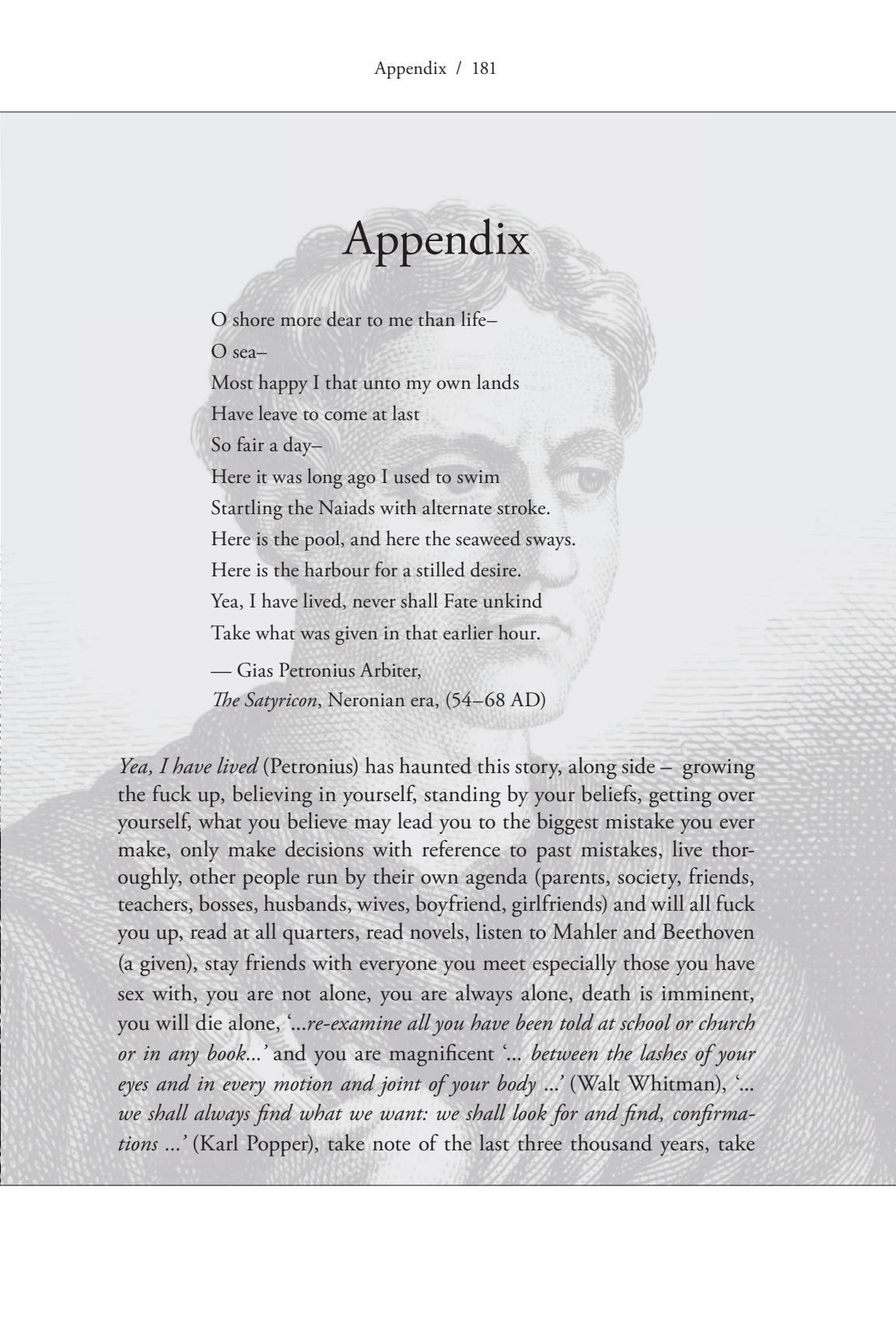
You cannot see in another man any more than you have in yourself; and your own intelligence strictly determines the extent to which he comes within its grasp. If your intelligence is of a very low order, mental qualities in another, even though they be of the highest kind, will have no effect at all upon you; you will see nothing in their possessor except the meanest side of his individuality — in other words, just those parts of his character and disposition which are weak and defective. Your whole estimate of the man will be confined to his defects, and his higher mental qualities will no more exist for you than colours exist for those who cannot see.

— Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)



Gias Petronius Arbiter (27-66 AD)

Appendix



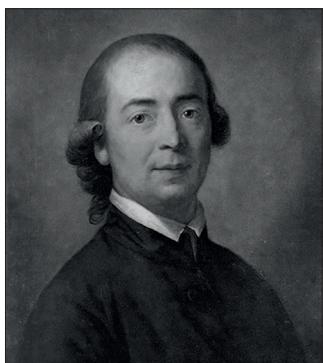
O shore more dear to me than life—
O sea—
Most happy I that unto my own lands
Have leave to come at last
So fair a day—
Here it was long ago I used to swim
Startling the Naiads with alternate stroke.
Here is the pool, and here the seaweed sways.
Here is the harbour for a stilled desire.
Yea, I have lived, never shall Fate unkind
Take what was given in that earlier hour.

— Gias Petronius Arbiter,
The Satyricon, Neronian era, (54–68 AD)

Yea, I have lived (Petronius) has haunted this story, along side – growing the fuck up, believing in yourself, standing by your beliefs, getting over yourself, what you believe may lead you to the biggest mistake you ever make, only make decisions with reference to past mistakes, live thoroughly, other people run by their own agenda (parents, society, friends, teachers, bosses, husbands, wives, boyfriend, girlfriends) and will all fuck you up, read at all quarters, read novels, listen to Mahler and Beethoven (a given), stay friends with everyone you meet especially those you have sex with, you are not alone, you are always alone, death is imminent, you will die alone, ‘...re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book...’ and you are magnificent ‘... between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body ...’ (Walt Whitman), ‘... we shall always find what we want: we shall look for and find, confirmations ...’ (Karl Popper), take note of the last three thousand years, take

note of the last billions of years, don't fall in love, falling in love is a most marvellous experience you will ever have, nurture your relationships, be wary of feeling too much, you are only feelings and emotions, be empathic but not too empathic, the person you fall in love with will one day be someone you may hate then love then hate again, we all '...want the world to fall in love with me eight times a week...' (Stewie), it's not what you remember it's how you interpret what you remember, '...if there is pain, nurse it, and if there is a flame, don't snuff it out...' (*Call Me By Your Name*, André Aciman), **you must complete yourself, good luck** completing yourself, your greatest expectations can be your greatest disappointments, visit the *Forbidden City* (although the original pylons have been replaced the principle still stands), you are everything, you are nothing, you are stardust – stardust drifting through the universe while you spend an entirely insignificant amount of time in the universe *as well as your most significant of time in the universe*; and as James Baldwin says, when we realise the more we know the less we know, '*...that means you have begun to accept, and are even able to rejoice in, the relentless conundrum of your life...*'

Anyone who says they have the answer won't have gotten this far into this book because mostly what's said, over-and-over is that there



Johann Gottfried von
Herder (1744-1803)

is no single answer to any one or many of the problems each person or each culture encounters; each of uses our own logic and emotional or cultural dimensions to make our own peace or not in our own time. Johann Gottfried von Herder (*left*) believed, as stated by Isaiah Berlin that:

*'... each human group must strive after that which lies in its bones, which is part of its tradition. Each man belongs to the group he belongs to; his business as a human being is to speak the truth as it appears to him; the truth as it appears to him is as valid as the truth as it appears to others. From this vast variety of colours a wonderful mosaic can be made, but nobody can see the whole mosaic, nobody can see all the trees, only God can see the entire universe. Men, because they belong where they belong, and live where they do, cannot.'*²¹⁷

Each endeavour a paean to eternity.



Elbphilharmonie Concert Hall, Hamburg



To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.

From *Auguries of Innocence*

— William Blake (1757-1827)

There is good reason why William Blake is lauded. There is also no known time when the ‘singularity’ (that which can be identified to explain everything) will be reached. Humans are small, vulnerable, incredibly strong, invincible and persistent while all the time knowing that time on earth is infinitesimally tiny (the universe has existed 14 billion years by last count) while we live under 100 years, 126 for some poor souls – do the math. Any significant information that has come to light in the past 14 billion years has been in an attempt to understand and explain the meaning of the 14 billion years and the projected next 5 billion, when the sun is slated to implode and everything will end – it’s the ‘*past three thousand years*’ principle of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe that may save you. This information should not make you life insignificant; rather, we are to be made greater for that very reason.

