

journal

of Anthroposophy in Australia
Issue 3, Spring 2018



exploring the vertical horizon



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Cover image: *Rainbow landscape*, watercolour, Sally Martin

From our General Secretary

Dear friends,

In just a few weeks I will be heading north again to meet with colleagues and the Goetheanum Leadership in Dornach. As the consequence of a vote taken when we met in March, Country Representatives will now also participate in this November meeting which was formerly open only to General Secretaries. On the agenda is further revision of the roles and relationship to the Goetheanum for these two groups. Currently countries with a membership exceeding 500 appoint a General Secretary who is confirmed by the Executive Council (EC). Countries with smaller member numbers can send a representative, however there is no process of confirmation. I welcome setting aside the differentiation based on number of members. I also see that it is important to have a reciprocal relationship founded in recognition – in other words that country representation should perhaps also involve confirmation by the EC. Staying connected and having effective twice-yearly meetings with 60+ as opposed to 30+ people will also require an increased effort from all of us attending, but this is a genuinely contemporary challenge in any context.

The change described above can be seen as one more signal of an ongoing (and I believe necessary) evolution towards more widely shared leadership of the Society. Following the March AGM and the departures of Bodo von Plato, Paul Mackay and Seija Zimmerman, the Executive Council has reduced from seven to four members: Matthias Girke, Constanza Kaliks, Joan Sleight and Justus Wittich. No decision has yet been reached by these four as to whether they will seek new colleagues at this point, and this freedom is entirely theirs, as the voting process applies only to the renewal of mandates, not to the appointment of Council members, whose number is also not fixed. For the moment they are choosing to shoulder the added workload as well as share tasks with their colleagues in the Goetheanum Leadership.

In my view, it is no longer possible to say that the Executive Council carries authority in the same way as even a decade ago, but this need not be seen as – or be – a weakness: Over the same decade we have seen the emergence of the Goetheanum Leadership, this larger circle of leaders, comprising EC members and the Heads of all the Sections, or Fields of Life (as we are beginning to call them). Responsibilities are being re-distributed, traditional relationships reviewed. It is fair to say that it is an unstable time in the life of the Society, but also fair to recognise that significant change is often accompanied by significant disruption of the status quo, and I do believe such change is underway.

In our week together, we will consider these

leadership questions. We will also: discuss ways to increase the participation of members world-wide in the world AGM (as so many of you have requested); consider means to build the strength of the School of Spiritual Science as a research organ; discuss the General Section – what should its role be today? What kind of leadership does it need now?

And we will try to work honestly together, to recognise and accept our differences, but still strive to support each other and re-affirm our common goal of contributing what we carry through anthroposophy effectively, with warmth and vitality towards meeting real needs in the world. That little challenge never goes away!

On the home front, we had a very fruitful visit from John Bloom, Director at RSF Social Finance and US General Secretary (who featured in a recent journal) and his wife Joan, an experienced teacher and teacher trainer. John spent two days in Brisbane talking money and community building. He worked with Samford Valley Steiner School, gave public talks, and joined the ASinA committee for our August meeting along with Sue Simpson, General Secretary for New Zealand. John shared insights into the workings of the society in America, and gave us ideas for developing some more effective practices and structures here. His thoughts were complemented by the outline of the NZ council brought by Sue. In addition to employing a part-time administrator we are looking at other ways to improve the quality and reach of the ASinA, and will call for your input in time. John then went on to the Hunter Valley, to Sydney and to Melbourne, to engage with various groups on social matters and on re-thinking finance. The essence of feedback I've received from people is: let's take this work further, we have only just begun! John is very willing to return to work with more focus, so we are investigating possibilities, including having him engage with SEA

Jan Baker-Finch together with Bodo von Plato and Constanza Kaliks at the national conference in Perth.



(Steiner Education Australia) managers and leaders.

His visit was followed, as you know, by Constanza Kaliks and Bodo von Plato's sojourn in our southern land. The excellent conference in Perth was attended daily by up to 100 people, and the more intimate, conversation-focussed Noosa weekend which followed drew 70. A highlight in Perth was the tender, intimate, wise and humorous performance 'Dancing Backwards' by the Word Sisters, Renate Millonig, Rosemary Stevens, Jenny Hill and Dale Irving. They hope to bring the show to the East coast next year, so look out for it. Many locals were amongst those present at both events, people who might not otherwise come to Society events. I am acutely aware that limiting the visit to just two locations did affect the capacity of members from further afield to attend, but it also enabled the slower, more substantial unfolding of ideas, and Bodo and Constanza (and, I believe, participants) were very grateful for the opportunity to work in this way. We will

Editorial

How can we greet what's new? How can we stretch towards the horizon and yet also reach towards what we picture as above us? How do we acknowledge the past and yet move towards the future? How do we stand in our own shoes and acknowledge what we bring and what we strive towards as well as trying to see what is in our blind spots? How do we act inspired by our hearts as well as our intellects? The past few months in the Australian anthroposophical society, we seem to have been perceiving these questions more intensively than at other times, and I have felt that too. The courage that is asked for in the spirit of Michael is one that takes us into our most vulnerable aspects as we learn to question ourselves and take action in our inner lives as well as in the world.

After a trip to Wales and Yorkshire in late July and early August meeting with a small group of people exploring Steiner's work in the English-speaking world, and what it inspires for us now, I went to the gathering in Noosa with Constanza Kaliks and Bodo von Plato. In the UK, we lingered at the stone circle above Pennmaenmawr and the swastika stone above Ilkley, and held conversations in small groups around themes that were important for each of us. For me, the strongest learnings emerged as we conversed and listened to each other. I was a little disappointed that there wasn't more opportunity for small group conversation at the gathering in Noosa, but that was my only regret as the weekend offered a new model for how to hold a gathering. Not a conference but an intense sharing of understanding from three people engaged on the quest for the vertical horizon. Constanza and Bodo offered a contemporary exploration, the fruit of their ongoing conversation with Jan. You can hear echoes of what they offer in the piece from the Perth conference by Jill Whitfield, and the fragments and fable inspired by the gathering in Noosa by Jerry Leach and Agnieszka Światłowska (with illustrations from an anonymous artist).

also ensure that we bring 'roving' visitors again soon.

Looking forward

Next year we propose to host a conference with largely local contributors and attach it to the AGM, as it is seven or so years since they were last together, and people have requested we link them again. It will therefore need to be before the end of May. Dates will be confirmed as soon as possible.

In 2020, we plan to hold another big 'Life and Living' conference over Easter at Tocal College in the Hunter Valley again, so if you have ideas or suggestions, please get in touch.

Jan Baker-Finch

September 2018

We also meet in the middle in this issue by reaching towards early childhood in Anna Scott's article on bush kindly, and towards the end of life and how to meet it in my conversation with palliative nurse, Pippa White. We also have an interview with an elder from Cheryl Meyer and a report on the youth conference from Fancy Chen.

There is something about the note that we can strike when we hear or speak the truth. I attended presentations by John Bloom and Andrew Wolpert in August and September. I was particularly struck by the authentic research that both these people have undertaken and their willingness to offer their own wisdom, inspired by anthroposophy, in refreshing and provocative ways. I was moved when Andrew Wolpert reflected on the nature of English as a naked and essentialised language which encourages us to speak frankly. He also explored the nature of gender and sexuality in moving ways, while John Bloom's work of coming to grips with money and finance was timely for me, and also helpful for those groups he worked with whilst he was here. Wendy Butler describes the impact of his visit to Shepherds Ground in Butterwick, NSW.

I am currently engaging with the management committee about the best way to serve the local anthroposophical community to provide the most effective and inspiring communication with a strong sense of purpose. We will let you know what is emerging in the next issue of the journal, my last as guest editor. If you have any feedback or interest in being involved in some way, please let me know. And if you have something to contribute to the next issue or wish to advertise, I look forward to hearing from you.

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Warmly, Tanya Coburn



Searching for the vertical horizon

2018 National Conference reflections

Jill Whitfield

From our high vantage point above the banks of Derbarl Yerrigan (the Swan River), a panoramic horizon stretched around us. After an unusually cold and rainy Perth winter, the sun shone for the whole weekend, and our familiar huge blue sky filled the dome above. It was the perfect setting to begin to tease out the deliciously mysterious theme of the 2018 National Conference: Searching for the Vertical Horizon.

After nine months of planning and preparation, a week of finalising lists, spreadsheets and rosters, a day of pick-ups, deliveries, briefings, marquee erection and room set-ups, finally the most important ingredient arrived: the people! A small contingent of 'eastern staters' braved the long flight west, and WA locals aplenty filled the Point Walter Recreation and Conference Centre.

Our special guests from the Goetheanum, Bodo von Plato and Constanza Kaliks, arrived from Europe just minutes before the opening address by Dr Ernst de Jong, 'The Transformation of Brain Thinking into Heart Thinking: The Challenge of the 21st Century. They showed not a sign of jet-lag all weekend.

As Bodo himself may have asked, 'Was it their Day Self or their Night Self speaking?' For yes, it was a weekend of philosophy; of questions: How do we perceive? What is the importance of perceiving for the perceived? What is the difference, and the relation between perceiving and knowing? How do we know we know? What is the difference between knowing through our own direct perception and through 'not-direct' perception?

Constanza introduced us to a Latin word, *mirandum*, which quickly became the word for the weekend. 'Knowing something,' she said, 'begins with a little startle of astonishment: we become aware of the unexpected.'

After the moment of *mirandum*, comes perception: There

is a world around me, and I can perceive. Perception allows me to realise that 'the world is'.

And the third aspect is that this process takes place in a particular place, and that place is our consciousness – in a separation. 'I know because I experience it as an "other".'

Can this process, when you shift from not understanding something to understanding it, be expressed in this way perhaps:

One minute you are in a big iron cooking pot, hanging from a tripod over a fire. You're in the pot with carrots and potatoes, onion and garlic, chicken drumsticks perhaps, a sprig of rosemary and some simmering tomatoes.

You're in the pot, getting hotter and messier, and all around you your companions are softening and merging and really getting into each other.

And then, suddenly, a hand reaches in and lifts you out, and in that moment, you realise: you are the spoon, not the stew.

The separation provides perspective. We need distance in order to know that there is an 'otherness'. At the same time, the distance wants to be overcome. The seed of knowledge is born from the desire to connect.

First One. Then Two. Then Both. Or, in other words: Self – Other – Relationship; or Self – Separation – Reconnection.

And so our first morning concluded!

The days that followed provided a full and deeply satisfying experience of listening (and needing to be fully present in our listening!), exercises in thinking, conversation (usually accompanied with eating), song, movement, crystal singing bowls, and artistic workshops.

The workshops were a great gift. Every day, different facets of what Bodo and Constanza shared found their way into

'*Mirandum*' is a twofold concept, and the explication of its two sides may assist in joining at the vertical horizon. This is taken from a strict view of Latin grammatical constructions.

Mirandum can be used as an adjectival gerund so we would say that the world is to be marvelled at, and where *mirandum* qualifies the noun – world – *mundum*. So we would say, 'The gods have made a marvellous world!'

Mirandum can also be used as a gerund: '*Mirandum est nobis*'. Literally, 'it is required of us that we marvel'. Here the emphasis is upon the human act of expressing marvel.

So the concept '*mirandum*' can be taken as expressing the idea that it is the human act of attributing marvel to the world which, when joined to the world in an act of active cognition, creates a human world of wonder.

What is important however is the joining of the two Latin grammatical constructions to create the anthroposophical concept of wonder, which denotes active human cognition apprehending the world as full of wonder.

Christopher J Charles

artistic expression. Time and again, workshop presenters appeared with wide smiles, saying some particular insight offered during the morning presentation provided the perfect lead-in to their next activity. And workshop participants huddled in little groups, excitedly discussing processes and discoveries.

Early in the organisation phase, Branch Secretary Peter Fern had framed our role this way: 'Our task is to create the space into which the angels can work.' And every moment of the conference we could experience their working.

