Learningguild Letter

1.2013

Dear members and friends of Learningguild,

The two things I have set myself to do in my parts of this *Letter* may at first seem unrelated. One is to praise and to fault a book most of whose authors are medical doctors or in related fields, and the other to answer questions I introduced at the first of our Saturday Meetings in 2013 (February 2): 'Why should I go on learning if I don't "have to"? If I should, how can I best do so?' (We call ourselves Learningguild, and say that membership is open to everyone who wants to go on learning and help others learn.)

The book is *Life Surfing Life Dancing*, and I gratefully acknowledge that I was given my copy by one of the contributors, Rob Moodie, the Professor of Public Health at the University of Melbourne. It was published this year by Future Leaders. One finds nothing on the normal page before the table of contents, or anywhere else in the book, about that body, nor in the list of contributors or elsewhere is there anything about Helen Sykes, one of the two editors; but on the net one learns that she is the Director of Future Leaders, "a philanthropic initiative about leadership and the future of Australia", with a Melbourne address.

On that normal page the subjects of the book are well described by "Health. Well-being." In the Introduction, after referring to "the momentum [of] … a surfer" and "the balance and flow of the dancer", the editors say "Living well and achieving wellbeing is a similar process of finding such balance, of discovering one's own rhythm, and focussing one's energy on the important things in life." (The Shorter Oxford admits only the hyphenated *well-being*. After *process*, here, a three-fold parallelism is needed, but not three *of*s: so one, not two.)

What do I think of the book? First, it is widely informative and full of good advice: most chapters are well worth reading, and especially a moving and insightful one by Dr Sophie Holmes, of the Williams Road Family Therapy Centre (Windsor, in Melbourne), summed up very well by its title "It takes two to tango: Emotional connection in a couple relationship". Secondly, given that so many people today in Australia have lives that are rootless, superficial and unsatisfying, it does not aim high enough, nor go deeply enough into what is or may be going wrong. Thirdly, some (not all) of its chapters together provide an object-lesson in how prone one's writing or any subediting may be to make or let through errors in English usage unless it is guided by a wide range of questions and principles seldom now well known. Such principles can be found in the classic *The Complete Plain Words* (Penguin Reference), originally by Sir Ernest Gowers. On pp. 11-16, referring to it, I offer thirteen questions, and in each case one or more principles and, for practice in correction, a group of defective sets of words.

The subjects of the chapters that especially pertain to physical or mental health are exercise, diet, drugs and alcohol, depression, and sexually transmitted infections. A valuable chapter brings out the great benefit of being known long-term by a good GP, includes (p.211f) "a checklist for GPs of the characteristics they should aspire to", and advocates (p.207f) "prevention is better than cure" as "the anthem of general practice", though without sufficiently considering the question whether GPs' training and ongoing learning attend enough to that.

Lack of mindfulness of the present and persistent worrying are two common obstacles to well-being, and each gets a chapter. We often need to be reminded to focus on and frequently to enjoy and delight in what we are doing or experiencing **now**, rather than being preoccupied with something else. However, Craig Hassed's phrase 'living in the present moment' is misleading, because so many of our happiest and best times include multiple awareness

of an extended present, often with a latent consciousness of past and future. So it is when I am engaged in a favourite run of about 400 metres in Clifton Park, Brunswick, or, certainly, when Margaret and I are thinking and talking about our family. I remember the Oxford and ANU biochemist Sandy Ogston's telling me that some of his best ideas came to him in the bathroom. I think he would read with decreasing agreement the following series (p.49), though no doubt he enjoyed a good shower.

> The prioritising of where the attention needs to be in mindfulness terms is pretty simple. When driving it is the road. When having a conversation it is the person we are talking to. When eating it is the food. When showering it is the water on the body.

Enquirers and agents of change who, as it has been put, "invent their own duties" do not live in that way, even though, as I have recognized, they must guard against undue preoccupation.

Sarah Edelman is right (p.143f) to advise that we should often postpone worries to some later time in the day, at which, often, we find that we view them more calmly.

Rob Moodie rightly prefers the term 'Life balance', which is his article's title, to 'work-life balance'. We should focus, as he does, on "face-to-face interaction" (p.123), and practise it, not letting a mass of emails etc. crowd it out, as he warns is widely occurring. It is one thing to have something to read in a tram or train, but quite another to cut oneself off from fellow-travellers with one's electronic device. How much universities need in their teachers a readiness to be approached and to chat!

"Adolescent health researchers have shown", writes Moodie on p.121, "that young people who have someone to depend on, someone they can trust and who knows them well, are much less likely to have depressive symptoms than those who lack this support." A special trust in someone often springs from experience of being valued by that person, even regarded as a kind of colleague. The teacher who welcomes questions from students, and seeks their joining him or her in seeking answers, will deserve and get their respect. It was wonderful to hear that my youngest grandson had remarked, at about the age of three, "Grandpa is my friend." We enjoyed going to parks together.

I come now to a point at which I must both congratulate Moodie on emphasizing something vital which no fellow-contributor mentions, and yet add that he does not "go on with it" except in one sentence. One of two quotations he puts at the head of his article is from Einstein:

> The most important human endeavour is the striving for morality in our actions. Our inner balance and even our very existence depend on it. Only morality in our actions can give beauty and dignity to life.

'Morality' is an awkward abstract noun there, partly because it is liable to suggest conformity with some set of *mores* widely expected. Better to speak of moral rightness and goodness.

We do not, however, find 'moral' or any cognate of it in Moodie's article except in this rich sentence on p.119:

> I am convinced that making a regular investment in our spiritual or emotional life can help us develop a more balanced, compassionate, loving, honest and moral existence in which we are both happier and more productive.

Einstein's remarks deserved much more than that, and in particular a consideration of what the basic moral requirements are, why they are indispensable, and why we often find them difficult to fulfil. It would be common but superficial to reply "But people differ so much in their moral values." They do, but if Kant's basics are presented and illustrated, they are likely to be appreciated: the Golden Rule in both its negative and its positive forms, and the principle that out of respect for humanity we should seek never to treat others merely as means to our own ends, but always as "ends in themselves".