Every book, novel and word uttered or written, or piece of ... 186

Approx.
350BC | 2020

The universe is slated to end as our sun dies in about 5 billion years>



Elbphilharmonie Concert Hall 'white skin' – Photo Christian Charisius/EPA ²²¹



music written and played and heard tries to make sense of life as we know it, influenced highly by our own biases. Every sensation is interpreted in the mind of the viewer or listener. We wait anxiously, for enlightenment, often discovered by scientific research. The Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg the (*see – 183 and ‘white skin’ – 184*) are designed to allow each listener to experience a close intimacy with the musicians from any position in the hall, hearing the sound within a two second reverberation time; still each person interprets their own song, their own story in their own fashion.

This book has nothing in it that has not long been said before. It is your reading, your experience that is vital to understanding the human condition – understanding yourself. The Greeks knew some things we would well be wise to use in our everyday life. To repeat not too often – *Never for the sake of peace and quiet deny your experience and your conviction*, Dag Hammarskjöld.

There are no known reliable method to guarantee fidelity and happiness when forming relationships, excepting maybe arranged marriages more common throughout the world before the 18th century. Endogamy marriages, within the caste or ethnic group are still practised in some places, Russia, Armenia... in China, ‘baoban hunyin’ or ‘blind marriages’ were common. In America ‘picture-bride marriages’ were practised within migrant groups until the first half of the 20th century. For Orthodox Jewish communities the ‘shidduch’ is still practiced

‘The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 of India, for non-consensual marriages and marriages where either the bridegroom is below the age of 21 years or the bride is below the age of 18 are prohibited for the Hindus, Buddhist, Sikhs and Jains.’²¹⁸

Sometimes these arrangements work remarkably well. Otherwise all you can do is be authentic where you can, get over yourself, get over all the frustrating things you let others impose upon you. Try not to impose frustrating things on them.

Søren Kierkegaard’s believed humans are inherently bored, anxious and despairing, suggesting three spheres of living well – the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. The aesthetic is not relief from the boredom, giving people something to do – it is to maximise pleasures where we can: anticipating events, Søren Kierkegaard says, is more pleasurable than the event itself. Prolong the anticipation for the greatest pleasure.

Humans tire easily of the one thing, frequently seeking more excitement. Playing the piano is fun, playing well takes passion and time and effort which moves us to the ethical, where passion is converted into dedication and application, often the reward within itself. Doing for the sake of it.

Too soon though thoughts of the ‘meaning of life’ and fear of death begin to impinge on our well-being and the only relief, according to Kierkegaard, is absolute adherence to faith in god – a belief that is personal and philosophy. The religious life is one of faith; there is never any proof that any god/s exist. Kant did state the assumption of God’s existence could be made because morality existed – there is no morality without God. This circular argument, a belief holding that there can be no morality without faith, does nothing for the esteem of us mere mortals. The Hindus may have gotten it right by believing there are millions of gods appointed by one deity –

Through history there arose four principal Hindu denominations— Saivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism and Smartism. For Saivites, God is Siva. For Shaktas, Goddess Shakti is supreme. For Vaishnavites, Lord Vishnu is God. For Smartas—who see all Deities as reflections of the One God—the choice of Deity is left to the devotee.²¹⁹

Imagine, seven and a half billion of us are attempting to understand the meaning of life one way or another, trying not to get in each other’s way – but please, not too much thinking says Howard V. Hong et al., referencing Søren Kierkegaard in, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments, Volume 1*—

Thinking can turn toward itself in order to think about itself and scepticism can emerge. But this thinking about itself never accomplishes anything.²²⁰

Phil
December 2019

Ach, unsre leuchtenden Tage
Glänzen wie ewige Sterne.
Als Trost für künftige Klage
Glüh'n sie aus goldener Ferne.
Nicht weinen, weil sie vorüber!
Lächeln, weil sie gewesen!
Und werden die Tage
auch trüber,
Unsere Sterne erlösen!

*Oh, our bright days
Shining like eternal stars.
As comfort for future action
They glow from a
golden distance.
Do not cry because
they are over!
Smile, because they have been!
And are the days too dull,
Redeem our stars!*

Leuchtende Tage, 1901 by Ludwig Jacobowski. Ludwig Jacobowski: Ein modernes Dichterbild by Professor Dr. Hermann Friedrich, page 65. Published by Siegfried Cronbach, Berlin, Germany.