And we could experience our own working as we were challenged to think through such ideas as:

We are simultaneously in the stars and on the earth. What is our way of perceiving during the night? How are we to speak properly in the earth and in the stars? How can we find our way back to our right way of being in our body in the morning?

The individual must know him or herself in the other since this leads to knowledge of the self. The world wants to be known to itself through me. I can be aware of myself because there are others. There is a gesture of receiving the world and an experience that the world is thinking [in] me.

Liberty is not only being able to choose to become what I want to become, but it also recognises in the other that they too can become what they want to become. It is changed into concern for the other, in the animal kingdom, the plant kingdom and the human kingdom.

The vertical horizon reveals itself in the Self as it seeks reconnection with Other, with the whole of the world, with the whole of life.

The Golden Balance is the equilibrium between day and night. The Golden Balance is the I in both places, and where they meet is the vertical horizon. We must move constantly between the two with fidelity to the conscious and to the unconscious life. Day is not night, nor is night day but in the balance knowledge becomes love.

The horizon between what I can know and what I don't

know is becoming wider and wider. In seeking for knowledge that wants to embrace the whole of reality, the solution is my activity. Knowing becomes participation.

And knowing in this way begins from three fundamental premises:

1. I may be wrong. (It's important to pause now - that's a big one!!)
2. You/the other may be right. (And this one may be even bigger...)
3. Together we can search for truth.

Of course there was more – so much more! And maybe what I've written here isn't even an accurate reflection of what was shared but my notes petered out on the third day when I could not keep up. I was being called to be so present in my listening and so active in my thinking that the capacity to reflect enough to write was subsumed.

Finally, I would also like to make mention of the Australian premiere of *Dancing Backwards*, a drama performance written and presented by The Word Sisters (comprising Jenny Hill, Renate Millonig, Rosemary Stevens and Dale Irving). Their flyer read: 'Four women perform their stories, weaving from periphery to centre stage, journeying through the vowel moods ... now that we are older, shrewder, wiser...'

All I can say is that the angels placed them too into the space. As a living, artistic example of searching for the vertical horizon, of 'Self in Other', in balance with 'Self centred in Self', and of Truth arising in this search we could not have dreamt of finding a more fitting work.

It was a privilege to serve on the Organising Committee for this, the 2018 National Conference of the Anthroposophical Society in Australia, and I thank my fellow committee members and all those who attended for creating a truly wonderful and memorable event.

With thanks to Christopher J Charles, South Australia, for his notes from the conference.



Participants at the national conference in Perth

Reflection on the Word Sisters in action a creative, collaborative community

Over the last year our group, Word Sisters, has worked biographically, blending moments of our lives into a performance piece *Dancing Backwards*. We started by working with speech led by Renate Millonig. Her deep understanding of Steiner's speech and drama Her leadership encouraged our exploration via the vowels, first into various excerpts from Shakespeare and then into our own stories.

The influence of the planets on vowels was a key point in linking our biographies to the vowels. Dale Irving's training in biography work helped us attune to the life story element. Through an understanding of the vowels, the planets and our lives, we created our own story.

Rosemary Stevens background in creative and professional writing helped in the editing of the pieces into a coherent whole. Jenny Hill's vast experience in storytelling and performance aided the direction of the performance and its rhythm and tempo. There was always a sense of egalitarianism and consensus throughout the process. Writing over a period of time and over distance bonded our group and forged our identity as the Word Sisters. We aimed to work collectively and collaboratively with the active imagination, weaving something authentic and universal. At least we have begun ...

Editing the script was relentless and a humbling experience. Genevieve Moran, a Perth contemporary performance lecturer, deviser, director and writer assisted in the final shaping of the work and brought in a professional and external eye.

Our workshops reflect the way we work and provide for participants an experience of working creatively together towards performance – that most generous form of

sharing. Our intention is to take the performance and workshops to other anthroposophical communities and to continue to explore through our creative and collaborative model. We also have found interest in our work within academic writing and learning disciplines.

Some responses to the first showing of *Dancing Backwards* at the 2018 Anthroposophical Society of Australia's Annual Conference, in Perth, WA:

...insightful and heart-warming... skilfully balanced, it invited the audience into rhythmic breaths of esoteric insights, literary delights and the creative courage of outrageously contemporary women in 2018. You go girls ... and plan another!

It was a performance that resonated on many levels. I was enthralled, engrossed and moved throughout. From the outset, the strength and projection in the performances was very apparent. The stories unfolded in a seamless way, whilst being very individual and intimate.

... spellbound, at the edge of my seat wondering what would come next, I could appreciate the depth of biography that was being shared without being overcome by it, was it the pacing? The inbreath but then the release with laughter or the humour of the next vignette. Was it the chorus, the movements that gently reflected the pathos?

Costumes helped the individual to be the universal so I could see my own journey played out.

Loved it! Wonderful to see the personal stories turned into art, something so colourfully objective which each of us could hold. Nice to see the spirit of humour there, too.

What extraordinary depth and revelation! Wisdom and maturity shines with passion, humour, life! Thank you!





Contemplations

on searching for the vertical horizon in Noosa

with contributions by Jerry Leach and Agnieszka Swiatlowska

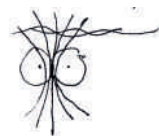
'We don't know if this is going to work, Bodo von Plato warned at the beginning of the weekend with a smile, 'but together we will find out.'

What we found out on the weekend in August in Noosa were the fruits of a conversation which Bodo, together with Constanza Kaliks and Jan Baker-Finch shared with us. It was a new modality of gathering, more of an experience of witnessing and participating in the ongoing exploration from these three people around this enigmatic topic. The conversation was grounded in the thinking of contemporary and recent thinkers, philosophers and sociologists as well as in the wisdom of anthroposophy. But to find the vertical horizon requires a meeting with the unknown, a preparedness to let go of fixed thinking and traditional responses to listen to what is new. It was an invitation for us to find flexible, fresh thinking, and a new way of responding. The theme of listening was fundamental and Constanza shared a poem by Portuguese poet, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen 'Escuto' or 'I listen. An English translation is included on the next page.

As the weekend emphasised the importance of dialogue and relational participation, when Jerry Leach invited me to have a conversation with him about our experiences of the conference, we began a partly emailed, partly spoken dialogue and I include some of Jerry's reflections on the questions and major themes. I also received a fable from Agnieszka Swiatlowska which captures the flavour of this encounter from a different perspective.

This is not a report but more like the traces of an experience which may encourage you to follow your own path into the unknown, to find your own sense of the vertical horizon.

Reflections



Jerry Leach

Soul mood and questions

The overall 'soul mood' of the weekend seemed to have the quality of a quest, like the one for the holy grail – it is known to exist but remains unknown until we find our way to an actual experience of it.

I started by pondering some of the questions that came from Bodo and Constanza. The central question was originally framed by Rudolf Steiner. Bodo paraphrased it in this way: 'Can we find a way to experience the incarnated spirit? Do you have the desire to know the unknown within you? This will lead you to know the world around you, including the cosmic world.'

Bodo also asked us, 'This question of how to live with challenge is a hallmark of our time, a time when courage and vulnerability are required to sit in the space of not knowing until the 'known' emerges. To counter our fear of the unknown, we can fall into dogma and ideology. This is where we stay with what is known and resist exploring the field beyond what we know. The challenge of truly uniting ourselves with what is unknown is especially great when our path involves a great deal of what has been "known" by someone else. In anthroposophy, just as in many other paths of knowledge and understanding, it is very hard and yet absolutely necessary to move beyond what the founder knew and told us.'

Bodo suggested we can ask ourselves questions like, 'How is it with your desire for knowing the unknown? Are you closer to your "already known", or are you closer to your search for the unknown?'

With regard to our relationship with others in their search for the unknown, he suggested we ask, 'Can I recognise myself in your knowing of the unknown?'

Another provocative question was 'How can I live so it's only me?' Perhaps 'How can I live so I'm truly me?' may be another way to frame this question and pursuit.

He went on to speak about our uniqueness. 'This "I" that I am you will never meet anywhere else in the world.' When we engage with others then this kind of questioning is not about information, it's about relations when I learn, better and better, to ask you my questions. He emphasised, 'It's always others who will tell you about your own orientation.'

Constanza asked, 'Is meditation a repetition of a state of being?' She continued – 'I don't think so; we can foster our meditation with the right conditions, and especially involving dialogue with some other.' Stated in this way is she pointing to the possibility of dialogue with some 'other' who is not physically incarnated?

'Would you like to live with the possibility of the truth coming to consciousness through participation, through dialogue? No more thinking as a system but rather as a becoming through dialogue, through a willingness to arrive at a new knowledge, a new reality through dialogue?'

After referring to UNESCO's human rights declaration and tolerance as acceptance, respect and appreciation of different ways of being human, Constanza shared a quote from Martin Buber's book, *I And Thou*: 'He who is in a relationship participates in a reality; where there is no relationship there is no reality.' She pointed to the problem we face now: we are so self-aware, so full of our selves so

there's no room for the other in the 'house' – the dwelling of our soul. Without being aware of it, we keep others outside.

One of the final questions from the weekend's presentations came from Constanza, who asked, 'In my relationships am I only loving myself?'

Some leading thoughts

A real danger in this quest for the unknown is to think you have reached your goal and become a knower. If the quest ceases to be an ever-evolving striving and questioning, the knowing can turn into an ideology, into a system that offers a sense of security, but at the expense of further development.

It's important to have trust in the 'becoming' of the human being without an image of the final goal. It's helpful to have the sense that we are co-creating this future goal rather than to assume that it is already a given and all we have to do is find it.

A guiding model for this quest from the known to the unknown can be viewed as a journey through seven stages:

- 1) **Questioning** - To have a question, a longing to know.
- 2) **Orientation** - In the whole array of possibilities to have a direction.
- 3) **Concentration** - Deciding on the focus, the 'object' of my attention. [a will activity]
- 4) **Contemplation** - Openness to the 'object' (the unknown other), a receptive attentiveness. [a reversal of the will, i.e. a surrender activity]
- 5) **Meditation** - A dialogue (possibly even a communion?) with what is. [an extended Contemplative dialogue with the reality of the unknown while lightly holding the intention

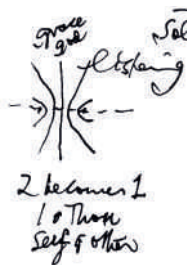
I listen

Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen
(translated from the Portuguese 'Escuto')

I listen but I don't know
If what I hear is silence
Or god

I listen without knowing if I'm hearing
The resonance of empty plains
Or if an attentive consciousness
From the limits of the universe
Deciphers and watches me

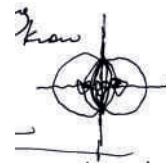
I just know that I go as the one who
Is seen and loved and known
And that is why in every gesture I place
Solemnity and risk.



to know, but being openly receptive to the unknown 'otherness' that it may reveal itself]

6) **Real life** - Live with this possibility of the truth coming to consciousness through participation, through dialogue.

7) **Wholeness** - The ever-evolving conscious connection between the known and the unknown.



Meeting the Unknown

a fable by Agnieszka Świątłowska

The woman heard a knock at the door. 'I'm coming. Who is it?' she asked. There was no answer so she opened the door of her guest house.

A strange being stood there, she didn't know who or what he was. He resembled a human being, but he had four legs. Two of his feet were like flippers, two others had roots growing from them. He also had four arms and four hands. Two of his hands were the hands of an old person; two were those of a baby. He held a sword in one of his old hands and a staff in two hands – one of the old hands and one of the baby's hands. His head appeared normal but his chest was very large. Despite his very strange appearance, she was not scared, she was curious.

'Welcome. Who are you?' she asked.

'I am the Unknown,' the figure answered.

'Oh, yes,' she said. 'That's a good name for you. Please come in.'

It took some time for this guest to make his way inside – it is not easy with four legs and four arms. It took some time for him to make himself comfortable, as he spread himself across the sofa and a chair.

'Can I offer you something?' she asked, while the Unknown kept looking around with his large eyes wide open.

'Some water please, I am not yet accustomed to those other drinks you drink.'

She went to fetch two glasses of water. She tried not to stare at her visitor's body, but she couldn't help looking as he seemed so peculiar.