For many people still, moral principles are closely connected with religion. Much devoted, sustained and non-self-seeking attention to the needs of others has had a religious motivation. What can fairly and aptly be offered as principles (for example in the talks that should be given at school assemblies – or by Vice-Chancellors?) in a society where many are unable to accept religious beliefs which, in some cases, they or their families once took for granted? One, certainly, is that religions should be studied with care and honesty (and discussion), in order to discover what we can or cannot reasonably believe or value. But another is today quite counter-cultural: it is that there is far more to a good life than entertainment and pleasurable sensations, which have come to dominate so many people's horizons, though such dominance is inimical to humanity.

Nothing is good or bad because it is old, or new, or popular. What matters is that in various forms we ask for ourselves, and discuss, Plato's fundamental question "In what way should one live?" (*Republic* 352), and look for answers which, however surprising and even demanding they may be, can really satisfy us and assist others.

The best answers cannot be in merely general terms, but need to be not only vivid but illustrated and exemplified. We must explain ideals and show how, realistically, we can approximate to them. So, to return to Moodie's theme of face-to-face interaction, we can find helpful Newman's famous words in his 1852 lectures "A university is … an alma mater, knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill"; but that will hardly come alive for us unless we have some experience of what a difference is made by a teacher's sustained personal encouragement of individual students in and out of a group. Then we can resist the idea that a university or a member of staff is to be judged primarily by the research grants it, she or he wins.

Even Sophie Holmes's admirable article (which is well illustrated) lacks a dimension, that of utterly committed love for the husband or wife or partner, even in the hardest of times. The text and music of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* provide wonderful illustration. Leonora, wife of the unjustly imprisoned Florestan, dresses as a man (with the name Fidelio) and becomes an assistant to the jailer, and so impresses his daughter that she longs to marry "him", and even has a delightful song (Act 1, Scene 2) about the domestic joys she looks forward to. Leonora hazards her life to save from the wicked Pizarro her Florestan, and is eventually reunited with him. All sing "*O unaussprechlich süsses Glück*" ("O inexpressibly sweet happiness"), and Florestan and the chorus invite all who have won such a wife to join in their rejoicing. The words and the music, at their marvellous heights, put to shame the lack of persistent devotion and idealism that most of us need to confess, but they also have the power to inspire us. Younger and older, we all need such inspiration, which can take many forms.

The word 'happiness' leads me to discuss a very unsatisfying article, the first in the book, by the psychologist Tim Sharp, who (as "Chief Happiness Officer") heads The Happiness Institute, based in Sydney, and is an influential advocate of "Positive Psychology". He is obviously right to warn (p.4) against what he calls "the tyranny of when", i.e., being convinced that not till the time when some particular goal is achieved can one have happiness. But how has this word 'happiness' been used, and what are we to say about its different uses? Sharp does not put his question in that fruitful way, but talks on p.2 of "defining happiness". He is, however, right to make a distinction between two ways of thinking of it, first, he says, "as a positive emotion; or more accurately, as a range of positive emotions" and secondly (here in fact he is concerned with the word) "as shorthand for living 'the good life'". Let us consider those in turn.

It has often been remarked that, when the word is used to refer to an emotional state, it is normal that some **duration** is implied, though it is possible to say, e.g., "The happiness I felt on hearing that first bit of news lasted only a few minutes." Sharp fails to tell us what happiness in this sense of the word is, and immediately after, inconsistently with his use of that phrase 'a range of positive emotions', writes: "Happiness is just one of a number of enjoyable positive emotions, including joy and excitement, calm and contentment and everything in between (including pride and satisfaction and peace and love and so on)." Editors as well as writers should be on guard against such inconsistencies. Let us say that the emotional state that people often refer to when they use the word 'happiness' is one which, generally quite long-lasting and wide-ranging, is higher than contentment but not necessarily as high as joy.

To the extent that 'happiness' has been used of the state of the person who is judged to be living the good life, it has been within a tradition, deeply valuable but now largely forgotten, in which 'happy' has been used as a rendering and echo of the Greek '*eudaimōn*' and the Latin '*felix*' or '*beatus*'. It used to be put at the beginning of a sentence, as in Isaac Watts's "Happy the man whose hopes rely| On Israel's God!" Thus used, it recognized that someone deserved an ultimate congratulation, as though to say "That's the way to be!" Virgil has a famous line whose last three words are the excellent motto of the Australian National University: *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*, "Happy the person who has been able to find out the causes of things." For Plato "Who is *eudaimōn*?" is inseparable from "In what way should one live?" He knew well what there is no sign of in Sharp's article, that **the answers to those questions are contested, and we must ask ourselves what ours is to be.**

In the dialogue *Gorgias*, at 470, the impetuous young Polus is amazed that Socrates, declining to call *eudaimōn* someone of immense wealth and power (even the Great King of Persia!), says "I do not know how he stands in respect of mental cultivation and justice". A modern Socrates or Plato might make a similar reply if asked about Rupert Murdoch.

In spite of the long history of this second use of 'happy', Sharp has no reference to anyone who lived before the twentieth century, and, revealingly, follows his "as shorthand for living 'the good life'" with a long sentence that begins "This is ultimately what positive psychology is interested in" and then has a list of components of that life that includes neither mental cultivation nor justice.

How valuable, in respect even to the first of the two uses of 'happy' or 'happiness', it would have been to draw on a famous passage in John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*, published after his death in 1873. In *Utilitarianism* Ch.II he is still, following his father and Bentham, willing to say that by the word 'happiness' he meant "pleasure, and the absence of pain", yet in fact he so insists on the "higher faculties" of human beings as to remark "better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied". In that context we may interpret his saying in Ch.V of the *Autobiography* that he had come to the view (at the age of 20!) that

> Those only are happy… who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness: on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end.

How much better for the boys and girls of Geelong Grammar School, where Positive Psychology appears now to be prominent, if that view of Mill's were to be preferred, explained and illustrated.

I recognize and welcome the fact that, unlike the other contributors, Sharp does give prominence on p. 13f to the word 'character' and to building character. But consider the first sentence of his summary (p.27):

> At The Happiness Institute we have said for many years now that achieving happiness requires nothing more than practising a few simple disciplines, each and every day.

Now think of that in relation to the anguish about isolation and/or meaninglessness felt by many a teenager, and, in further contrast, Bunyan's Pilgrim song:

> Who would true valour see,
> Let him come hither;
> One here will constant be,
> Come wind, come weather.

As part of love for their children or pupils, parents and teachers make a major contribution to their lives by giving and telling them of examples of what Mill calls following ideal ends: as we might say now, having over-arching and unselfish aims (preferably not just one) and seeking to devote oneself to their fulfilment come what may.