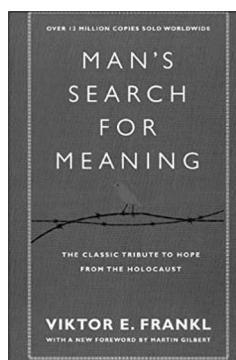
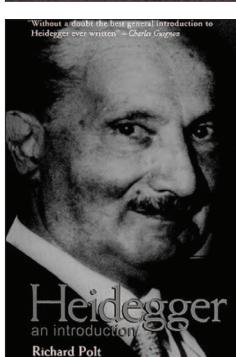
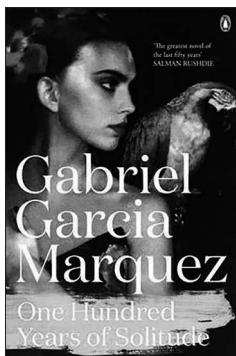
I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where. I love you simply, without problems or pride: I love you in this way because I do not know any other way of loving but this, in which there is no I or you, so intimate that your hand upon my chest is my hand, so intimate that when I fall asleep your eyes close.

— Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) ²²²

Il me semble que la tache politique actuelle dans une société comme la notre c'est de critiquer le jeu des institutions apparemment les plus neutres et les plus indépendantes, de les critiquer et les attaquer de telle manière que la violence politique qui s'exerçait obscurément en elles (les institutions) surgissent et qu'on puisse lutter contre elles.

It seems to me that the current political task in a society like ours is to criticize the working of institutions that are apparently the most neutral and independent, to criticize these institutions and attack them in such a way that the political violence that exercises itself obscurely through them becomes manifest, so that one can fight against them.

— Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

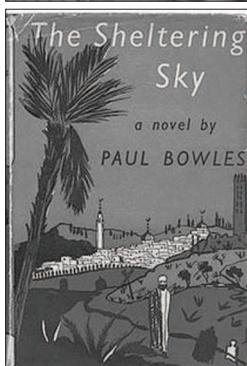
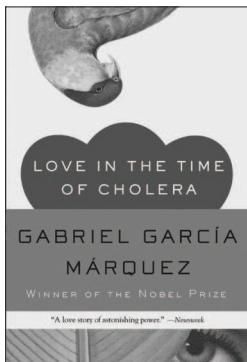


Reading *passionately*

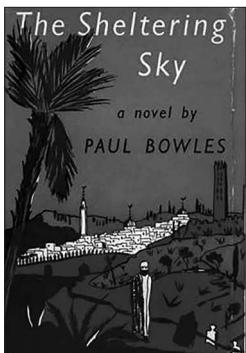
An entirely incomplete list in no particular order

Novel *Biography Philosophy Poetry*

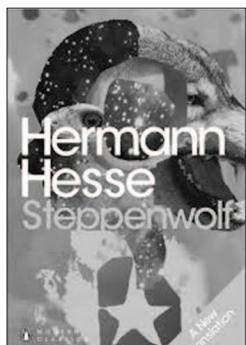
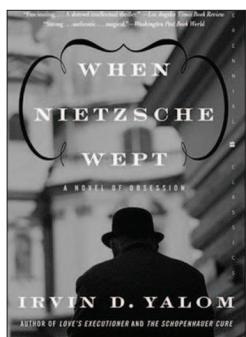
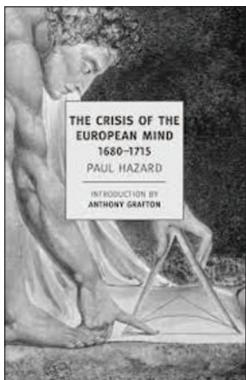
- Call Me By Your Name – André Aciman
- Leaves of Grass – Walt Whitman
- *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life*
– Richard Dawkins
- The Trial – Franz Kafka
- Don Quixote – Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra
- The Great Gatsby – F Scott Fitzgerald
- *Utilitarianism – John Stuart Mill*
- Tao Te Ching – Lao Tzu
- *On the Move: A Life – Oliver Sacks*
- The Bell Jar – Sylvia Plath
- *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt – Andrea Wulf*
- The Alchemist – Paulo Coelho
- *In Praise of Love – Alain Badiou*
- Everything by – J.D. Salinger
- Nicomachean Ethics – Aristotle
- The Thirty-Nine Steps – John Buchan
- The Leopard – Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa
- Pride and Prejudice – Jane Austen
- *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays – Jürgen Habermas*
- 100 Years of Solitude – Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- *Narcocapitalism – Laurent de Sutter*
- Civilisation and Its Discontents – Sigmund Freud
- One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich
– Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn
- The Second Sex – Simone de Beauvoir
- The Reader – Bernhard Schlink
- Crime And Punishment – Fyodor Dostoevsky
- Grapes of Wrath – John Steinbeck
- The Vegetarian – Han Kang