He took a glass of water in one of his old hands and he drank it quickly.

After some time, the woman spoke to him. 'I have had many visitors in my guest house, but never a being like you. What is interesting is that despite seeing you for the first time, I feel you are familiar in some way. Can you tell me something about yourself, please?'

'I am glad you say I feel familiar to you,' he smiled at her. 'It means you sense within you and around you. I am the Unknown; the one no-one wants to look at, the one no-one

wants to acknowledge. I am the one who is impossible to classify and measure and put into a box. I am too difficult to fit into the known world. I am left behind and ignored. But ignoring me and pretending I'm not here doesn't make me disappear.' He smiled again and turned to her. 'Some human beings begin to have the courage and readiness to look at me, and you are one of them. That is why I came to you.'

'Thank you for your words, Unknown. I feel honoured by your visit here. Perhaps I can get to know you and also ask some questions that bother me?'

'I like your attitude, my dear. Yes, you can ask me some questions but don't expect I will solve your life problems! At the end, I am only the Unknown, so what can I know?'

The Unknown smiled and the woman smiled too and for the first time, she felt an amazing warmth coming from the Unknown and from herself. They were both immersed in this warmth, that felt like a pure kind of love.

After some time, the woman found a way to ask her first question. 'If as you said, you are impossible to classify, how do I meet you, Unknown? In what way can we meet that allows me to grow and to love, instead of dropping into frustration and fear? How do I stand, even here at my guest house, when you knock on my door and let you enter, while I cannot use my regular ways of acting and understanding with you? You even need a special arrangement of my sofa and chair so your legs can rest comfortably!'

'Yes, my dear, the moment you encounter me, you enter the unknown in all parts of you – your thoughts, emotions and behaviours. You realise your old patterns don't apply and you need to find new ones. And usually in those situations, it is easy to sense frustration and fear, because all you want is answers and solutions. You want to act and achieve some measurable results. But you see, dealing with me takes time. Have you noticed my hands? Two are the hands of an old man, two are those of a baby. Both babies and old men need time. They cannot be rushed. So, you need to slow down. Expect "no clear answers" and "no instant results" as an outcome of an encounter with me.' He paused, 'What did you feel when I smiled before?'

'Warmth, an amazing warmth.'

'Yes, and that is what you can sense when you are present and when you listen to the Unknown. I speak to you, not necessarily with the words. And when you are attentive, you will hear what I want you to hear and feel. Look at my chest. It is very big because it has many, many hearts. Not one; many, I don't know even how many!' The Unknown smiled again, and we were both immersed in that curious warmth.

'You see, I come from the Old, and I need to be reborn into the New. That is why I have these two kinds of hands. But this "New" has to be different from the old new, the one which the Old grows from. Do you understand?' She nodded. He paused again, 'And you see, no-one knows what this New way will look like. It is a Mystery in which we all

have to participate; we co-create it together. Some people claim they know the New, but really, they don't. Some may suggest ways towards the New, but no-one knows the New. It is Unknown.' He paused again.

The woman took in what she heard, then she asked, 'And what about your feet, Unknown? They are peculiar too.'

'Yes, they are, but their form has meaning. The flippers mean that your thinking has to move like water, to adapt to changing conditions, to meet what is coming towards you. The roots mean you need to ground your thinking. Yes, at the same time, your thinking needs to move and flow like water and be grounded in the way that roots ground the plant.'

'That sounds tricky, Unknown. In a way, it feels impossible, because how can I flow like water and be rooted in the ground?'

'Yes, it feels impossible if you think in the old way. But when you stop wanting to reach a particular goal, you can just become an activity which allows you to develop new skills and capacities by floating and being grounded at the same time. How do you think freely when you are grounded?'

'OK... but please slow down, Unknown. Firstly, I need to know what my thinking is grounded to – and why?'

'That is a very good point, my dear. What do you think?'

'I am grounded so I don't go astray, so I stay on track ... and so I stay in the environment that is safe and nourishes me.'

'That's a perfect answer! Well done, my dear. And what are you grounded in?'

'For me personally it is trust and faith in the divine and in Christ's deed. But for the others it can be trust and faith in something else, some other higher powers, beings.'

There was a pause. Then, the woman continued. 'But you see, Unknown, my faith and trust are not constant and permanent all the time. Their core is the same, but they keep changing as well.'

'Yes, that is a good observation. So even the grounding is not fully constant. What is constant is the core of the root, but the outer form of the root can change.'

'That is why it feels like it is so important to come back to the core of my roots when meeting the Unknown, as that is the only safe element,' said the woman.

'Yes, you could say that.'

'OK, so Unknown, coming back to my question, how do I meet the Unknown?'

'What do you think, my dear? What emerged for you from our conversation?'

'I feel I need time and I need to keep coming back to the core of what grounds me. And then I will hear what you say to me.'

'Yes, exactly.'

'And what if I don't have time, what about when I feel the need to rush and make a quick decision in the face of the Unknown?'

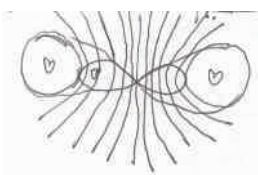
'Then you take the risk. You either make the decision quickly based on the Old, or you slow down and take time to listen and then you make your decision. You may miss a deadline or two when you slow down, but you work with the New, otherwise when you rush, you work with the Old, which will have to be addressed again anyway, sooner or later. Also, you have to remember, meeting the Unknown is often connected with questions and issues that can affect other people's lives. These are not question about what you eat for lunch. These are issues of how you meet the challenges of our 21st century world, how you recognise your task in the word and how you serve others, how you care for young children, how you help teenagers to find meaning in this world, how you care for the earth. These questions and issues need to be treated seriously. And they need to be acted upon with solemnity and risk. And you

need to know, my dear, that when you meet the Unknown, the questions you ask will often be answered by another question – leading towards new aspects of the unknown – so expecting solutions is an attitude that can lead to frustration and fear.'

'Thank you Unknown, that is truly a new way of working with the future. Thank you. Now can I do anything for you? You are my guest here, what can I do to serve you?'

'Thank you for asking but all I need is to be seen, and you offered me that. If you walk with courage to get to know and love me, despite the fact that I can only offer questions and a path further into the unknown, that will mean a lot to me. And to others and the world. And keep asking your difficult questions, my dear. Have courage to be in dialogue with yourself and with others.'

I fetched the Unknown some more water, he drank deeply and then he smiled. Once more we both experienced a great warmth.



Exploring new ways with money

John Bloom at Shepherds Ground, Butterwick

Wendy Butler

John Bloom is General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in America and Vice-President Organisational Culture at RSF Social Finance. In August this year he and his wife Joan Caldarera undertook a whirlwind speaking engagement in Australia working with individuals and groups in Samford, Butterwick, Sydney and Melbourne.

We were most fortunate to have been given the opportunity to work with John Bloom on various questions surrounding money and to explore how we could find new ways of working that would facilitate fulfillment of the vision of Shepherds Ground. Shepherds Ground is a becoming intentional community where members are involved in finding ways to live together while developing a 200-hectare property towards becoming a sustainable, regenerative agricultural entity. At this stage there are 23 shareholder families with four shares left to sell. The first four houses have been built and plans are now being drawn up for the next building stage. While the pressing focus is for members to organise themselves to build and move onto site, we also have in mind some serious and challenging questions. How are we going to fund all the infrastructure we need to make the vision a reality? What ways can we think of to encourage and facilitate young farmers to become involved? How can we secure the land use for the future beyond the intention of the current members?

To help us come to an appreciation of the bigger context within which answers might be found, we began with a talk

by John about how we might find a new relationship to money. Identifying such a new relationship as one of the great transformative challenges of our time, John alerted us to the need to work diligently to change our habits. The following is my interpretation of aspects of John's talk particularly as they relate to our experience at Shepherds Ground.

Money and mutuality

We can come to an understanding of money as being distinctly different from what people may typically understand economics to be. In a sense money has a quality of mutuality – what I do affects you and what you do affects me. If we work consciously together, with such an understanding of money, we will find we are able to have more stable, and more human experiences of life. By contrast, the prevailing illusion of the worth of money depends on an attitude that focuses on 'what's mine is mine'.

Somehow, we can all experience a sense of the market economy as being somewhat 'rigged'. It seems to intrinsically lead to the few rich getting richer and the greater number of those who are less affluent continually increasing in number. We can consider how we go about working together with money that offers a different way.

Paradigm shifting work

When we work in communities we are in a process of community building. But often our interactions are based

on assumptions we have each brought with us and that continue to divide us. We need to consider how we can best move from bringing 'created imagination' to 'co-creating imaginations'. We need to remember that when we are working in an initiative such as ours which involves paradigm shifting, we will need to consistently engage in conversations where we strive to clarify our individual assumptions. So much that interferes in the present comes from our 'old' assumptions, but in working towards something new we have to keep double-checking the assumptions under which we are working. We could pay attention to ensuring that we hold 'what if; conversations, where we openly explore differing interpretations and emerging meanings. This will be much more productive if it takes place when we are not under duress. In this way we can support each other in building a shared picture within which we can help to hold each other accountable.

Using the treasury to transform the world

In times past such as in ancient Egypt, the 'treasury' was positioned in a protected place in the centre of the most sacred place, the temple. In the post-modern era in which we live, we need to strive to move the 'treasury' from a protected inner place into the outer world so that it becomes a source of generosity, moving resources into the world. If we move money into service to the world, we can contribute to making the world itself sacred.

In any organisation there is always competition for limited resources. Working together, we need to prioritise how these limited resources are applied to enable us to fulfil our vision. When we are considering our financial resources, we can consider three ways we work with money – as individuals, in relationship, and in community. We need to understand each of these as we go about co-creating a productive, dynamic place to live, grow, work and do business.

Hempcrete houses at Shepherds Ground



When we move
our money 'treasury'
out from its
unexamined,
protected place
we are undertaking
important work
that has real
potential to change
aspects of
our identity.

Individuals and Money

At an individual level, it can be helpful to explore our personal life story, our biography, in a safe way – this can help us to discover the 'story behind the story' of our own attitudes towards money that have come from our childhood, our family, our working life, perhaps even from family secrets relating to money. We will discover 'economic patterns' from our early childhood. We can then begin to conscientiously explore the assumptions that we make about money that are based on our unconscious habits. We could look at particular times of our life such as at age 12, and consider what was happening with money in our family and life at that stage. Such individual reflective work is the foundation of bringing to light much that we are unaware of in our relationship to money. Whenever we bring our unexamined attitudes into our interactions with others, we are the only ones who know even a little of the hidden story, so no-one else has any idea of what is influencing our reactions. When we move our money 'treasury' out from its unexamined, protected place we are undertaking important work that has real potential to change aspects of our identity.

Money in relationships

Money can be seen as a relational barometer. When we consider money in relationships, we can see that exchange is involved. If there is no relationship, then no money moves. Such financial exchanges can be either purchases, loans or gifts.

When we make a purchase, there is no need for a relationship. The purchase occurs in the present and is then over. However, when we make a loan this clearly exists within the context of a relationship. Each party has a shared interest in the other, and this has a past-oriented quality to it, because while a loan continues to exist, it always stands in relation to the conditions that were agreed upon in the making of the loan arrangement. When it

comes to making a gift, we are oriented to the future, we are giving money to enable something in the future to occur.

While we may be tempted to think of money as a commodity, it is in fact an activity. The real intention with charging interest on loan money is to provide a means of retaining the value of money that has been lent – to make sure that, by time the loan is repaid, its value is equivalent to when it was lent. However, the higher the rate of interest that is applied, the more money becomes commodified.

When we think of our personal budget we can pay attention to how much we want to allocate to purchases, how much to loans, and how much to gifts. How much do we want to save, spend or give? Each action has qualities that we can become aware of. When we think about saving, we can think about how much we want to set aside to build the future.

We may wonder where profit really comes from. Essentially profit arises not through the effort of a business owner but through the totality of community activity. Profit is a gift – it is the surplus value that is created by the interdependency of the whole economy.