In view of the enormous potential for good or ill of intimate relationships, and the immense value, there and in many other areas of life, of responsive cooperation, a fundamental need in raising and educating the young, and often in later life, is the recognition that human life must have higher and less transitory aims than to be entertained or to have pleasurable sensations. So, for example, a doctor may sometimes have to say, as Catriona Ooi does (p.189), "by limiting the number of sexual partners you have you will decrease your risk of infection", but the first questions deserving to be asked and seriously answered by an individual human being in relation to sexuality, as to much else, are "What kind of person do I want to be?" and "What kind of person do I hope to 'win', and deserve to have, as a sexual and preferably lifelong partner?"

Adrian Dunlop's article "Escaping drugs and alcohol" invites attention to "the stage of change model" for a process whereby "in [the over-drinker's own] perception of events, the downsides of drinking start to outweigh the good things about drinking" (p.159). That is certainly a salutary process; but we need also to ask how it is that people come to think, and that their so-called education allows them to think, that they have nothing better to do at some points than to "get pissed" or "get stoned". What an insult it is to human powers that people suppose that they cannot enjoy themselves or "unwind" without being "lubricated" – or at least stimulated by strong coffee.

I use that word 'powers' in the opening sentences of the most recent version of the green leaflet about our examination for the Learningguild Certificate in Reasoning and Expression:

> The development of your powers both of reasoning and of expression is crucial for

> high achievement (and for delight!) at senior secondary, undergraduate, post-graduate and professional stages. To have evidence of your powers is a great help in job-seeking.

Since very few students in the past thirty years have had much systematic training in either reasoning or expression, and since there is a general reluctance to take any examination one does not have to take, we have to appeal to entirely justifiable concerns for high achievement and a good job. But I have added 'and for delight!' When we look for an answer to that question **why** we should go on learning when we don't "have to", it must be one that includes the possibility and the experience of delight, related to the interest and value of what one is learning, the felt strengthening of one's mental powers, and what Mill called ideal ends, such as the gaining of deeper and wider understanding and the capacity to communicate it.

So often education fails to be productive of such delight. We have noted Newman's warning that a university must not be a treadmill. It has tended to be made one by the splitting of the academic year into two so-called semesters with assessment at the end of, and often during, each of them. There is insufficient emphasis on and time for getting into the complexities of a worthwhile subject by protracted reading and thought. Unhealthy emphasis on frequency of publication takes away teachers' attention from the provision of ample opportunities, formal and informal, for discussion with students. Secondary schooling now commonly lacks the cumulative and quite exacting learning that I was enabled to enjoy from the age of eleven in Latin, and could similarly be made available in English through good books about vocabulary, choice of words, and sentence-construction. Often there is a crucial lack of personal encouragement and guidance.

If people have not been excited by their school or university education to go on learning, they will not be likely to do so later, unless they meet someone who, whether teacher or student, has an infectious enthusiasm for learning. There may still be obstacles of shyness and lack of confidence to overcome, but possibilities can become apparent. A large part of Learningguild's work is to make them so, through our Saturday Meetings, Philosophy Seminar, publications, one-with-one tuition, and eager conversation.

"**How** can I best go on learning?" A large part of the answer is to find a book and/or article and/or method just right for **you** at the time, so that you regularly have the experience expressible by "Yes! I can do this! I am getting better at this!" The abundance of example-sentences and the well-limited vocabulary of the *Oxford Basic English Dictionary*, and the use of such sentences in the method set out in my booklet *Sentences to Study and Change*, have proved fruitful for many students, partly because they give scope for individual needs and interests. However (in spite of the fact that Raymond Murphy says his books are not written to be worked right through) experience of guiding particular members of Learningguild from Colombia and Iran has shown that it helps some students to do just that with his elementary text *Essential Grammar in Use* and/or the intermediate one *English Grammar in Use*, provided that sentences of the student's own are added at the foot of each explanatory page. I write "Be a good listener/note-maker/copier" for each user of my booklet-and-CD on pronunciation *Sounds, Words, Sentences*, and splendid progress has been made recently by a Chinese member who is just that.

In the seminar this year I have had to realize that some set reading that does not seem to me too lengthy or difficult is likely to be so for people with less experience of such material. Whatever set reading we have, I ask members to come with at least one written comment and one written question. "Writing", said Francis Bacon, makes "an exact man". It does, if the draft sentences are exposed to criticism from the writer and sometimes from others too. It is very valuable for us all to write in such a way as both to do justice to an author, summarizing what he or she has said and quoting aptly, and to respond with agreement, disagreement or at least a question. Hence the continuing value, even the necessity, of the traditional exercise or exam question of the form "Present and discuss what author A says in place P about subject S."

In self-guided study, it is very valuable both to look for a book or article that one wants to get to know very well and, as one reads, to ask questions and formulate and test hypotheses in relation to it. But there are few students who can really flourish without experiencing responsive cooperation with one or more teachers and/or other students. Let's make that a characteristic of Learningguild.

John Howes

Remembering Ludwig Leichhardt: the bicentenary of his birth

HILARY HOWES, *like her parents Michael and Dorothy and her sisters Janet and Elizabeth, is a member of Learningguild. Since mid-2011 she has been Executive Assistant to the Australian Ambassador in Berlin. She is well suited to the cultural work that is part of her responsibilities, speaking German fluently and having gained her Ph.D. (from ANU) for a thesis that has led to her recently published book* The Race Question in Oceania: A.B.Meyer and Otto Finsch between metropolitan theory and field experience, 1865-1914.

In March 1846, the young Prussian naturalist Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig Leichhardt and his party arrived in Sydney on the ship *Heroine*, having earlier completed an overland journey of more than 4800 km from Moreton Bay (now Brisbane) to Port Essington (near modern Darwin). The journey, one of the longest explorations by land ever undertaken in Australia, had lasted 14 months. Leichhardt, who had long since been given up for dead, was hailed as the "Prince of Explorers" and received prestigious awards from both the Royal Geographical Society in London and the Geographical Society in Paris for his contributions to scientific knowledge.

In December 1846, he set out from the Darling Downs in southern Queensland on another ambitious expedition, this time intending to cross the continent from east to west. Inclement weather and disease forced him and his party to turn back after only 800 km. Nothing daunted, he set about organising a second attempt, and in early 1848 he departed the Darling Downs with a party of six. Their destination was the Swan River settlement (now Perth) in Western Australia, but they never reached it. Numerous search expeditions failed to find any conclusive evidence of their fate, and their final resting-place remains unknown.