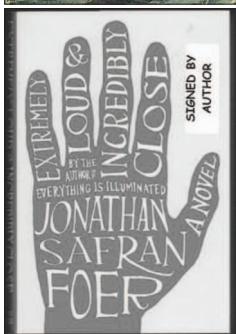
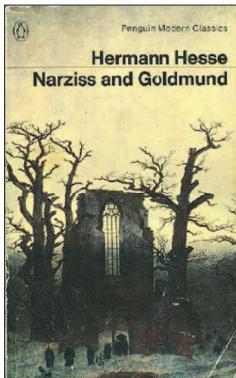
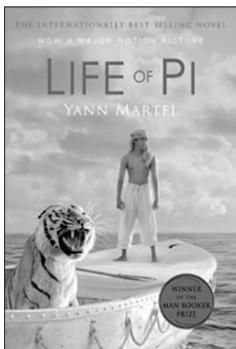


- The Book Thief – Markus Zusak
- Rebecca – Daphne du Maurier
- Praise – Andrew McGahan
- *On the Nature of Things – Lucretius*
- *Heidegger: An Introduction – Richard F. H. Polt*
- A Single Man – Christopher Isherwood
- Not Fade Away – Laurence Shames and Peter Barton
- Roger Scruton - Australian Essays – Roger Scruton
- The Price of Salt (Carol) – Patricia Highsmith
- Norwegian Wood – Haruki Murakami
- *The Logic of Scientific Discovery – Karl Popper*
- The End of the Affair – Graham Green
- *Meditations – Marcus Aurelius*
- Man's Search for Meaning – Viktor Frankl
- *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance – Robert M. Pirsig*
- State of Wonder – Ann Patchett
- Love in the Time of Cholera – Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- *The Phenomenology of the Spirit – Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel*
- The Dud Avocado – Elaine Dundy
- *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography – Rüdiger Safranski*
- The Reader – Bernhard Schlink
- The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game – Michael Lew
- The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini
- *The Myth Of Sisyphus and Other Essays – Albert Camus*
- *Tao Te Ching – Lao Tzu*
- The Age of Reason – Jean-Paul Sartre
- Things Fall Apart – Chinua Achebe
- Moby Dick – Herman Melville
- All the Light We Cannot See – Anthony Doerr
- Anna Karenina – Leo Tolstoy
- Manual for Living – Epictetus
- Solaris – Stanislaw Lem
- The Portrait of a Lady – Henry James

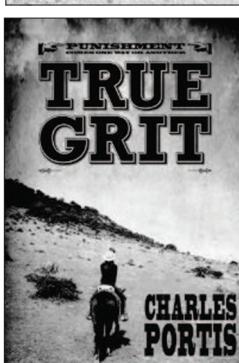
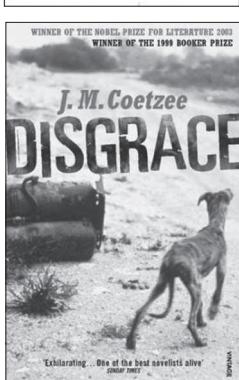
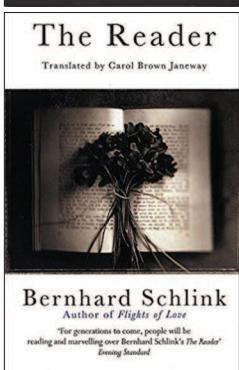
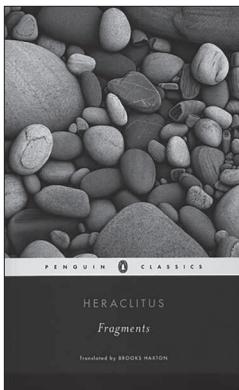


