

## Feeling Loved

*I can hear my colours singing  
Feel my culture deep within  
Feel a peaceful sense of beauty  
I am brother to the wind.*

Those words, written by a young Aboriginal artist, formed the chorus of a song I wrote to honour the warm connectedness I recognised amongst indigenous Australians. He (Sonny Beckett) had scribbled that verse on a card beside one of his paintings and I asked him if I could use it in a song. We were both part of a small study group that was exploring works of art, songs and stories as vehicles for understanding one another.

In Sydney at the moment there is an exhibition from the famous Hermitage museum in St Petersburg. Three of the paintings (by Kandinsky) are the best examples I've ever seen of the **beauty** created by strong colours arranged in abstract patterns. What do they mean? My left brain can't say, but my mind takes a lot of pleasure in the experience. It reminded me again that there is a huge amount **we simply don't know** and cannot understand about how our mind works. That is what I want to acknowledge in this final Blog of this series.

Rather than worry about this, I think we do well to **trust** that our **experience** will tell us what we need to know. We are all **experts** on one thing only – our individual experience. In my book *Mind and Love* there are the following words (that I first heard from Maturana): 'All that we humans ever explain is our experience and we have only our experience with which to explain it.' This applies to everyone including the lecturers quoting from books they have read. It's one reason that we don't get close to other people by explaining our theories or our facts – we are connected by the **shared meaning** of our mind's experiences.

To honour our experience we need to trust our **feelings**. They can be so subtle that they are often swamped by the greater clarity of our **thoughts** or the greater mystery of our **emotions**. For many of us, left-brain domination of our mind tricks us into trying too hard to explain lots of things that are beyond our understanding. In that state we may miss the real joy of appreciating things and people for what they are. Even worse than that our whole society becomes too focused on simplistic yes/no equations based on dubious 'hard facts' that mostly miss the point about our life as a song.

In my opinion far too few writers and researchers have taken up the telling points about brain laterality made by Iain McGilchrist.<sup>1</sup> He explains that we need to consciously use the right side of our brain to get perspective and meaning (context rather than facts) and to appreciate that what is **unknown** in any situation is not working against us – it is **necessary** for us to be able to understand. The regular exercise that keeps our right brain healthy is art and music, singing colours, and flowing stories that integrate with our own experience.

So if **experience** is the best guide to the way we use of our mind, then our way of paying **attention** is our most important tool. The mind is not just a passenger in your life's journey. It's the instrument with which you play your life's song. When relationships, harmony,

---

<sup>1</sup> His major work that took 20 years to write is called *The Master and His Emissary*, but he has written two other very short books that are easier to get through. They are *The Divided Brain and the Search for Meaning - Why Are We So Unhappy?* (only available in a Kindle version) and, just this year, *Ways of Attending - How Our Divided Brain Constructs the World*.

wholeness and meaning are at the front of our awareness we are using our right-brain attention system. When the business-like, left-brain, kind of attention is the primary (or the only) use of our mind, the precious ‘stuff’ of our experience becomes depersonalised and objectified – the less explicit and non-verbal kinds of meaning and communication are downgraded. Needing explicit rules for everything we become more paranoid; protecting our security becomes an obsession. The harder we try to control everything the more fearful our life becomes.

There’s an important book by Peter Whybrow MD called *The Well-Tuned Brain<sup>2</sup> - The Remedy for a Manic Society*. He describes the hubris in our society whereby we think we are managing ourselves and our environment intelligently while our ‘acquisitive mania’ leads to a ‘self-destructive rate of consumption’ through ‘mass-market materialism.’ We must find ways to **temper** this. He says we are ‘living in the shadow of our achievements’ in that we don’t know how to cope with an excess of everything. I guess our Christmas-time behaviours are a good example of that.

We **tune our mind** to our circumstances by developing **habits**. In Whybrow’s words a better-tuned mind starts with **Love** (weaving a web of trust), requires **Character** (education and self-command) and moves on to **Imagination** (the playful, creative brain) and **Wisdom** (re-tuning for a sustainable future). These are the hallmarks of using our minds well and they are powerful enough to fortify us even through the most difficult of times.

I believe they are all based on **knowing in your soul that you are loved**. We don’t need a scientific explanation for this. It is simply a feeling that conveys deep meaning. We may experience it through singing colours, the words of a loved one, or every other kind of magical experience with which our **aliveness** is blessed. However we choose to refer to it we recognise that we know only a little about the mechanisms of our mind. And that’s okay. I’m reminded today, also, that there is no need to rush.

The popular New York Times columnist Tom Friedman’s most recent book is called *Thank You For Being Late - An Optimist’s Guide to Thriving in an Age of Accelerations*. He says he realised how precious it is to have a little unplanned time for reflection, on your own, while waiting for someone or something. This book is a far-reaching commentary on the state of the world and I’ve found it very thought-provoking; I haven’t finished it yet.

So the work of reading and learning, writing and talking, laughing and dancing, caring for one another at all times and in every way, is never finished. It goes on for each of us in our own separate ways. But we are not really separate – the cloud of **unknowing** is also the cloud of **love** that envelopes us all.

It has been a great privilege for me to connect with like-minded souls by lecturing and listening in U3A Courses for many years. I want to thank U3A and every human being whose life has been entwined with mine, either loosely or tightly, through this experience. It has been an **experience of love**.

I trust that whatever is most **Holy** for you will be the chorus of your life’s song.

---

<sup>2</sup> The title refers to *The Well-Tempered Clavier* by J.S. Bach