Leichhardt remains familiar to many Australians, especially in Queensland, where a river, a highway, a suburb, and a federal electorate bear his name. In Germany, however, he is almost unknown outside his home region in the Spreewald, some 100 km south-east of Berlin.

Throughout 2013, the bicentenary of his birth, local council representatives and interest groups in the Spreewald have worked with the Australian Embassy in Berlin to realise an ambitious program of activities commemorating his life and legacies and promoting Australian-German collaboration in education, science and research. Major bilateral projects have included the release of a commemorative silver coin by the Perth Mint and the launch of a joint stamp by Australia Post and the German Federal Ministry of Finance. Funding made available by the German Federal Government allowed the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to award Ludwig Leichhardt Bicentennial Fellowships to two outstanding Australian scholars wishing to conduct research in Germany. The successful applicants, linguist Nicholas Thieberger and physicist Paul Anthony Altin, have chosen to collaborate with colleagues at the University of Cologne and the Max Planck Institute for Quantum Optics in Garching respectively. In addition, two dedicated websites have been established to document Leichhardt's life and the ongoing initiatives celebrating his achievements. The German website can be found at www.leichhardtland.de; its Australian counterpart, at leichhardtland.net.au, has been developed under the auspices of the German Honorary Consul in Brisbane and the German Australian Community Centre Queensland.

The Amt Lieberose/Oberspreewald (municipal council responsible for Leichhardt's birthplace) and the Lieberose/Oberspreewald Tourism Development Association, with the support of the City of Cottbus, organised an impressive range of local and regional activities, ranging from public lectures to community art projects, sporting events and a travelling exhibition. Highlights included the opening of a Leichhardt Trail, allowing pedestrians and cyclists to rediscover the route taken by Leichhardt from his birthplace in Trebatsch to his secondary school in the major regional centre of Cottbus, and the opportunity for locals and visitors to experience the region's largest lake, the Schwielochsee, on board the

only existing replica of a Kaffenkahn, a sailing barge of the kind used by Leichhardt's father to transport goods to and from Berlin. Existing events in the regional calendar — the annual installation art festival aquamediale, the Cottbus film festival and the Spreewald marathon, among others — celebrated the bicentenary year by adopting Australian themes.

German and Australian universities have combined to re-examine Leichhardt's scientific discoveries. The conferences "Ludwig Leichhardt's Legacies" and "1001 Leichhardts", jointly organised by the University of Potsdam and the University of Technology Sydney, discussed literary and artistic representations of Leichhardt, his shifting reputation and significance across different epochs and political settings, and his interactions with indigenous Australians. The inaugural Leichhardt Symposium on Biodiversity and Conservation, held in October 2013 at the University of Queensland (UQ), brought together researchers, students and decision-makers engaged or interested in the sustaining of biodiversity, and featured the launch of a three-volume set of publications in the Memoirs of the Queensland Museum series, including English translations of Leichhardt's early diaries. Two of UQ's German partner universities, the Ludwig Maximilians University and the Technical University Munich, are planning a follow-up event in Munich for late 2014.

Other bicentenary projects focused on primary and secondary students. Sue Boyce, Senator for Queensland, initiated an essay and drawing competition for students studying in the federal electorates that Leichhardt passed through on his expeditions: the winning entries are online at sueboyce.com.au/Ludwig_Leichhardt.html. A group of students from Bremer State High School in Ipswich, Queensland, visited the Ludwig-Leichhardt-Oberschule in Goyatz, Brandenburg, in September, where they participated in the "EYES — European Youth European Summit 2013", together with students from Germany and eight other European countries. Another school named for Leichhardt, the Ludwig-Leichardt-Gymnasium (senior school) in Cottbus, has also taken up the idea of student exchanges with enthusiasm, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding to this effect with Adelaide's Henley High School in November. These connections, together with the ongoing collaboration between various Australian and German universities, will help ensure that Leichhardt's legacy continues to resonate beyond the bicentenary year.

Leichhardt himself has been many things to many people over the 200 years since his birth. His scientific contemporaries valued his work highly, frequently referring to him as "Dr Leichhardt", despite the fact that he never completed a formal qualification of that kind. The Royal Geographical Society in London, which awarded him its Patron's medal, emphasised the commercial potential of his discoveries: his overland expedition from Moreton Bay to Port Essington had "open[ed] to the settler in Australia new and extensive fields of enterprise" and "connect[ed] the remote settlements of New South Wales with a secure port on the confines of the Indian Archipelago". Following his disappearance, Leichhardt attained an almost mythical status, captured most compellingly by Patrick White, the Australian author and Nobel prize winner, in his 1957 novel *Voss*. Leichardt's detailed descriptions of the Australian landscape, flora and fauna have now become important sources of information for environmental historians, and he is increasingly recognised as an interested observer of Aboriginal knowledge of the environment and a careful documenter of Aboriginal languages.

Further reading:

Bailey, John. *Into the Unknown: The Tormented Life and Expeditions of Ludwig Leichhardt*. Sydney: Pan McMillan Australia, 2011.

Darragh, Tom, and Rod Fensham, eds. *The Leichhardt Diaries: Early Travels in Australia during 1842-1844*. Memoirs of the Queensland Museum – Culture, 2013.

Erdos, Renee. Leichhardt, Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig (1813–1848). Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/leichhardt-friedrich-wilhelm-ludwig-2347/text3063, accessed 14 January 2014.

Lewis, Darrell. *Where is Dr Leichhardt? The Greatest Mystery in Australian History*. Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Publishing, 2013.

A weekend at Wandiligong

JIM RICHARDSON *describes the first residential weekend that Learningguild has held, from which comes the photograph opposite. Jim is a retired electrical engineer who has written for us about his travels and the need for more and better trains in Melbourne and interstate. Anyone who would like to enjoy and perhaps to write about the books and the DVD mentioned is invited to phone me. JH*

On the weekend of April 19-21, the hosts of eleven other members of Learningguild were Norm and Trish Piper, at their home in the small township of Wandiligong, about 8 km from Bright in north-eastern Victoria. The Pipers lived for many years in Essendon, and then in Airport West, and used to come to our Friday-evening meetings. In John Howes's absence overseas, Norm acted as President along with John's brother Michael. They have retired to their home in the country, where they are engaged in house extension, community work, various hobbies, and, in Norm's case, U3A and the study of Latin.