Capital is the capacity to transform intention into matter, to bring spirit into matter.

Economic life consists of three core aspects – labour, land and capital – and is 100% dependent on the world. The activity of the economy is purely about meeting material needs. When we consider debt, we can explore what it makes possible.

Who is the lender, what are their intentions, and at what cost is debt taken on? Are the lenders' and borrowers' values aligned?

Money in community

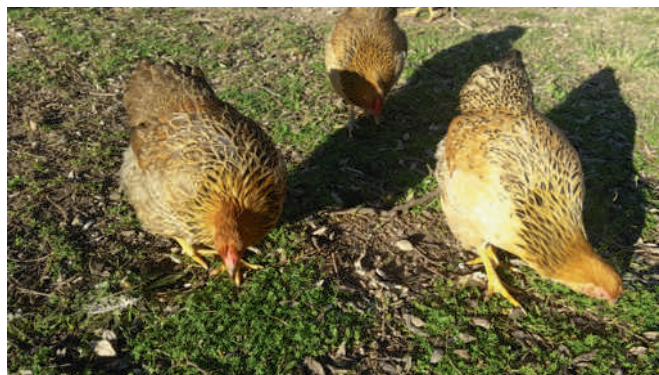
When we consider the aspect of money in community interactions, we begin to move from 'me' to 'we', from egocentric to eco-centric, from individual concern to interest in the other.

So where is value created? Value occurs when a need is met. As members of a community we have all shown up to fulfil a task. How are we as individuals going to show up for ourselves, in a sense? How are we each going to change ourselves to enable the new that we are trying to create to come into being. In what way will we change? Our old ways will not suffice. How will we come to terms with changing our thoughts about how we might work with money?

Primary elements of economic life

There are three pre-economic conditions which make economic life possible. Labour, land and capital. The word 'land' can be taken to stand as a placeholder for all natural resources. Capital is the capacity to transform intention

into matter, to bring spirit into matter. Ideas which arise in the spirit can come into being in the world. When work (labour) is applied to natural resources (land) a value is created. When capital is applied to labour, another value is created, and with the division of labour greater efficiency is made possible.



Getting work done

How do we go about organising the work that needs to be done? What is the idea that provides the organising principle? It is worth appreciating that the group that works out the organising principles is actively engaged in the process of creating value. When it comes to compensation, which has a relationship to the value stream, we can remember that financial compensation originated within an intention of honouring that someone's life is being used up to undertake work. But how are we to pay for labour without seeing it as a commodity? It is clear that we cannot possibly place a monetary value on a person. Essentially, compensation is about covering a worker's material needs so that they are freed up to bring their gifts into the world.

Working as a community

To work effectively together we will need to pay attention to our moral and ethical development. We need to find our shared values and, in so doing, we will find that we are able to build a system that works. As a community we have undertaken to carry responsibility together for fulfilling our vision. What will it take to maintain this community? What will it take to discover what the work is that we are required to do? We could look at each person and at the tasks needed. Then we could take care to match the right person to do a specific task and, in trust, empower them within a governance framework to undertake it. Such an approach can generate considerable energy for work.

Work and financial compensation

When it comes to work and payment for work how do we as members of a community separate work from compensation? How do we value everything? One way to think differently about this is to imagine that time, not money, is the currency. As individual human beings, we have 24 hours in each day, and we are all capable of contributing our time without it necessarily needing to relate to a monetary standard. We could imagine an economy of trust (or distrust!). Essentially, if we take on tasks and others have accepted the worth of these tasks

and recognised us as being suited to undertake the tasks then, it can be that, for all of us, our time can be seen as being of equal value. We are all active in the same relational field.

Essentially, economics is about meeting material needs and operating within a field of reciprocity. While we may be recognised as being the right person to take on a task, we also need to hold ourselves under review, we need to develop self-accountability. Can we initiate some feedback loops to help us with our own self-review, so that we maintain clarity about where our personal needs may be influencing us? How can we ensure we carry personal responsibility?

Self-governance

Working as an institution that is involved in self-governance, there is a clear need for a co-ordinating group that has the task of looking at what it will take to make everything work. For example, we might decide that the single most important thing is to bring in the remaining shareholders. How are we going to organise to achieve that? Who should be holding the co-ordinating function? How will the community determine where the resources are coming from? In fact, where are they actually going to come from?! It is important within such processes that along the way people are given agency and responsibility to carry out agreed tasks.

Cultural needs

In the broadest sense, cultural life is starved of resources. We can consider how, in what we are striving to do, we can breathe life back into cultural life. How can we engage in a proposition that has reciprocity within it, where our economic activity contributes to the life enhancing enrichment of cultural life? How, in what we are striving to achieve, are we going to show up in a new way, in the fight against the forces that work against enlivened community? What we are looking for is a levity stream, for that which is uplifting. Where can we find it in community? Could it be that it is found in that place where we all share values?

Following on from this introductory talk, John then engaged with answering big questions that we have. Some suggestions from John were that we could:

- develop a register of our resources – equipment, tools, contacts, skills – and see what riches we already have
- consider establishing a Land Trust for the part of the property that is used for agriculture and reforestation
- think about establishing our own financial institution so that we can arrange finance ourselves

At the end of the day we were given some homework, to take into sleep a question, “If it was up to me, what first step would I take to move things forward? This task was taken on most conscientiously – some people hardly got any sleep – and the next morning there was a wonderful sharing of potential strategies to pursue. It was the perfect

way to connect the theory to something pressing and real.

A month has now passed and it's time to reflect on what has really come of our engagement with what John brought to our attention. Interestingly, there are signs of life that are gently emerging. We have not forced a focus on any particular strategy. What we have done is notice what has become real for people – we hear people mentioning something or other that was learned in the workshops; others are talking about how to take particular ideas forward. The first step in mapping our resources has been taken. Tentative conversations about how we could operate a ‘time-bank’ have begun. Someone else offered to host a reflection on, “What did we get out of the weekend with John Bloom?” and there are plans to start a process of checking our shared understandings of what we learned about transforming our relationship to money one night per week over seven weeks. We will use some of the chapters from John's book 'Inhabiting

Interdependence: being in the next economy' as reference tools. Five of our members have undertaken to do the next u.lab course¹ with the intention of finding ways to enhance our working together into the future. We anticipate that the approach we engage with in Theory U will perfectly complement what John brought to us and will assist us to be more effective in our steps towards a new relationship with money.

Tentative beginnings, but it is Spring and we are certainly in tune with nurturing our small beginnings, caring for them and each other as we step out along this fascinating new path. We are most grateful for the support of the Anthroposophical Society in enabling John's visit to Australia and particularly for including Shepherds Ground in his itinerary.

1 A mooc or massive online open course based on Theory U and designed for those seeking to lead profound social, environmental and personal transformation. For more information, see presencing.org.

Some of the Shepherds Ground members at a Theory U workshop in April



Out in the bush

Review of Bush Kindy at Perth Waldorf School

a conversation between Anna Scott, Jenny Hill and Ann Reeves

For the first time, the children of the Rose Room kindergarten class at the Perth Waldorf School spent all of Term 2 in an outdoor setting, a bush kindy in a 5-metre circular tent set up in bushland at the back of the school.

The bush kindy was necessitated by renovations to the existing kindergarten space, but to Anna Scott, kindy teacher in the Rose Room (one of four kindergarten classes), it was an opportunity to give children a deeper connection with our natural environment, and to be more attuned to nature.

In the term break immediately after the experience, school staff attended an early childhood seminar with Dr Lakshmi Prasanna and Patries Orange, and with joy I realised the opportunity we had given our children and ourselves to truly breathe, to breathe in the beauty of nature.

We saw in bush kindy the ability of nature to bring peace to even the most restless soul.

Before we began bush kindy, I spoke to my supervisor about the change in rhythm that the children would experience, and the lack of formed in/out routine. She responded 'They will get that in nature.' And they did.

Would you describe the environment?

Bush kindy was situated at the back of the high school in a five-metre circular bell tent. Melody Stevenson and her family worked hard to create a safe environment. They smoothed the ground and built a retaining wall to give it a very definite home base. A parent created space between the trees for play and the area was fenced off to make the space feel safe and held.

A lean-to became our kitchen. The year 9s built a fire pit and a wall around it that we sat at each morning. The children climbed in the mulberry tree nearby, and there were stands of scraggy trees and a big stump that the children loved to climb on and dig around. It was their place to explore and to be alone. We observed and kept a certain distance. The Year 9's vegetable garden was in the same location, and one of the assistants, Heidi, and the children planted in it.

Can you describe the morning rhythm?

Every morning the parents said goodbye near the Rose Room. The children would walk up with us, each carrying their own back pack, while two children pulled a cart with the extras that we would need for the day as well as a partly-prepared lunch or fruit. We would encircle the great grey tuart tree and thank him for sharing his space. The children would include the tree in their consideration and if it was raining, they would say things like 'Mr Tuart is cold today'.

At the tent, the children unloaded their bags onto a big table. We would sit around the fire pit while the children scrunched up paper to light the fire. Then we'd say the morning verse:

Mother earth, so great and wise
Guide us with your gentle eyes
As the bush we do bless
With laughter, fun and listening ears.

We light the fire every day
Before we all begin to play
Our bushland home is safe each day
As we care and listen well.
If the kindy bell does ring
Back to our teachers we do sing.

The two 'cart-children' acted as helpers, cutting fruit and helping the assistants. Then the children were free; most of the morning was play. Lunch at 11.30am was around the fire or at the table before we would go into the tent for story time.

There was much more of a breathing space for the children here, less was packed into the day. Although there was more freedom, we still covered our curriculum, with rhythm and movement coming from the land rather than the teacher's ego centre.

How did the children interact with the space?

We saw that the digging pit could become a city or the beach, or the children became wood cutters. There was imaginative play and great interaction between all the children. There was less of 'one person's turn' or that you only play with certain children. The ideas were so big the children were more accepting of each other's plans, and the plans could grow with what was there. For example, a tepee became a house with a letterbox which then became stepping stones. And I loved the capacity of the children to get dirty. At first, girls in pink would only watch from the edges, then as the joy grew, that didn't matter. They became construction workers and foremen.

The children found their own places to be. One little girl found hers in the tent; it was her sanctuary.

At first one little boy wanted an adult to be at the mulberry tree when he began to climb. Eventually, he was climbing it and hanging upside down. Another little boy decided to climb every tree on the block – and he did. His asthma means he runs out of breath at games. I could feel in him the need to have a freedom in his physical body. I could see what he got out of discovering himself. He didn't need to be boss of everyone; he could teach others without having to take control.

The assistants all brought their own magic. Everyone brought something. One assistant, Jo worked with Jena, a former student, but I know the children saw her as a golden princess. She would do craft.

And the extra assistants each brought something special. Sam, a mover and an artist, would sit and draw, and the children would gather around; they could simply come into the activity without it being set. Rose made a massive spider web in the trees and gave never-ending love. Caleb, digging, became a six-year-old, but he also had a strength and imagination to make things happen. We called Ella the Dragon's Breath, because she got the fire going.

We set up little things. We made a spiral of bush things and that grew and grew. The children respected the space and their reverence for it grew, even though it was simple. We had three aboriginal bush puppets, made by the parent body, which I would leave out for play. The children created stories on a tree stump. These were true nature stories that came from the children's hearts, a beautiful thing.

In the afternoons, six year olds would put their sticks into the fire and put a spell in the air with them. The fire pit was a gathering space for the children and gave a heart to the days. We cooked sandwiches and roasted nuts there in the afternoons.

Each morning we walked past the office, and the children sang to Tracey our finance officer. She responded by bringing worms for our vegetable garden, macadamia nuts for roasting, and by writing poems for the children. They loved it. And the year 9s would sit around the fire with the children. All this activity incorporated another part of the school into our world.

What was your experience of time?

I learned to let go of a set program in my teaching. Here, the time needed came from what was happening, and sensing when something was enough and when it was time that we came together. I learned that through observation, I began to see the rhythm, rather than being ruled by the clock.

And the rhythm?