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- Candide – Voltaire
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- Never Let Me Go – Kazuo Ishiguro
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- The Brothers Karamazov – Fyodor Dostoyevsky
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- The God of Small Things – Arundhati Roy
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- Animal Farm – George Orwell
- *Practical Ethics* – Peter Singer
- The Wings of the Dove – Henry James
- The Ambassadors – Henry James
- A Town Like Alice – Nevil Shute
- 1984 – by George Orwell
- *A Treatise of Human Nature* – David Hume
- Great Expectations – Charles Dickens
- The Stranger – Albert Camus
- *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* – Rebecca Skloot
- *Humankind - Solidity with Nonhuman People* – Timothy Morton
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- On the Road – Jack Kerouac
- How to Read Foucault – Johanna Oksala
- Grasshopper Paperback – Bernard Suits
- A Death in the Family – James Agee





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- ***On Liberty – John Stuart Mill***
- ***Crisis Of The European Mind – Paul Hazard***
- Walden – Henry David Thoreau
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- ***The Lagoon: How Aristotle Invented Science – Armand Marie***
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- Heart of Darkness – Joseph Conrad
- The Man Without Qualities – Robert Musil
- Brave New World – Aldous Huxley
- Steppenwolf – Hermann Hesse
- ***HOWL AND OTHER POEMS – Allen Ginsberg***
- Narcissus and Goldmund – Hermann Hesse
- The Trial – Franz Kafka
- Moby-Dick – Herman Melville
- ***Utopia – Thomas More***
- ***Nausea – Jean-Paul Sartre***
- Watt – Samuel Beckett
- ***Peter Grimes – Benjamin Britten (Opera)***
- ***Discipline and Punish – Michel Foucault***
- Death in Venice - Thomas Mann
- Ubik – Philip K. Dick
- Atonement – Ian McEwan
- Life of Pi – Yann Martel
- ***On Human Nature – Roger Scruton***
- ***When Nietzsche Wept: A Novel Of Obsession – Irvin D. Yalom***
- The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini
- ***Foucault's Pendulum – Umberto Eco***
- A Farewell to Arms – Ernest Hemingway
- The Sorrows of Young Werther – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
- The Idiot – Fyodor Dostoyevsky



- The Day of the Locust – Nathanael West
- As I Lay Dying – William Faulkner
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- Catch-22 – Joseph Heller
- The Death of the Heart – Elizabeth Bowen
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- A Severed Head – Iris Murdoch
- War and Peace – Leo Tolstoy
- Thomas the Obscure – Maurice Blanchot
- Invisible Man – Ralph Ellison
- The Secret History – Donna Tartt
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- Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry – Robert M. Pirsig
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- Lolita – Vladimir Nabokov
- The God of Small Things – Arundhati Roy
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- To Kill a Mockingbird – by Harper Lee
- Find Me – André Aciman



Read at every wait; read at all hours;
read within leisure; read in times of labor;
read as one goes in; read as one goest out.
The task of the educated mind is simply put
— read to lead.

The Young Cicero Reading

— Marcus Tullius Cicero 106 BC-43 BC²²³

Endnotes / References

- * Back cover: In a 2005 recording obtained by The Washington Post before the presidential election, Donald J. Trump talks about women in vulgar terms to Billy Bush, then the host of "Access Hollywood." Credit: Mark Makela for The New York Times.

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Preface xvi

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Delphi Temple: This temple was the site dedicated to Phoebus Apollo and the the pre-historic oracle Delphi. This is where it is claimed the three phrases were carved into the temple architrave: i. know yourself; ii. nothing to excess; and iii. make a promise and trouble is near; attributed to Plato and Pausanias.
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The subject deals with the story of Laotzu riding an ox through a pass. It is said that with the fall of the Chou dynasty, Laotzu decided to travel west through the Han Valley Pass. The Pass Commissioner, Yin-hsi, noticed a trail of vapor emanating from the east, deducing that a sage must be approaching. Not long after, Laotzu riding his ox indeed appeared and, at the request of Yin-hsi, wrote down his famous Tao-te ching, leaving afterwards. This story thus became associated with auspiciousness.
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 ‘NIB managing director Mark Fitzgibbon’s proposal - which one health economist slammed as “self-serving” - comes amid growing concerns about the sustainability of the private health insurance industry, as more healthy, young people abandon their cover, taking premiums that subsidise older members with them. We love this word Medicare, it’s like Bambi,’ Mr Fitzgibbon said. ‘I don’t want to be seen as the one who wants to shoot Bambi, but I think there’s a better way of delivering universal healthcare which is more efficient and fairer. The same demographic reality is what led to the introduction of compulsory superannuation’, Mr Fitzgibbon said, while also arguing that privatising the Medicare “monopoly” and adding competition would create a more efficient system.
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Emergency Contacts

Working at time of publication.