Having travelled by train to Wangaratta and bus to Bright, we were picked up by Norm in successive groups, arrived around 11 on the Friday evening, and received a welcoming bowl of hot soup with some freshly baked bread. An excellent start to our stay! John announced our program for the weekend, with both mental and physical activities for all.

On Saturday morning, beginning at 10, we studied some excerpts from a book John strongly recommends, *A Wealth of Words*, by H.G.Fowler and N.Russell (1960). These were complemented by our watching part of the DVD *The Adventure of English* by Melvyn Bragg (2003), which was succeeded by a book of that name. It is about the historical development of the English language, and we watched an episode related to the Renaissance and Shakespeare.

Our study of English words focused on the influence of Latin on adjectives and verbs in modern English. Fowler and Russell give ten examples of English adjectives derived from Latin, for example 'equine' (pertaining to horses), derived from '*equus*' (horse). In addition, there are long lists of English words of which we were encouraged to seek the origin in Latin and, in some cases, Greek. Melvyn Bragg emphasises the many sources of English, ranging from Old Norse to modern Japanese. It is certainly the most composite of all current languages, with innumerable variations, both local and international, in vocabulary and accent.

In mid-afternoon, we embarked on what turned out to be a three-hour walk in Wandiligong, led by Norm. He took us along a trail through eucalyptus forest and mountain meadow, pointing out various features as we enjoyed the surrounds. Eventually we descended to the valley, walking close to productive orchards of chestnuts and apples. A few of us collected chestnuts which had fallen onto the ground, carefully prising them out of their prickly pods with well-shod feet. There were also apples, freshly fallen and scrumptious both to us and to an equine friend we met along the way. It was a most enjoyable stroll indeed.

On Sunday morning, there was opportunity to walk along another way or to read and rest. Four members decided to attend morning worship at a church in Bright, Our Lady of the Snows, at which the theme of the sermon was "The Good Shepherd". We all returned to the Pipers' home for lunch, then bid them farewell and were taken to Bright. Norm and Trish were excellent hosts and we were fortunate to have been there.

The journey home was again by bus and then train, to Spencer Street (now I must call it Southern Cross). Since we had more than an hour in Wangaratta, we all took the opportunity for further sightseeing, including visits to two splendid cathedrals, Anglican and Catholic, and had a tasty snack at a local Indian restaurant. Overall, a weekend that stimulated mind, body and soul. It would be great to do it again.

Those photographed are as follows: names are arranged to correspond with the seating around the table.

Dorothy Howes	Michael Howes	John Howes	Margaret Howes
Guanmin Hu			John Drennan
Joe Vassallo			Jim Richardson
Alfred Lendvai			Sanaz Baghaeefar
Trish Piper			Norm Piper

The photograph was taken by Sanaz's husband, Davoud Zolghadr.

Though we certainly hope to arrange another visit to Wandiligong, we should like to build up a set of practicable Learningguild destinations, whether for a weekend or for a single day, particularly suitable for people who do not have a car or prefer not to drive. We have in mind especially international students and asylum-seekers. Invitations and suggestions would be welcomed by John and Margaret Howes (9380 5892).

Reluctance to go into politics

This is a revised version of an essay read by **MILAN RADOS**, *a member of Learningguild and a graduate of La Trobe University in politics and philosophy, at a Saturday Meeting on September 21, when we discussed some of the March exam paper for our Certificate in Reasoning and Expression. The essay-topic (N) to which he is responding runs: "It is said that in Australia fewer men and women of ability and experience outside politics are interested in becoming a politician than used to be the case. Why might that be so, in Australia or any other country? How could the prospect of ten or more years in politics be made more attractive?"*

Many men and women of ability and experience outside politics place personal wealth high on the list of their priorities. Although our politicians at State and Federal levels are well remunerated and have exclusive access to various perks, their income is inferior to what some companies are willing to offer to capable professionals, especially during the last couple of decades. Ten or more years as a highly paid company executive could be much more financially rewarding than the same period spent as a politician.

Our political system is based mainly on competition between ideologically opposed political parties, which require party loyalty, sometimes to an extent that crossing the floor is seen as a deadly sin in politics. It seems that this attitude has become more prevalent lately, and independently-minded men and women outside politics could find that kind of atmosphere restrictive and stifling, and hence become discouraged from entering politics.

Anybody who follows debates in our parliaments is likely to judge that they are deteriorating in quality and content. They are becoming much more combative than reasoned and argumentative, and are often abusive. On occasions they present a wretched and embarrassing picture, neither inviting nor stimulating to the people we have in mind.

I don't think that anything effective could be done about the discrepancy between the salaries of the politicians and those paid in the higher echelons of business and industry, because any substantial increase in the former would provoke public outcry and any enforced curb on the latter would be seen as an inappropriate interference in the functioning of the economy. But our political parties could decide, and show, that their prime objective is the good of the country rather than merely the winning of elections, and that they are prepared to employ for that purpose the best qualified rather than ideologically loyal but less capable individuals. That would cause some men and women of ability and experience outside politics to regard political activity as a live option.

Moreover, our representatives should show greater respect for our parliaments by aiming that their discussions become more focused, constructive and even cooperative, so that men and women who could play a valuable part in them would not be repelled by cheap tricks and innuendo. Responsible people in our political parties should actively seek such potential contributors and invite and encourage them to consider offering themselves as parliamentary candidates. Their talents and experience should be treated so seriously that some of them would become convinced that to spend ten or more years in politics might well be worthy, purposeful, and in various ways rewarding.

From Viscount Bryce's *Modern Democracies* (1921), Vol. II, on p.209 of his account of Australia:

> One is often told that the present generation of parliamentarians does not equal the men of 1860 to 1890, that the debates are on a lower level, that there is less courtesy and dignity, that the term "politician " begins to be used in a disparaging sense. … There are today, as there have always been, a few men of eminent ability in public life. It would seem that there has been a decline in manners. Australian politicians fight "with the gloves off".

Questions and principles for sentence-construction

The path to discovery, and also to getting things right or doing things well, often begins with the asking of appropriate questions. One such question is often "Have I reached a point where it's easy to go wrong, and, if so, what principle should I follow?".

In the past 45 years, the widespread failure in English-speaking countries to teach sentence-construction, and therefore also sentence-correction, systematically has led to ignorance of specific questions worth asking and principles to be applied. Hence many mistakes. In this article I go from question to question, propose a principle or principles, and offer for correction examples of errors that the principles rule out.