After the week's teaching seminar in July at the end of term 2, with Dr Lakshmi and Patries Orange we learned about breath, and I realise that is what comes out of the bush. The ability for the children to really breathe happens when you are in nature. And their ability to observe grew over time.

How was life in the tent?

The tent was rest time, story time and shelter for days of heavy rain. The circle of the tent and its warmth and domed roof held the children in a beautiful circle, close to each other, tucked up in blankets. Shadows of trees on the tent walls brought the outside inside.

Any observations of the physical wellbeing?

Walking from kindy up to bush kindy, the children had to grow stronger, to come into their own strength. They carried rain coats and other things in their bags; they were heavy. They had to be more responsible for their possessions.

What about more vigorous activities?

The children got the chance to dig into the earth. The only opportunity otherwise is in sand, and it doesn't accomplish the same things, it's more ethereal. This was deeply physical. Everyone dug a trench for plumbing pipes – a real trench. There's a resistance digging in the real earth. And from the earth the idea would come for something else.

Stonemason Michael Stevens and his crew were building a forge nearby for the school woodwork classes. They entertained the children, dancing and digging and building. The children experienced real work by jovial young people with youthful physical bodies. The children started looking for bricks to build something. This was good imitation from the outside, not from the teachers.

What was it about being in that environment that you loved?

It enlivened my teaching. I could review what really



matters. To experience such beauty was significant. Everything that the children received, I received as well.

I also loved the opportunity to work with Lindy (Lindy Frayne, kindergarten assistant) in this positive way. She took on Bush Kindy with joy and nothing was ever too difficult.

What were the expectations for you, and for the parents?

For me it was an exciting unknown. For the parents, it was a questionable unknown. I think that if we had brought them in earlier, had busy bees at the site, they would have been more open to the idea from the beginning.

The support of the school was important. Jennifer Byrne (our early childhood coordinator) was very positive. I think parents' anxieties were alleviated by our positivity and that increased over time as they saw what their children were experiencing.

One of the parent's biggest concerns was the washing. Next time, we will prepare them and plan what children need. We can suggest plastic overalls that can be taken off at the end of Bush Kindy, and spare socks and boots.

Was the weather ever a problem?

There were three rainy days in a row and moving between the kitchen area and the main tent was difficult. We needed a covering there, so it's something for next time.

Was there any other equipment that you would like next time?

No. 'Making do' was part of the experience, even though the washing up was tricky for Lindy.

Any mishaps that wouldn't have happened in Kindy?

None. The hardest thing was finishing on time because time was so fluid. You didn't want them to break what they were doing. We didn't want to bring them to lunch or have story, because what they were actually doing WAS their own story. It would be 11.30 and we'd say 'Quick, we've got to eat!'

How do you think the environment supported or extended their experience of language?

Their language came out of constructive work. It became much more unisex language and play.

When they created their own story, there was also a deeper acceptance of the other's ideas instead of there being one storyteller with one idea. I think that's a direct flow-on from having this more universal play. Problem-solving language was developing.

Can you say a little more about how the girls engaged and how the boys engaged?

Because initially the girls were worried about clothing and getting dirty, they would be the 'water carriers' or they

would have peripheral jobs. It was as though they were the carers of these men who were busy. But in the end the girls were the foremen. It changed over eight weeks. It was not 'boys' and 'girls' but equal workers. Within that experience comes language that the girls would not usually use.

Can you comment on the relationship of the children's will to their activities?

Their will was engaged in a positive way. Nothing was seen as a job and if there was 'a job', like going to collect wood with Rose, ten children would be ready at the gate with the trolley, and they would come back with the same amount of inner aliveness about creating things for each day.

They also sustained play for a long time.

There was no need for discipline. It's part of the same picture. Because the children were engaged in the way they were and we were all there as a collective we had no need to discipline.

Do any individual experiences stand out?

One little boy wouldn't climb ... wouldn't climb ... couldn't climb, yet he was the most physical boy when we were in the Rose Room – he would go anywhere, do anything. But in the bush kindy environment, he took a while to feel safe. It was so difficult for him to climb the mulberry tree and

... take your children
to the bush
and don't talk.
Or respond to what
they're asking
in an open way.
They're not asking
for an answer,
they're just
asking you
to hang with them.

every day he'd test himself just a little bit more. Then he'd put on the gardening gloves and say 'These are my climbing gloves'. He'd try a little more. At the end, he was climbing the tree, but at his own pace, without my help or me saying, 'You can do it.' On his own, he developed trust in himself.

The little boy who was the biggest observer of the natural world had come from Singapore and his experience of nature had been limited. He would see everything, every change. The dewdrop on a nasturtium, the bandicoot coming and going. I imagine he got a real sense of saturation of goodness

that he hadn't experienced because his world picture didn't allow that previously.

A similar experience also came to a little boy who comes from a very intellectual family where everything is discussed. At the block, he could relax. He could let his head go for that time and get back into it when he got home again.

What was it that they breathed in that will come out in their language and play later?

There's the possibility of nature. Parents would say 'Oh we must go camping more,' or 'We need to get the fire on outside.' I think there is a flow-on effect that we can't measure.

You mentioned the painting changed?

Because we painted only in the afternoon and outside it was freer, more fluid. It was the same with any activity. They didn't feel as constrained by it; the activity was there and you could live into it. The six-year olds became much more unified as a group. In the classroom, they would often look at each other's paintings and comment, not always kindly, and here you just got on with what you were doing and you could do another one – and we could! We also had a large table that we could all fit around and it helped community building.

Cooking on the fire?

Eating was more fun. The food was partially cooked in the Rose Room and pulled up in the trolley and then finished over the fire or on the gas burner.

Going back into Kindy now, what will you take back?

The knowledge that I have the ability to keep the movement of friendships happening. Up there the bush 'did it' but now I think it will need a consciousness from the teacher. And I need to find a way of not letting the children get back into the form that they were used to. Going back into the room I feel there's much more rigidity. Now there's the whole experience of rhythm and what it is 'to really breathe'. Are we filling their lungs? I want to keep up our walking and let them feel their physical body without them being conscious that they're doing an 'activity'.

The ability to be in timelessness and just to be sitting watching and not being 'playing' or 'singing' or in 'circle' ... just to be. Because often as the adult you want to fill up...fill up...ask a question, engage them. But when they're just sitting by the fire, the most amazing things will happen. Time just to see and to be. Those elements I want to bring back. I want the fire to live in them.

Is there anything you would say to the parents now?

It would be something about the gift of nature and taking their children into nature. That they take that on as something that they can share ... and to just stop talking.

So those would be the two things. Take them to the bush and don't talk. Or respond to what they're asking in an open way. They're not asking for an answer, they're just asking you to hang with them.

Now that you're back in the Rose Room, what differences have you noticed?

My feeling initially was of constriction and noise, although this is less noticeable now. We are more time-bound and more time is spent inside. And I have noticed that the confined space has brought about a decrease in child and teacher health.

Separation for some children is more stressful. Comments in the parent survey indicated that they noted that the children were happier to come to bush kindy.

Now that we're back in the room, play has regressed into separation based on gender, age group and area. However, it is true that new skills that bush kindy developed have continued – for example in tree climbing and in self-trust. Now, though, play has become repetitive and less imaginative. It has reverted to pre-bush kindy play. Part of this picture is the children's reliance on adult intervention.

I need to remember my commitment to recreate within the Rose Room the opportunities to experience nature and movement.

Expectations of the child's self-reliance have diminished as our daily routine does not rely on their same involvement.

And your final reflections?

We created an environment of open free play. We cooked on an open fire. We played in the rain. We watched as red-tailed cockatoos serenaded us. Children climbed and dug and got dirty. It also gave me a unique opportunity to re-enliven my teaching practice. It was indeed a wonderful experience.

About Anna: Anna Scott began teaching kindergarten at the Yalagonga Steiner School in 1992, and has been at the Perth Waldorf School for the past 26 years, in the Rose Room.

About bush kindy: Bush kindy is the Australian name for the educational approach known as forest kindergarten or forest pre-school elsewhere. According to Niels Ejbye-Ernst, Researcher at Copenhagen University, the first record of a forest kindergarten is from 1950, when a woman named Ella Flatau formed a 'Walking Kindergarten', where a daily hike in the woods was part of the curriculum. Within a few years, mothers began organising schools that bussed their children from Copenhagen's congested neighborhoods into the countryside.

There are now forest kindergartens or nature-based early childhood education in many places around the world, over 1500 in Germany alone. Journalist and author, Richard Louv, who identified nature-deficit disorder in his book, 'Last child in the woods', provides a synthesis of research on the benefits of greater contact with the outdoors at his website childrenandnature.org. (Ed.)

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Til this passing away is transformed into love

Interview with Margaret Kirkwood

C. A. Meyer



I first met Margaret when, at the age of 80, she joined our anthroposophical study group at the Manning River Centre for Rudolf Steiner Education in Taree. Margaret came from Port Macquaire, an hour's drive north, to attend. It was not long after her husband, Keith had died, and Margaret mentioned that she had waited 60 years to reconnect with an anthroposophical group. What the rest of us didn't discover at first, was that Margaret's connection with anthroposophy began before she was even 20 years old.

Born in Griffith on 7 September 1930 as Margaret Lynne Edwards, she moved often early in life, as her family followed her father's teaching career. When Margaret was only nine, she experienced a near-drowning, which she describes like this...

'We were visiting my grandmother in Cundletown. She lived just over the road from the Manning River. I was with some other children and we were swimming there. They could swim but I couldn't, because I'd come from out west and there was no swimming pool where I'd lived. So I was trying to teach myself to swim, going out as far as I could up to my neck, and then pushing and gliding into the bank. I must've struck a drop off, and I slipped down in there, and I was drowning. I remember coming up and waving to the others – they were diving off the punt up the river – trying to get them to see I was in trouble. But they thought I was having fun and they just waved back.

After I got pretty full of water, my experience was I was dying, and I felt that I had died before. I felt this is a very familiar experience, this has happened to me before. And then I started to feel it was wonderful, that I was coming home to my real home. It was then that a voice spoke to me, and told me exactly which way to turn, and how to get out of the water, to put my feet towards the bank so I could walk myself out.

I remember going over to my grandmother's place afterwards in absolute shock. I wondered, whose was the voice? What's happened here? I never told anybody what had happened. For years, I wondered who the voice was.'

Many years later, Margaret read Rudolf Steiner's remarks that some people are called by Christian Rosenkreutz in near-death experiences, that he calls his pupils in this way, rescuing them from death, to put them on a new, changed path in life. The recollection that death was something that had happened to her before, Margaret puts down to

establishing at a young age, a belief in reincarnation and a strong sense of her spiritual home.

'I won't be afraid of dying. I might be afraid of the suffering I might experience, but I won't be afraid of dying, because I believe that we are coming to our real home. It is said in the Bible we're only visitors here [in earthly life].'

Margaret has the impression that there were members on her father's side of the family who were open to spiritual understanding. 'Their ancestors, way back in England, were weavers,' she recalls, 'and weavers generally lived in top floor rooms with skylights. The daylight they needed for their work; but they could also observe the heavens at night.' Her grandfather, Henry 'Hawkeye' Edwards, was a well-known Manning resident – a poet and a bootmaker. He was someone, Margaret recalls that people sought for advice. 'Go and ask Hawkeye, people would say.' When the Taree bypass was constructed several years ago, one of the new bridges spanning the Manning River was named after Margaret's grandfather.

With this profound early life experience of near-death it is not surprising that, only a few years later, Margaret was guided to anthroposophy while she was still in school in Sydney.

'The careers advisor thought I might be good in advertising as a copywriter. And she showed me some leaflets about where I could go to learn about advertising copywriting. I went to the School of Applied Advertising in the evenings, and that's where I met Doug Waugh. He was a teacher there.'

Initially in conversations after school at a nearby coffee shop where some of the students mingled, and then later at the home of Doug and Marj Waugh in Gordon, where they held open house get-togethers on Sunday, Margaret began to hear and learn about anthroposophical ideas.