Australia

Emergency from any phone — 000

Beyond Blue — 1300 22 4636

Kids Help Line — 1800 55 1800

Sexual Assault — 1800 737 732

Lifeline — 13 11 14

Family Relationship Line — 1800 050 321

Parentline Australia — 1300 301 300

The Line — 1800 MYLINE (1800 695 463)

Tresillian — 1800 637 357 Nationally 02 9787 0855

NSW

LBGTQT — 1800 184 527 (3 pm – 12 am AEST)

ACON — 1800 063 060

Gender Center — (02) 9519 7599

NT

NTAHC — (08) 8944 7777

QLD

Diverse Voices — 1800 184 527 3 pm – 12 am,

SA

Befriend — (08) 8202 5190

TAS

Switchboard — 1800 184 527 3 pm – 12 am

VIC

Switchboard — 1800 184 527 3 pm – 12 am,

WA

Living Proud — 800 184 527 7 – 10 pm, Monday–Friday



The purpose of philosophy is the logical clarification of thought. Philosophy is not a teaching but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of explanations. The result of philosophy is not 'philosophical propositions' but the clarification of sentences. Philosophy should clarify and sharply demarcate the thoughts that are otherwise, as it were, cloudy and hazy

— Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)
Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus 4.112 (1922)

Der Zweck der Philosophie ist die logische Klärung der Gedanken. Die Philosophie ist keine Lehre, sondern eine Tätigkeit. Ein philosophisches Werk besteht wesentlich aus Erläuterungen. Das Resultat der Philosophie sind nicht „philosophische Sätze“, sondern das Klarwerden von Sätzen. Die Philosophie soll die Gedanken, die sonst, gleichsam, trübe und verschwommen sind, klar machen und scharf abgrenzen.²²⁴

Ludwig Wittgenstein

1920 Duluth lynchings

Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie in 1920 ²²⁵







You cannot lynch me and keep me in ghettos without becoming something monstrous yourselves. And furthermore, you give me a terrifying advantage. You never had to look at me. I had to look at you. I know more about you than you know about me.

— James Baldwin

I Am Not Your Negro ²²⁶



A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even
glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always
landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a
better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.

— Oscar Wilde

Relationships

*The more I try to change myself to suit my partner the less there is of me.
The more I try to change my partner to suit me the less there is of them.
In both cases the less there is of us.*

More people are visiting a psychologists in 2019 than in the 1950's, in what is a near (could be and should be) Utopian world. Ninety percent of the population are healthy and comfortable, never hungry or at a loss to be entertained. Ironically the ten percent not living this wonderful life are also not clogging up psychologist's rooms simply because they can't afford it. And the ones who are at the psychologist's couches are 'unhappy' simply because they can not find fulfilment in their wondrous bounty. What's going on?



Dysfunctional behaviours are caused by out of kilter societal impositions as well as expectations projected by powerful people, erroneous ideologies and mistaken beliefs. Relationships and loving are the most important and among the greatest things you experience. Why are they sometimes so difficult to manage? What is the meaning of Elio having sex with a peach?

Common sense, science, philosophy and practice help to build foundations for living well. You will explore attachments (family and personal), reveal inherited dysfunctional habits, develop trust, gain assertiveness, improve your relationships and develop skills for better communication. In turn you will live more thoroughly, be more authentic, be better fulfilled and more confident.

Relationships can help you manage change, resolve mistaken beliefs and bring you greater understanding of your personality and why you do what you do.

Film, literature, poetry, music and painting provide examples to discuss achieving a mindful outlook and fulfilled life. You will be empowered with your newly appreciated awareness of the cultural and societal influences surrounding and influencing you and your family, partner, and friends.

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