Numerous principles are to be found in a book that deserves sustained study in every English-speaking country by every senior secondary teacher and student, undergraduate, postgraduate, university teacher, journalist and report-writer, and by all others who value good writing. Yet the third edition of ***The Complete Plain Words***, still available as a Penguin Reference book for about $25, is now little known, especially outside Britain. Originally written in 1954 by a senior British civil servant, Sir Ernest Gowers, who brought together in it two earlier smaller books, it was soon regarded as an indispensable guide to clear and concise writing in what Australians would call the public service. It has been revised by three other people, and virtually nothing in it is out of date. One function of my own book *Making up Sentences* (*MS*) is to prepare the way for effective use of Gowers in self-education by explaining many grammatical terms used there.

How ridiculous it is that in secondary and tertiary education there is seldom the critical conservationism that would lead to the recognition that this book is a classic which could and should be progressively studied and digested from Year 11 on. How many mistakes (and how much correction by those who still can and do correct), how much wordy or imprecise writing, could thus be averted, and how much clear and satisfying communication fostered!

My indented examples of going wrong are all from the book I reviewed in my letter in this issue, *Life Surfing Life Dancing*. Like Gowers, in all these cases I give sets of words without names of authors or page-references. I invite the reader to correct the errors (sometimes more than one). Each set of words can be referred to by giving its section number and then its own within that section, as in '2.2'.

1. Would this sentence be better if it were shorter, or turned into two or more?

Gowers has an excellent chapter (6) on the avoidance of verbosity, and a short section on sentences (p.174f), where he gives and illustrates a basic principle, and yet goes wrong himself in stating it. His error escaped the notice of his revisers for the second and third editions. I invite the reader to spot it, and to correct it in each of two ways, as I shall do at the end of this section. "The two main things to be remembered about sentences by those who want to make their meaning plain is that they should be short and should have unity of thought."

1. I have briefly referred to aspects of health and wellbeing within this chapter, but I want to formally acknowledge that I do not believe I have come anywhere near close enough to adequately doing this range of topics justice.
2. While we are all aware of the fairly rapid relief one can obtain from taking a pain-killer to alleviate a headache, there are very few circumstances of a consumer actually feeling better/stronger/healthier within a reasonable time scale (hours/days or longer) after swallowing a dietary/nutrient supplement.

A long subject-locution (for that term, see the following section), from 'The two' to 'plain', led even Gowers to forget the plurality with which he had begun. We can correct the error either by changing 'The two main things' to 'The main principle' or by changing 'is' to 'are' and inserting a second 'that they'. I prefer the first for its brevity, enhanced if we drop the second 'should'. We can even halve the number of words with the more moderate "Don't obscure what you have to say by unnecessary length or complexity in any sentence."

2. Is this personed verb part of a matching pair?

Those two terms are my own (*MS* 1:7), but Gowers discusses the matter with good examples on pp. 127-134. 'Personed verb' has the same meaning as the old 'finite verb', i.e., a verb describable, in its particular context, as a 1st-person, or as a 2nd-person, or as a 3rd-person form. Students can be asked to give its label from the table-of-six that runs in two columns from '1S' ('1st person singular') to '3P' ('3rd person plural').

Unlike other grammarians, I consider it essential to have a terminology that enables one consistently to distinguish clearly between what I call a subject-locution (Sub-L) and what I call a subject. In 'Ann was praised', 'Ann', the **word** used to refer to the particular woman of that name, is entirely different from the **woman** Ann herself, whom I call the subject of the sentence. Gowers is mostly consistent in using the word 'subject' to refer to the linguistic item, but even he slips, as when he writes (p.136) of someone who "must have started with the intention of making the Tate Gallery (about which he was writing) the subject of his sentence but changed his mind". Speakers or writers may have the Tate Gallery in London as their subject but refer to it with the subject-locution 'the Tate Gallery' or 'it' or some other. (See *MS* 1:7.1 and 3:2.6.)

Gowers gives "The rule that a singular subject requires a singular verb, and a plural subject a plural verb" (p.127), but provides in its subsection no way of describing what has gone wrong in the set of words, quoted on the next page, 'his refusal to submit to sustained pressures on mind and spirit were worthy of the highest traditions of journalism'. We need to be able to talk, not as Gowers does on p.130 of "the main subject", but of the **main constituent** of the Sub-L (main, that is, grammatically), here of the long one from 'his' to 'spirit', where it is the singular noun 'refusal'.

So let us make this our fundamental rule: unless it is imperative, every personed verb in a normal sentence must have its Sub-L, or the main constituent of that Sub-L, **in a matching pair**, i.e., one that has for each the same person and number (and so the same label). Mistakes often occur as a result of failure, such as Gowers's own in his sentence quoted in our first section, to note and focus on the main constituent.

1. other types of studies where the health of people have been followed for years
2. The mysteries of passion, love, and how to best live day to day in a couple relationship is one of the most constant subject of conversations.
3. each [of the two partners] were keeping a tally of all the dishes that were not put in the dishwasher

3. Am I presenting a direct question or an embedded one?

We say 'How old is he?' but 'I want to know how old he is.' and 'Do you know how old he is?'. The first and third have question marks because they are direct questions; the second is a statement and so has no question mark; both the second and the third "embed" a question, whose verb therefore has the position it would have in an assertion, e.g., 'He is 34.' The phrase 'embedded question' is a vivid one, but Gowers has the commoner 'indirect question'. On p.173 of his chapter (all of it deserving detailed study) on punctuation, he distinguishes such questions from direct ones, with examples.

1. the next question is why would one want to be happy?
2. We ask them … to think about what sort of person do they want to be?

4. Should I use a pronoun here?

Gowers's excellent principle (p.113) is "Do not be shy of pronouns." They enable a speaker or writer to avoid cumbersome repetition of nouns or noun phrases. Often the pronoun will be in one or both of the two groups called personal, one beginning with *I* and the other with *me*, in which for convenience *it* is included. It is often useful to employ *that* or *those* as a demonstrative pronoun, especially in comparisons, so as to compare comparables precisely and neatly, as in 'Bob's success was more surprising than that/those of Meg and Jo.' The importance of **parsing** becomes clear when we read Gowers's remark on p.123 about the word *that*: "it may be one of three parts of speech ─ a conjunction, a relative or demonstrative pronoun or an adjective". He successively illustrates that (demonstrative pronoun) by the sentence 'I think that the paper that he wants is in that box.' *One* and *ones* are useful pronouns.