'They were very friendly. Marj was lovely; very warm and a beautifully spoken person, a very loving person. She used to go into Alice Crowther's studio, and she did speech and drama and eurythmy. And I became interested in those things and I went there too. I met Alice Crowther and Ruth Ainsworth there.'

When Margaret later married, Alice Crowther presented Margaret and her young groom, with a burgundy pottery

jug as a wedding present, which Margaret still treasures including the little card wishing them well. Margaret has also kept her notebook from that time, recording notes from her various lessons at Alice Crowther's studio.

Destiny relationships with anthroposophists of the past as well as those of the future were cultivated through Margaret's attendance at the School of Applied Advertising. Lesley Evans happened to be sitting next to Margaret on her first day, and they met when Doug instructed everyone to shake hands with the person next to them.

'Isn't it strange?' Margaret ponders. 'Several times in my life that sort of thing has happened – [I've been guided to] someone who, as it turns out, plays quite an important part of my life.'

As Margaret's interest in anthroposophy began to grow she thought of her other new-found friend. 'Getting to know Lesley I started to think, this would be her cup of tea so I told her about it, and she started to get interested in [anthroposophy] too. She later on became a teacher at Inala ... When [Lesley] got married she was living in the same street as my parents in Hornsby. Her husband built their home there at the end of the same street. So I really got to know her very well.'

Margaret and Lesley have maintained their friendship throughout their lives. 'We have a birthday about the same time and I always ring her up on her birthday.'

Lesley introduced the work of Albert Steffen to Margaret by giving her a book of translations of his poetry. 'I just love his poetry. I've had that book for a long time.'

All this early soul connection and active involvement with anthroposophy was somewhat interrupted when at 20, Margaret married Keith Kirkwood. Raised a Catholic, at first Keith didn't share Margaret's conviction about the reality of reincarnation, and while she kept up her membership to the Anthroposophical Society in Australia unbeknown to her husband for a while, eventually she resigned, feeling that she didn't want to keep secrets from him anymore.

These were the busy years of raising a family together as Margaret and Keith eventually had four children. Tragedy struck when the second eldest, Peter, became sick with leukaemia in adolescence. Treatment in those days was not very successful and Margaret sought help from anthroposophic doctor Rita Leroi at the Lukas Clinic in Arlesheim. Dr. Leroi sent Iscador medication by post and Margaret gave Peter the injections herself but sadly, Peter passed away at age 12. Margaret is grateful that for his last few months, Peter was enrolled at Glanaeon Rudolf Steiner School, where he enjoyed all the artistic activities.

In addition to anthroposophy, music is an interest which has unfolded meaningfully in Margaret's life. 'My parents were very musical. My mother taught me a bit of piano when I was young. My father always had choirs in the schools where he was teaching. Even in the little school at Tallimba, near West Wyalong – a little bush school – we

sang in three-part harmony. That was a wonderful experience as a child!'

In mid-life, after her father had died, Margaret sought some way she could contribute in the world beyond her family. She applied at a local school as a reading support volunteer, but the volunteers' coordinator had a more pressing need and asked:

'Are you the littlest bit musical? We need somebody to teach recorder.' And I said, 'Oh, I don't know anything about the recorder, but I am a bit musical.' She said, 'Well here's the book, and here's the recorder. As long as you can do the first lesson, and keep just ahead of the children, [you will be fine].' So I did that. Then the woman who was teaching brass there had to leave, so they asked me if I would teach brass. I said, 'I've got no idea about brass playing ...' But that didn't become an obstacle either.

As well as recorder, Margaret eventually taught herself to play several instruments, including brass. Forty years later at 87 she is still giving lessons in clarinet and saxophone in schools in the Hastings, and plays in two community bands to her great enjoyment.

During the 58 years of Margaret's marriage to Keith, while she kept up her interest in and personal study of anthroposophy, she could not find a like-minded group to connect with in her area. She believed for a long time that nothing of that kind was happening locally. Then, soon after Keith's death she saw a notice on the noticeboard of Coles which caught her attention. 'I saw the beautiful colours, and it was talking about a [Steiner-inspired] playgroup in Wauchope at that time.'

Margaret was eventually led through that poster to Manning River Steiner School and Centre in Taree, and to the study group there which had only newly reformed. She was able to get a lift with Mark and Ruth Gallagher who were also travelling from the Port Macquarie area to Taree for the group. Even though throughout her marriage she could not make connection, Margaret feels that it was Keith, after death, who led her to seeing that notice in Coles. Later in life, Keith seemed to become more open to aspects of anthroposophy which Margaret discussed with him over the years. Disillusioned with the church, he began questioning.

When I asked Margaret if she had any challenges with anthroposophy, or difficulties (as many do!), she replied, 'What's difficult is that nobody else in my family is interested.' One family member once went so far as to assert that she believed God wanted Margaret to give up anthroposophy. But Margaret's relationship with anthroposophy has proved enduring. When a new First Class group formed in the area in 2015, Margaret joined as a member. She continues to attend regularly.

'I feel so grateful that I've come to know anthroposophy. I sometimes feel that's why I'm still living, that I'm meant to keep learning.'

(Title taken from a line in a poem by Albert Steffen)

Becoming human: questions for co-creating the future

reflections on the youth conference 14-18 July 2018

Fancy Chen

The quest journey that was the Youth Conference on the theme of 'Becoming Human: Questions for Co-Creating the Future', was grounded in a vision that stems from a very relevant topic for youth – the direction of our common future. We have entered the 21st century, a highly dynamic and intense time where no spheres of life are left untouched by interconnected global issues.

This uncertain and volatile climate is fertile, imaginative ground for much of the moral and creative force we need to harness as a united youth organism-body, to counteract the powerful ecological destruction and spiritual devolution that is happening around the world. Co-creation and collaboration is the key to turning the ship around and steering the wheel in the direction we collectively determine.

I heeded the call and set out with over 2½ weeks of almost non-stop destination hopping. Fast forward seven cities and two countries later, I finally land at the monumental Goetheanum, its appearance both formidable and quaint on its site atop an undulating hill in Dornach. It feels as though has always been a part of the landscape – steadfast and unchanging.

I was delighted to meet two friends from the Moral Technologies conference in Melbourne in 2018, Tanvi Golaki and Paolo Apostolides, at the conference and we had a beautiful reunion. Paolo was one of the international organisers and the only Australian representative on the team. He was also a workshop leader.

I felt a deep sense of warmth and community-building fostered by our international network of 150 individuals. Most of us camped out at the nearby Steiner school in Aesch. As we were sleeping about 10 – 15 in a room on thin mattresses, we were so close to each other that making the effort to get to know everyone was less awkward than saying nothing at all.

The in-school camp was like a big slumber party that led to the Night Café starting from 9pm most evenings for those staying on-site. This was a super cool experience because the little grotto and youth hangout space were actually built by the local high schoolers. It had a very underground, Parisian-grunge-jazz club feel to it with old brocade lounges, a non-alcoholic bar, a decked-out PA system and, most importantly, room to dance! And of course, the Latinos kept the party going through to the early hours of the morning with the song, 'Despacito' featuring a number of times.

On the last night, we had a big farewell bonfire on the lush hillside beside the Goetheanum in a similar rambunctious fashion with lots of music, laughter, friends and fun.

We spent four days engaged in life-changing and soul-evolving workshops, found kindred spirits in our fellow conference participants and made new and hopefully lifelong friends. There were three keynote speakers each focussing on an independent sphere of the threefold commonwealth organism. Each person, touched upon and guided us deeply through issues and causes they are



intimately involved in. They are all well-regarded experts in their field, happy for us to pick their brains. Other workshop facilitators, equally as passionate and knowledgeable about their fields, provided a vital sense of community building, which starts from the individual and moves to the collective.

Constanza Kaliks, aligned with the political sphere, opened the conference with a speech on the Declaration of Fundamental Human Rights and the message that tolerance of other races, nations and cultures is not enough. The celebration of diversity and understanding the beauty of difference, as well as the sense of belonging in our shared common humanity is a much vaster and loving space than the ways we use to divide our borders and close off our hearts.

Joan Mele was the spokesperson for the economic sphere leading the talk on Money and Consciousness. He is the founder of several ethical banks in Spain, now expanding to South America. He sees money as a form of energy whereas in our neo-liberal, capitalist society we believe that profit making is the highest form of good, basically the belief that never-ending expansion is possible without consequences for the limitations of the earth and its finite resources. He brought forward a new concept that money is actually like a tree, which lives, dies and moves on in a different form anew when we give money or resources to charity.

Unfortunately, our great greed leads to wanting to hold onto that money or excess resources without care for the concerns of its misuse and stagnation. He encouraged us to turn to alternative and ethical solutions such as purchasing Fairtrade goods and think of the effects of how investing our money on fast fashion and mass manufactured goods is affecting the quality of life for those paid slave wages and forced to work in unsafe conditions. He also asked us to do a simple exercise of keeping your financial records to see clearly how you spend your money. And does it resonate with your values?

Nicanor Perlas, spoke as the expert on artificial intelligence, its impact on the world and its future. He spoke about the scary dystopian and potentially destructive to the point of extinctive effect on the human race. He spoke about how the leaders at Facebook shutdown the AI they had developed, after they realised it had created its own language and was communicating with other AI. When the AI started spewing out code or gibberish they soon caught on to what was actually happening. This had an extraordinarily dangerous potential if AI were able to learn about the cruelty and destruction caused by wars and how to mimic these cruel strategies for their own means or experimentation.

Kait Zigler is a facilitator from the States who held an amazing workshop on Theory U and its practice in economic, political and social spheres. We practised it at a grassroots level on ourselves. We have some emotions and experiences that are valued and others that are not. The ones we don't value, we tend to avoid and ignore. Theory U helps us to navigate our way through the uncomfortable

and negative by presencing and only moving on once everything has been digested. I felt the general theme behind Theory U is to slow down in a world that is always trying to get us to go faster and move on, before we have fully digested what has already come towards us.

We were challenged by global issues of our times such as discrimination, intolerance, materialism and conscious spending/investing, artificial intelligence and its effects on all levels of society and humanity. We split off throughout the day to work in groups and held open forums on how we would go about addressing some of these problems at a grassroots level, so that we change not only our own lives and those immediately around us, but the lives of those for generations to come.

During this conference, I encountered and developed community spirit, was inspired by the quality 'containers' that existed within the conference, equipped myself with knowledge and skills, procured material and tools to begin to co-create long-term projects of my own, 'The Centre for Learning, Healing and the Arts' and 'Creative Avenues: A Youth Mentoring and Careers Service' and further The Sophia Consciousness Movement – all intimately connected to and applied through the scope of anthroposophy and investigating spiritual science.

I highly recommend attending this eventful and rich experience to all people who identify themselves as youth – either in biological age or, even within the capacity of a youthful spirit – the oldest attendee was 71 years old. This was not the norm – most participants were between the ages of 16 and 35 years.

The four-day youth conference I attended at the Goetheanum during the European Summer this year was an unforgettable experience and, I wholeheartedly thank the ASinA for a grant that helped to fund my trip. Special thanks to Matthew Bond for being supportive and practical with both guiding me through the grant writing process and helping with this article.

Love, Community, Spirit in Co-Creation!



Presence at the threshold

An interview with anthroposophic and palliative nurse, Pippa White

Tanya Coburn



Can you say a little bit about your work, Pippa?

At the moment, I'm doing quite a bit of teaching through workshops and teaching parents about childhood illnesses and what to do at home. It seems as though a lot of parents are actually really seeking help with that because there isn't a lot around. There's actually a lot of information on the internet but when it comes to looking after your child at home, it's a lost art.

It's really wonderful doing that work and helping parents to gather experience. We offer experiential workshops where parents will be guided with learning how to do footbaths a certain way, and that incorporates really looking into oneself and what you're giving and being really present. Our presence seems to be the major healing factor of being there for somebody.

We teach footbaths and we teach compresses and we teach how to care for your child with fevers and those sorts of things.

So, these are simple things that you can do at home, can you say a bit more about compresses?

For children with digestive disorders or even with nervous disorders which often come out as stomach complaints of having sore tummies or constipation or diarrhoea, or when they're feeling anxious, they feel a bit sick in the tummy. We give abdominal compresses for that so we teach parents how to do that. For children who are really nervy, to help them sleep and to help them settle, the compresses are fantastic.

Compresses would have herbs...

Yes, herbs. Chamomile generally for the stomach. Simple things. We try and keep it really simple so that what's used in the compresses, like onion compresses, they're things that most of us would have in our house anyway – and they're very effective.

So, in the workshops you're teaching home care based on what you've learned through anthroposophic nursing.

Yes, and folklore. They're very old traditions from the European traditions. It's new but it's old. It's anthroposophic but it's also steeped in historical health care.

You're working with parents and you're also working with individuals. You reflected just now on the healing power of presence. Do you want to say more about that?

I think that we're so caught up in activity in our lives that to come in and have an anthroposophic nursing treatment is like coming into a gold space, and as a nurse, I feel my role is to be absolutely present. That is my goal, all the time, to be really present to that person.

I believe that is the major part of the healing role that I play. The compresses, the body oiling and the substances that we give are beautiful and they are directed towards a particular ailment, but I think the presence behind that is the driving, healing factor in it. It was interesting I had a conversation with a woman the other day who has been through a lot of trauma in her life. She said that the one thing that has the greatest healing force is presence. It really struck me because that's what I truly feel in the work that I do as well and it's the same working with a woman who is in labour; it's the same with someone who is dying – to be present and to observe the cues, to observe what it is that people bring to the situation is all part of that being present, and it tells an amazing story every time as well.

So, that's picking up on quite subtle things, isn't it?

Yes, yes, absolutely. We know with women who are having a baby who are in labour that the different sounds that they make will be an indication of what stage of labour they are in and what they are feeling in their bodies.

The same with someone who is dying. There's a question mark there for me, if there's a labouring that is going on through the dying process as well. I don't know that that's the case because everyone is individual but it seems to me that there is a sequence that happens and there's a consciousness there that is very different from your and my consciousness here now, where your communication with that person is on a very different level and to read those signs is quite a thing to do. It's not easy because everyone is different but there are certainly indications there of how to be with somebody at that time.

Because that has become a focus of your work, Pippa, or has that always been present? You've spoken about the birth experiences of labour and the dying and the labouring or the changes that happen at those two thresholds – has that been a particular interest of yours?

Very much so, right from my early years. I was very interested in home birth and I went to home birth meetings at a very young age, just because I wanted to be around people and learn. I used to go to John Stevenson's meetings – he's the home birth doctor, or was in those days. I

attended a couple of births with friends when I was in my late teens and early 20s, and then with my sister with her children.

I also did a very short stint at a mental health hospital, Mont Park, which was pretty awful back in those days. I was in a geriatric ward where most of the people had dementia, and a few other issues. My first experience of being with someone who was dying was there. At that time, they had huge wards – lots of beds in each ward and lots of noise. It was a depressing environment.

I sat with this woman who was dying; I just held her hand and sat with her and I was very aware of being very present and sending loving thoughts to her at that time.

I was really amazed when she died that the presence in the room, the feeling in the room, was so similar to the feeling in the room in the births that I had been to. It was very warm and love-filled, even in this horrible environment.

Very quickly that changed and I was asked to plug all the orifices and zip her up into a bag but that was an amazing experience and it always stayed with me.

So that was during your time as a nurse, or training in nursing?

I had planned to train as a mental health nurse but I only lasted about three months. I found the system too difficult to work in. I went on and had children and went through all of that.

Then when my mother died, she had had a stroke a few years beforehand and had been in a nursing home. She also got post-stroke dementia and she was unable to walk; she had numbness down one side. I would go in regularly to the nursing home and my experiences throughout that time, the latter part of the time when she was dying, that inspired me to train in my mid-40s. I trained to be a nurse because I wanted to be a palliative nurse.

So that was your experience in Mont Park in...

My early 20s

Then the experience with your mother's dying was the impetus to move into the field that has become a real passion – working with the dead and the process of dying for you.

I did the training to become a palliative nurse and once I had finished my training, I started working at a palliative care unit which was new and it was wonderful. It was led by a wonderful unit nurse manager who was a great guide for me and very open. I was a very frightened nurse when I first started nursing and for me, the whole nursing journey has been a heart-opening experience.

Working in palliative care with other palliative nurses was a really wonderful experience. After a while I found the system very difficult. The nurse unit manager left and being within that system was quite difficult. The more experience I had as a nurse, the more I knew that I could do a lot better.

The first year that I was there our daughter was diagnosed

with cancer and it was through her diagnosis that I actually went to Jan Rayson, who was the anthroposophic nurse at the Melbourne Therapy Centre at that time, to ask her if she could teach me some of the anthroposophic nursing therapies that I could do for Sarah. That was the beginning of my journey with anthroposophic nursing and the year after that I started doing the training in New Zealand which was a process over three years. And while I was working at Wantirna palliative health care, I started seeing my old friend, Bettye Palmer. She would come to my house and I gave her treatments to support her in her journey with cancer.

That was a wonderful experience to give true nursing care with lots of time; old-fashioned nursing care. She was wonderful to work with, and I worked with her right through to her death. She was the first person I'd laid out for a vigil and cared for her during the three-day period of the vigil.

So the vigil is the time where people can come and be with a person before the formality of a funeral. It's that time after death and before a funeral or other ritual.

That's right and I see that vigil time as being most important for the person who has died. In many traditions, that three-day period for the person to actually leave their body and for the etheric body to leave.

The life force body.

In the Buddhist tradition, the same thing – they talk about the elements gradually dissolving in the body over that time. It's very interesting to watch a body over that time and see the changes that are happening. It's like the person is still breathing, it's like their life body is still a little bit present. And as the time goes on, you see the body becoming more and more earthly or stone-like, I guess and the etheric has gone.

It's interesting to see that in some people that goes really quickly and in other people it takes a long time.

Again, it's that observation of subtle things that you're talking about. Nursing involves both care and also the presence that can support those transformations.

That's right, when I go in with someone who has died, even with someone I haven't had much to do with during their living life, I go in to support the family and to guide the family because for most of us we haven't ever done anything like that before.

We use really beautiful oils and bath milks for washing the person. My way is to help the family as much as they would like, to be a support so they can actually do as much of the caring process as they would like. It's a very beautiful process for families to care for their loved one in that way and very much a part of the process. When their loved one dies at home, they've been caring for that person anyway. To extend that to when they have died and beyond their death is just as special as looking after that person before death.

I've had many families saying to me what an incredibly special time it was for them, and special for their processing of the death, for their grieving of that person, and to see how normal it is.

That was my experience with Bettye when she died. It was this wonderful experience of a whole community coming in and supporting Bettye being there, showing everyone that death is normal, that death is a wonderful thing actually and there's nothing to be frightened of. For me, it was like, 'This is so normal! The way we do it with funeral directors is so *not* normal.' There was a sense for me at the time of 'Oh, I don't know whether I should tell everybody this!' especially those who would come in feeling a bit fearful.

I've also had families say, 'Oh, she looks so beautiful!' And they would tell me that he or she would look so much nicer than someone they had seen that a funeral director had taken care of because of course, we never use any internal embalming as most funeral directors would do. It's all oils which are similar substances to those that were used in Egyptian times like gold, myrrh and frankincense.

I've actually had a funeral director say to me, 'What is in that stuff that you are putting on?'

You see a change in the body after you have applied them because it's like magic. I don't know whether it's my imagination or not but after we have completed the washing and the oiling and I do certain movements over the heart using the gold, when I do it, I always feel as though the person has a smile on their face and they are relaxed. Even though they are dead already, you see a change in that body after that process has happened.

This is profound work really.

Incredible.

Profound and normal – how to have this marriage between what is profound or sacred and also normal seems like a part of what you're exploring in this work.

An area that has been of great interest to me in my palliative nursing has been something that takes place at this time just before death. In the medical world, it's named as terminal restlessness. I've had a long-term interest in this because when I was working in the palliative care unit, people who had terminal restlessness were always sedated or given relaxants or drugs to help with that. I always felt that we weren't doing people a good service by doing that, and that there was something more they needed. That was one of the things that drove me out of that working environment and wanting to work with people in their homes.

To see the difference if you can support a person through that time of restlessness is also very profound. A person who is going through that time, it's like they have one foot in this world and one foot in the next world and they're kind of bumping up against their own body, so they're still here but they're elsewhere. People will often stare ahead or

stare at something, or they'll be using their hands in a certain way, grasping at something that we can't see, or trying to climb out of bed or climb out of a window – all sorts of things like that. I have had people saying things like, 'I've got one foot in, and one foot out,' or 'Can you open the door – can you please open the door?', talking in this symbolic language which is an indication of the process that they're going through. If we can support a person and try to understand the language that they're using, it's really fascinating.

So, what might you do, how might you respond in that sort of situation?

If someone was, say, looking up into the corner of a room, I would ask them what they were seeing. Sometimes they can be quite clear that they're seeing a person. If they can't answer, just suggesting that they trust in what they can see will often bring a further conversation, or if not a conversation, then a restfulness – just by encouraging a person to trust what they can see and to trust that they will be supported. The main thing is to help that person trust more deeply in what they are seeing and believe what they are seeing.

So, it's to trust whatever process they are going through rather than resisting it.

Yes, and within our medical system, it's seen as hallucinations or something that is not here – it's not seen as real. I think more and more people are starting to see that there's something real there. A lot of palliative care nurses that you speak to, they'll have experiences of it.

I remember I did some work at the local aged care facility. People would say things like, 'There are a lot of aboriginal people in the room.' Apparently, that spot was where an aboriginal ground had been and it was the children who came to meet those people. One of the nurses told me that she always knew that people were going to die within a very short period of time when they were being met by these aboriginal children. I've heard loads of other stories like that.

One of the wonderful things about working with people who are dying is that it's very helpful for your own sense of confidence with dying yourself, and feeling that it's OK. In fact, feeling that it's wonderful.

That's a real benefit, isn't it? And removing all the fear, all the taboo, moving death away from something that's experienced in the home and now has been medicalised or moved out of sight. All that you are doing seems to be creating those atmospheres of trust, respect and honouring of a process that involves wonder.

Absolutely. The reality is that within our medical system, drugs are used a lot and sedation is used an awful lot. That's what is used and for most nurses, that's the right idea. In fact, when I worked at Wantirna, I did a mini research study and I asked all of the nurses who worked there, what

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would be the perfect scenario for their own death. Every one of those women and men, except for one who was a practising Buddhist, said that they would like to be knocked out on morphine and Midazolam, which is a sedative. For them, the most caring and loving thing to do would be to give someone sedation and morphine at the end of their life. That's seen as best practice in palliative care.

But I don't want that for myself. I want to BE there, I want to show up for my death but you have to fight for it. You have to be very present and say this patient doesn't actually want that.

You now have a freelance palliative nursing role and part of that seems to be a preparation for what you might have to stand up for towards the end of your life.

And find out what that person wants. That varies greatly. A lot of people are very frightened of dying. No matter what background they have, no matter how deep their spiritual connection, a lot of people still carry the fear of death and none of us knows, actually, what's going to happen.

It's a big journey for all of us to make. I think talking with people about what they want beforehand is actually a really important part of the process, doing advanced care planning. I've had a few people asking me if I would be – it's not called medical power of attorney anymore – it's called a medical decision-maker. I've had a few friends asking me if I would do that for them. When I talk to people about that, I always say you need to make sure that whoever you choose as your decision-maker is someone who really knows what you want, and can actually stand up to the medical profession and really follow through with your wishes. I think that it helps people to think about what they do want and what is most important to them.

A lot of people are really happy to have sedation and morphine, and that's their choice.

The element you've referred to a number of times is taking the time in nursing. That's something that's a real challenge in our contemporary culture in lots of different areas but it's something that's truly needed.

Yes, that's right. You wouldn't want to be in this game if you wanted to make a lot of money, but for me the rewards that I get for doing this kind of work are far greater than monetary. To be able to spend the time with people and to learn; I learn so much when I work with anybody. To be in a position to be with people when they are in such a vulnerable time of their life. That's a gift.