1. Your goals should be achievable and realistic and you may like to gradually work your way up to meeting your goals.

2. considerable efforts are being made by foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
3. each couple has its own unique emotional ecology, which is different to every other couple
4. when there is a loss of attunement in their closest relationships, such as their mother, father or partner
5. The battle is with the excess of foods with completely different nutrient compositions to unprocessed foods; often these new processed foods are rich in energy, [etc.]

5. Should I use or avoid a participle here?

The relevant area in Gowers runs from p.134 to p.138, as usual with valuable examples. Regrettably, however, the terms *participle* and *gerund* are used only a little and are not explained, whereas they were in the first edition (p.155). Here are the basics. (See also *MS* 3:5.)

In verbs called regular, and sometimes with modifications, the present participle is made by adding *ing* and the past participle by adding *ed*: *lifting*, *lifted*; *carrying*, *carried*; [for *hop*] *hopping*, *hopped*. In those called irregular, too, the present participle is made by adding *ing*, but the past participle has to be learnt in each case: examples are *gone*, *driven*, *bought*. Often a participle is used after one or more little words called auxiliaries to make **one** personed verb (see Section 2 above), as in *was lifting* or *has been bought*. Error arises less in that use than in the adjectival one, as in 'Jumping on the bus, her purse fell', where the participle 'Jumping' is **unconnected**: it is not tied to any noun, pronoun or phrase, and 'she dropped her purse' is needed.

The gerund is a **noun** derived from a verb, as in 'It was his interrupting [of] her that led to that remark of Susan's', where the possessive form *his* is clearly preferable to *he* or *him* followed by *interrupting* as a participle. At least for living beings, and where the focus is on an action or similar feature rather than on the being concerned, it is better to have a possessive form followed by a gerund than the bare noun or pronoun followed by a participle. (Cf. Gowers at p.137f, d.) Gerunds too can be wrongly unconnected.

Recently it has become common, especially among journalists, to use in a second part of a sentence the cumbersome 'with … -ing', as in 'There is disagreement over this new tax, with some arguing that …', instead of using, after a colon, a personed verb, as in the far preferable 'some argue'. (Sometimes one could start a new sentence.)

1. vitamin A toxicity occurred in some polar expeditions as a result of the intrepid travellers consuming the livers of their dogs, which were loaded with vitamin A following the dogs being fed on seals
2. This research has been repeated with similar results elsewhere, with a trial being considered in Australia in the near future.
3. this has led to more people being able to afford eating away from home
4. White Australia was settled with our first soldiers, the Rum Corps, being paid in alcohol.
5. trauma and emotional pain that result in us not feeling safe
6. despite most Australians disapproving of extramarital encounters
7. Taking us back to Tilda and chocolate, she [Tilda] had made the logical connection between palm oil and chocolate
8. without developing these feelings, they will fade when confronted with the demands, stresses and traumas of life

6. Do I have an appropriate structure?

That is an important question to ask about one's essay, paper, talk, thesis or book. (See my page headed "Seven features of a good talk or paper" on our website.) But it arises also within sentences, especially where familiar **pairs** occur such as the combination of *both* and *and*, each of which needs to introduce a word or set of words that is **parallel** in form to the other and fits preceding words. (The same applies to sets in bullet-point form.)

Gowers deals well with such pairs on p.101f, and all the chapters (9-13) on the arrangement and the handling of words deserve close attention. "Danger Ditches", to use the title of a handwritten book a Welsh teacher of French required us pupils at a London school in 1947-8 to maintain, include *however* (**not** equivalent to the conjunction *but*!), *including*, *because*, *as* and *as to*. The question should often be asked whether a particular verb is used, like *raise*, transitively, i.e. with an object-locution, and so can be put into the passive, or, like *rise*, intransitively, or in both ways, like *break*. (*MS* 3:3.)

My first example of error is varied on the book's back cover by the addition of *from* after *also*.

1. [The writers] discuss their views on wellbeing, based not only on their clinical and research roles, but also their life experiences.
2. good habits of interaction and conversation make the issues either feel manageable or resolvable
3. the Internet is a medium by which a person with depression who values self-reliance and believes that they should help themselves can do just that.
4. just because you might, at times, feel stupid doesn't mean you are!
5. The tension we experience is because we latch on to and pull against what is taking place.
6. [if their emotions are not concealed] as a couple it is more obvious how each other feels.
7. You are free to give as much or as little information as you feel comfortable.
8. experience success in all areas of life including in the workplace
9. It is worth discussing with your partner as to whether people … honour and respect your partner and your relationship.
10. Herpes is most likely to be transmitted during an active phase, however it is possible to transmit the virus at any time.
11. These issues … do not resolve with substance use.
12. [Concerning "substances".] try to ensure you fall into the group of people who can enjoy, in a balanced fashion.
13. This book explains about the importance of finding a good general practitioner

7. Is this a comparison in which *like* or *unlike* is the right word?

Gowers's sound principle for written English is on p.104: "*Like* must not be treated as a conjunction." When it is correctly followed by a noun or pronoun with no accompanying verb, but often with a comma, as in 'like Bill,' or 'like him,' it is a preposition. In Gowers's example of error 'like he does', it is used as a conjunction introducing a subordinate clause (i.e., a set of words which, though including a Sub-L and a personed verb [see Section 2], could not be a normal sentence), and should be replaced by *as*. Sometimes *like* itself is acceptable, but as a preposition followed by *that* or *those* as a pronoun along with a preposition such as *of*, to ensure that comparable entities are compared. (See Section 4.) *Unlike* too is often wrongly used: try the same remedy.

1. the man proceeded to consume [most] of the food in a manner like a dog guards its dinner plate
2. just like focusing on our own strengths enables us to be at our best
3. like elsewhere on the body, irritation can occur as a result
4. like trying to describe an elephant, the description [of mindfulness] will vary depending on which part of the elephant we focus on.
5. unlike some countries around the world, GPs in Australia undergo extensive professional training to be recognised as GPs.

8. At this point, is this the best word or phrase to employ?

The seventh chapter of Gowers recommends the choice of the familiar word, and the eighth that of the precise one. Both are full of humour and of apt examples of ineptitude, as in the discussion of metaphor (pp. 75-77). A long and valuable checklist of words often misused is the bulk of Chapter 17.