People say, 'You've got to be a very special person to work in that area of work,' but I think that the gifts that I receive from doing that work are far greater than what I give.

That notion of the 'very special person', you're saying that it's about receiving something as well, but is there something that you

bring in terms of your own spiritual understandings or questions or wonderings, or your particular soul qualities?

That I bring? Well, particularly if someone wants to go through the dying process without the use of drugs, particularly sedation, I think, then you have to have the presence of mind, the presence of being. It's very edgy work and you are dealing with a different situation every time you're with somebody. You don't have the answers. The whole time, you're in a place of exploration yourself. You have to be prepared to go in cold every time you go in, and to expect the unexpected. It is edgy work in that way.

It has been helped with people saying certain things when they're dying to know that they're looked after, that they're going to be OK.

I had a long conversation with a doctor in Sydney who had been a palliative care doctor for many years. He had done some studies with people who are dying and with people who are in coma as well. He talks about that at that moment of death, we're in sleep and in different stages of consciousness before dying, we're at 50% level whereas we're at 100% now. At the moment of death, consciousness goes right up with anyone, whether they are drugged or not drugged, their consciousness goes up just before their death, their last breath.

I found that really fascinating and also very reassuring that whether you are drugged or not, you are still going through this process at the gateway.

Then it's so lovely to have the stories like of an elderly woman who had been unwell with congestive heart failure for a long time. She just wanted to die and she was around for a lot longer. She was a bit grumpy about that but she continued on. At the time when she was dying, she turned to her friend, and said,

'The gates of the spiritual world have at last opened for me.' She had a very big smile on her face and she died a couple of hours later.

For me, stories like that, how could you not feel that everything is going to be OK, that we're looked after, that we're loved, that we're held. Having those experiences changes you and helps you to help other people at the same time of their life.

I'm not quite sure what I actually bring.

I'm sure just listening to you, people will get a sense of what it is.

I think we all have that potential and that's the thing with supporting families and hearing their stories of what the experience has been like for them and to walk into a room which is so full of love and that thick, wonderful warm energy around someone who is dying with the whole family. It's open for everybody.

This conversation is an extract transcribed from a podcast with Pippa White. You can listen to the whole conversation at humanwisdom.org/conversations or search on soundcloud.com.

Working with light, darkness and colour

Exploring painting therapy and artistic painting according to the method of Liane Collot d'Herbois

Sally Martin

How do you become a Painting Therapist?

Training in the Liane Collot d'Herbois method, involves a multi-layered journey. It begins with developing more awareness for the changing qualities of light shining in the atmosphere and how this affects the colours we see in nature. Students are trained to notice the correspondence with their own inner world of thinking, feeling and willing. The course also has a spiritual aspect connected to what is called 'archetypal' light colour and darkness. Is there an unseen spiritual presence working behind each of these visible phenomena? It has a spiritual and social aspect where in the many exercises, both practical and for self-development, the student is stimulated to stay present with the knowledge that we are all interconnected with each other and the whole of creation and that it does matter what you are thinking, feeling and doing. Following the path of this therapeutic art training with light, colour and



darkness as your constant companions can enable you to live with more awareness, stronger heart forces and more energy for carrying out your actions. You may gradually develop the ability to keep yourself in balance. The journey starts with you and your own healing, so that when you are trained to work as a painting therapist, you will be able to provide the necessary healing space for the people that come to you.

What courses are offered by the Sienna Academy?

The Sienna Academy now offers three trainings: postgraduate training in Flaxton, Australia and Guangzhou, China, and a foundation course in Chiang Dao, Thailand.

In Australia, we are nearing the completion of our third round of training and will start a fourth round in 2020 with new students welcome to join us still in 2019. We had one graduation earlier this year and three more students are completing their final case studies work to prepare for graduation early next year. We use a beautiful venue with extensive grounds including many interesting groups of trees, old tree stumps, shrubs, flowers and shady corners. The space is both very nurturing and ideal for outdoor observations. Inside there is a large main studio space with floor to ceiling windows, giving excellent light for the art



work. The room also has very good acoustics so that when we sing in the morning we sound like angels (at least in my own possibly biased view!)

In Guangzhou, China, students who started in 2016, will be finishing their contact hours in December 2019. More have since joined, so there will be ongoing modules to make sure that all can complete. We are planning a deepening course for students in Australia when they have graduated. Some have already expressed interest in this opportunity! For the past year, we have held the course in a beautiful new venue: a Steiner school still in its early stages with enough space for us to use. It is a warm mellow brick building, arranged around a grass courtyard. There are flowers everywhere; in fact, the name of the school is Grandmother Flower School. The manager for this course is Hou Binjie, a very committed and capable young woman, who also participates in the classes whenever she can.

In Chiang Dao, in the North of Thailand, there is a new foundation course hosted by Anupan Pluckpankhajee and his wife Rungvisa Rungtanapat (Jing) in their purpose-built studio. It is in a rural area with rice fields and farmland all around and a dramatic mountain backdrop. This course is nearly completed with just one more 2 week module to come in November/December at the end of this year.



What are some recent highlights?

In Australia, our medical doctor, Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna now gives small tutorial style workshops, focusing on the medical topics mentioned in each of Liane Collot d'Herbois' colour chapters. Students appreciate this setting as it gives more scope for questions and discussion.

In China, our course organizer, Hao Binjie, organized a very successful online book reading club, so that the Liane Collot d'Herbois book: 'Light, Darkness and Colour', could reach a wider audience. The painting therapy medical lectures given by our medical doctor, Dr. Maria Van Den Burg, have been made available to teachers at the school, and also to students of a nearby eurythmy school. This gathers

together a stimulating mix of young people interested in Anthroposophy.

In Thailand, the most important development is the interest generated amongst the student group to continue. Those that are able will continue the training in Australia. For those who have work or family commitments, we are in discussion as to how they may continue in their own country.

What are some significant training moments?

In Australia, students who have reached the stage of working with their own clients are supervised until they graduate. It is inspiring to see the way in which all that they have learnt is put into practice. This can be seen in the way interact with their clients as well as in diagnostic work, and in the design of a therapeutic pathway. I also appreciate the enthusiasm with which they begin this new adventure of working with their own clients.

In China, the students of the training have a group 'Wechat' using a social media app. They use this to post pictures of colourful sunsets, or unusual colour phenomena, and to comment on what they have seen. A new world has opened for them. Through their shared experiences both in the class and in between modules, they have also become a close-knit and supportive community.

In Thailand, it is inspiring to see how much confidence the students have gained through attending 2 out of 3 of the Foundation Modules. In the first module it seemed especially meaningful for them to discover new ways to observe different phenomena in the world. They also gained confidence in the power of their own memory. This was clearly evident in a four-part observation exercise. The first two parts took place outside in nature, using the same chosen place each time; and for the following two parts they were inside in the studio, painting from memory. Each student was surprised and delighted by how much they could remember of their chosen place of observation, and how alive and vivid each picture became.

Liane Collot d'Herbois grew up near Tintagel in Cornwall in 1907 and died in 1999 in the Netherlands. She lived briefly in Australia at the beginning of the first world war before returning with her mother to England. She trained in art at Birmingham Academy of Arts painting school and became a teacher. After becoming aware of anthroposophy, she worked in curative education at Sunfield in Clent. Her work attracted the interest of Ita Wegman and she visited Arlesheim. She began to develop her unique approach to painting therapy through her own work in deep observation and painting from memory, and multi-layered veil painting based on Rudolf Steiner's work. Once she established her therapeutic painting approach, she and the painter and sculptress, Francine van Davelaar, travelled extensively teaching until settling in the Netherlands where they were joined by a group of painting students, calling themselves the 'Magenta Group' throughout the years 1967-1987. She has published books on her approach and her works were exhibited in Colmar and regularly at the Goetheanum. They are held in private collections, clinics and as altarpieces for the Christian Community (Editor).

Contributors

Fancy Chen

Fancy is a first-year Advanced Diploma in Steiner Education student at the Melbourne Rudolf Steiner Seminar. She has a love and natural interest in organic movement, social activism, creative entrepreneurship, eco-living, travelling, healing and the arts - especially eurythmy and claywork. She brings this into The Sophia Consciousness Movement, the heart of her healing and wellbeing work.



Wendy Butler

Wendy has recently moved to Shepherds Ground, with her husband Rod, after a few years of wwoofing (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) around eastern Australia. Before this they lived in and around Samford Valley where they were involved for many years in various capacities at Samford Valley Steiner School.



Sally Martin

Since 1978, Sally has been involved with anthroposophy and its practical application in daily life. For 23 years, she worked in the context of the 'Camphill' organisation in the UK. During this time, she completed a diploma in Anthroposophic Painting Therapy which forms the guiding principle in Sally's teaching. In 2008 she founded The Sienna Academy offering accredited Painting Therapy Training in Australia, China and Thailand. Sally has also worked for 16 years as a Painting Therapist at the Noosa Pengari Steiner School on the Sunshine Coast, and runs a private practise at her own home. For more information: www.siennaacademy.com.au



Cheryl Meyer

Born in New Jersey, Cheryl immigrated to Australia in her 20s. She learned about Rudolf Steiner while living in Sydney and working at The New Awareness Centre. Later, she and husband, Kevan Millican were co-founders of the Manning River Centre for Rudolf Steiner Education (now closed) where their two sons attended primary school. Cheryl is the author of The Love of Tristan and Essylt. She is a class holder, and last year joined the board of Port Macquarie Steiner School which opened in January. Currently she teaches cello to beginners.



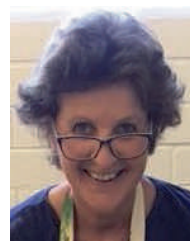
Agnieszka Światłowska

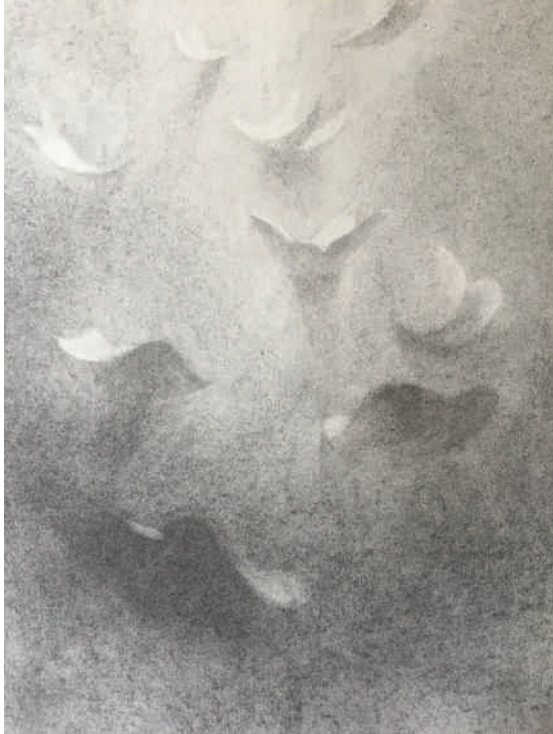
Agnieszka is a community welfare and development worker. Community is her passion and she strives to empower people and explore ways to strengthen the communities she is engaged with. In every case, this starts with looking deeply within her inner life. Agnieszka lives on the Sunshine Coast with her 7 year old son Tibo.



Jill Whitfield

Jill Whitfield was a member of the organising committee for the 2018 National Conference. She is a member of the Committee of Management of the WA Branch and a member of the Rudolf Steiner College management committee in Perth. She was a class teacher at West Coast Steiner School from 2005-2011 but is currently working in her family business, while also writing her first novel and learning pottery.





Sienna Academy exercises

Above left, an exercise in charcoal which aims to show the 'archetypal' light and darkness interaction that gives rise to a yellow-green and violet colour 'movement'.

Above right, the yellow-green and violet veil painting to show the corresponding colour movement.

Below left, observation exercise from memory, Thailand.

Below right, observation of flower with coloured shadows, China





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Rudolf Steiner, *The Spirit of the Waldorf School*

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