One of our authors has this to say about "one of the founding fathers of positive psychology", Christopher Pearson: "When once asked … to sum up this exciting new science of happiness, Chris responded with these three simple and profound words: 'other people matter'." How valuable it is to consider whether *study* is better than *science* there, and *revealing* than *profound*, and even to ask oneself whether the phrase 'these three simple and profound words' should be omitted.

Sometimes one word is confused with another of similar sound or appearance (*reticent* with *reluctant*, *mitigate* with *militate*). A word may itself be usable in a given context but need a different construction.

1. They had three children, substantive careers, a mortgage, a dog and two cats.
2. Tom had been very impacted by the pressures of work [etc.]
3. In the highly dangerous world of our stone-aged ancestors
4. Not every lump is a STI.
5. There are, of course, multitude ways we can lose our equilibrium.
6. Before we look at how to practically do this
7. A standard drink is 10 gm of alcohol.
8. Although sex seems to be ever more prescient in our modern day lives

9. thinking about how to engage the population through emotional registers
10. If you are unsure, discuss products with your doctor prior to use.
11. Perhaps it is because we have approached the problem from the point of view of facts and rational argument rather than from the point of view of story and embodied rationality.
12. but as I will refer to throughout this chapter, there are many myths and misconceptions about happiness
13. Life is simply not rewarding me as I think I should be rewarded ─ by virtue of salary, or status, or recognition and acknowledgement, or maybe just simple attention.

9. Do I need to use this nounal adjective, especially if it is one of two or more?

We read in Gowers (p.81) of "the harm that is being done to the language by excessive use of nouns as adjectives". 'Our whole sugar import requirements' is contrasted with the preferable 'all the sugar we need to import'. The most horrible example is 'surplus Government chemical welfare vapour detection kits', where one needs for clarity 'surplus kits provided by Government for detecting vapour in chemical welfare'. There as often elsewhere, recasting is required. Sometimes a nounal adjective should be followed by a hyphen.

1. when your natural relationship building and repair processes get stuck
2. there are other health benefits of smoking cessation
3. This section discusses the role of flexibility in our lives and time management including how to manage the great time wasters.

10. Should I split this *to*-infinitive?

We have a *to*-infinitive at 'to explain' in 'I am able to explain that', and a bare infinitive at 'explain' in 'I can explain that'. The word 'infinitive' has been used in contrast to 'finite', the traditional adjective for what in Section 2 I have called personed verbs. This *to* is not a preposition (**no** preposition can be used directly before an infinitive): it can be called a particle or an infinitive marker. Gowers discusses the contentious subject of split infinitives on pp. 143-5, and rightly allows many. His section ends with an example of a series of *to*-infinitives in which there is ridiculous splitting. He could also have given examples of short but still awkward groups in which the *to*-infinitive is unnecessarily split, as in the examples I give here. Often a *to*-infinitive that is not split communicates our meaning more crisply.

1. how to more effectively communicate food-related health risks via the media
2. We all need to continually learn about what draws us together
3. and to not have more than four standard drinks on a special occasion
4. With the advent of the Internet, it is now possible to quickly connect with other people who are 'in the same boat'.
5. it is better to not answer than to give misleading information

11. Is a hyphen needed here?

Gowers covers the ground well on pp. 167-9. An adjective made up from two or more words needs a hyphen to make its nature as an adjective immediately plain. An example given by Gowers is one that produces what he calls a "false scent" (see the note at p.125f): 'When Government financed projects in the development area have been grouped'.

1. this won't lead to laugh out loud happiness
2. these strengths are trait like
3. In a recapitulation of the lotus eaters story

12. Has an apostrophe been wrongly omitted or wrongly used?

On p.153f of Gowers there is useful discussion. The elementary matters of possession and abbreviation are not covered. There is no mention of the fact that to surnames ending with *s* we should add *'s* for their possessive form, lest through reading aloud the impression be given that, e.g., the book is by Gower or the article by Howe.

1. because its good for us
2. accept each others shortcomings
3. that others opinions are not important
4. people change their own and other peoples' behaviour

13. What is the reason why I should or should not put a comma here?

There is mistake after mistake in the use of commas in the book from which these errors come, and I include only about half of those I noted. Many of the authors would presumably have been affected by the common and bad advice from a teacher "Put in a comma where you think you need to pause." The proper advice is "Learn the mainly grammatical reasons for inserting commas; pause at a comma when

you are reading aloud, but learn to recognize other points where a pause is justified."

In this last section I shall not give a set of such grammatical reasons, but invite the reader to make his or her own study of Gowers on commas. Between p.155 and p.165 he divides incorrect uses into six types, and correct ones into four. I have arranged the examples of error below in the same order as that of the first, second, third and sixth of Gowers's six, except that I finish with four that he would hardly have contemplated.

One great benefit from studying a guide to good usage of English words and punctuation is that one can thereby be stimulated to think, speak and write in ways that were previously beyond one's ken. So, for example, one might decide to employ both "defining" (I would say identifying) clauses and commenting ones (p.158f). The study of a further language can have a similar effect — but how absurd to come to it, as so often now occurs, with little ability to describe, or perhaps even to maintain, the grammar of one's first.

Gowers's first subsection draws attention to the incorrect use of a comma between what he calls "two independent sentences not linked by a conjunction". That use of *sentence* conflicts with the one given on p.174, and it is anyway better to say "two sets of words such that each set could be a normal sentence, even if a short one, and with no conjunction linking them". At *MS* 5:3.10 I call that kind of comma inadequate, and employ the phrase 'interrupting comma' in describing Gowers's last type of incorrect use.

1. It is a well-known fact, condoms are protective against STIs.
2. Not all of us have the privilege, or the opportunity to be able to choose slow food
3. he had emotionally settled to some degree by thinking about, and facing the worst possibility
4. Homeric narratives, such as that of the lotus eaters also bring us into contact ….
5. they needed to have the conversations, which they had not known how to have
6. many women report that the father's devotion and quality of nurturing of a sick or crying child, increased his attractiveness as a man and partner
7. They did not understand why their attempts to 'make things better' and to bring more joy in their life, so quickly faded into emotional insignificance.
8. The transformation of the lifeworld when encountering chronic disease, connects us to the world around us in a profound way.
9. We do not communicate well or deeply, we waste our time and, we do not enjoy our life.
10. And, that brings me to a question.
11. But, it is not all bad news.
12. So, to bring this rambling reflection together.

John Howes

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