Learningguild Letter

2017 and 2018

Dear members and friends of Learningguild,

The questions I raise and discuss here are "What **goods** should we especially seek to develop and maintain in our own lives?" and "How, in various stages of education, are these goods best fostered?". I give plenty of grateful and critical attention to two books. One is *Flourish* (2011), by the American Martin Seligman, a pioneer and major exponent of positive psychology, to whom I am indebted also for responses to a question and comments of mine. The other is *Positive Education* (2015), which describes the large-scale application of positive psychology at Geelong Grammar School in Australia, beginning from an invitation Seligman took up in 2005. The main author is Jacolyn Norrish, but there are valuable contributions from many others, including Felicia Huppert and Nansook Park, introducing Chs 4 and 5 respectively.

Two main features of positive psychology as presented in *Flourish* are clear from the Preface and Chapter 1 ("What is Well-Being?"). First, since at least 1998 Seligman has urged psychologists to add a "new goal" to its "venerable" one of "relieving misery and uprooting the disabling conditions of life", a goal that he respects. The new goal is the positive one of "exploring what makes life worth living and building the enabling conditions of a life worth living" (p.1f). 'Worth', we should note, is an evaluative word, one that admits of degrees and for which many and sometimes conflicting criteria might be offered. We are influenced by others' evaluations but need to make our own.

Secondly, Seligman acknowledges a major change in his own thinking. In *Authentic Happiness* (2002) he had offered happiness as the overall object of desire, but from 2005 he has regarded that as too narrow, and has moved to a wider one, which he calls well-being. He shows no interest in exploring the common use or uses of that word. The Shorter Oxford gives a good explanation, "healthy, contented, or prosperous condition; moral or physical welfare (of a person or community)", except that between the semi-colon and 'welfare' we need the wider range of four categories indicated by 'physical, mental, psychological and/or moral'.

Seligman presents well-being entirely in the terms of his own theory of it, as when on p.24, using bullet points rather than commas, he lists "five measurable elements (PERMA) that count towards [well-being]: Positive emotion (of which happiness and life satisfaction are all [*sic*] aspects), Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement." The five are treated on pp.16-20.

My main response to his book is to invite attention to **personal qualities**, as among the constituents of well-being and not merely helps towards it. These qualities are in fact widely and valuably pursued for their own sake, and definable. The questions to what extent they can be **measured**, and how much in these areas measurement matters, as both books insist that it does, as against thoughtful evaluative appraisal, should not keep us from attending to such goods-in-themselves.

The qualities we may most need to focus on belong to more than one of our four categories. Plato seeks to show in the *Republic*, one might say, that there is no integration without integrity as a major constituent of it. Honesty, concern for truth in pursuing questions or appraising oneself or others, fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, moderation, accuracy, realism, reasonable confidence: none of these belongs just to one kind. Respect and concern for others and for oneself as human beings is the fundamental moral quality, and thence come helpfulness, cooperativeness, friendliness, and the best kinds of love and of service.

Both Seligman and I want to view education in relation to our different conceptions of well-being, and here I turn to the book *Positive Education*. It is striking that he ends his Foreword to it by saying that from his family's stay at the school in 2008 he drew the lesson that "Positive Psychology will most easily take root within an already existing positive community". In Ch. 4 Jacolyn Norrish writes of "the School's long history of nurturing the whole child" (p.58) and "the School's strong history

of service and the deeply embedded principle of helping students to become respectful of others, passionate about civic responsibility, and active contributors to the community" (p.62). Felicia Huppert, in her statement "Schools have traditionally focused on academic success, and preparing children for the world of work, rather than developing the whole child" (p.52), and Seligman, in his remark "what schools teach is how to succeed in the modern workplace" (p.ix), both fail to acknowledge a wide range of past and present attention by people other than positive psychologists to the fostering in children and teenagers of moral, mental and psychological qualities such as I have mentioned.

Alongside 'development', two words prominent in writing about education, and especially in expressing gratitude for aspects of one's own, have been 'encouragement' and 'example'. Neither is in Seligman's index to either of the books of his I have named, nor in that of *PE*. Neither encouragement nor example lend themselves to measurement, though we can consider their depth and breadth and influence. They are both prominent in a tribute at the front of *PE* by Nansook Park to the late Chris Peterson, in whose work she shared:

> Students often said that when they were in his class, he made them feel that he knew them, and that they mattered. He made everyone around him feel comfortable and respected. He inspired young people to develop a love of learning and a desire to be better people not by simply lecturing, but by his example.

(I have emended the last words from 'but by living by example'.)

I question two sentences from Park's introduction to Ch. 5, "Character Strengths". She begins "How can we build good character in young people?" and later (p.79) writes "Children and young people should be instructed to choose a target character strength that they want to focus on, then set a specific and measurable goal, and devise a concrete action plan for achieving that goal."

'We build'? 'Instructed'? It is the young people who must build it, developing and deepening their own evaluations, if in them it is to be built at all, and the word 'instructed' needs replacement by 'invited'. The virtue of humility, often misunderstood as a kind of subservience coupled with a low opinion of oneself, where these are then accepted or rejected as a guide to one's own behaviour, offers a good example. Humility is best presented and voluntarily learned as freedom from complacency, self-preoccupation and self-deception, and closely allied to gratitude, teamwork, realism and objectivity. The humble person asks not "What's in it for me?" but "How can I help?". David Brooks's *The Road to Character*, both its short biographies (especially that of George Marshall) and the pages headed "The Humility Code" (pp. 261-7), are thought-provoking. One valuable remark is "Humility relieves you of the awful stress of trying to be superior all the time" (p.205).

In *Flourish*, at p.258, a questionnaire invites a response to the remarks "I change the subject when people pay me compliments" and "I often brag about my accomplishments" with one out of 'Very much like me', 'Like me', 'Neutral', 'Unlike me', 'Very much unlike me', numbered 5-1 in the first case and 1-5 in the other, and so to derive one's "humility score". I do not doubt that, here and elsewhere, such a procedure can be valuable. Seligman demonstrates (Ch.7) that it has been widely adopted in the US army, and Park describes its implementation at Geelong Grammar. I agree also on the value of recognizing particular character strengths in oneself and seeking to develop and employ them widely, and recognizing them in others, though I am less happy about nominating some students as **paragons** of particular "signature strengths" (see Justin Robinson's contribution to Ch.5 of *PE*).

I have three reservations about Seligman's positive psychology. First, as I have said, it pays too little attention to a wide range of moral, mental and psychological qualities as valuable in themselves: the range of what is recognized as rightly valued for itself is too narrow. Secondly, there is too little recognition of how much both biography and moral philosophy (its history and the practice of it) are needed **alongside** psychology, with its emphasis on measurement. Thirdly, as Richard Layard, now Lord Layard, said in his review of *Flourish* in *The Observer* (15 May 2011, available on the web), "Positive psychology can come over as very individualistic – a strategy for each individual to find his own way to well-being, full stop." It is too little concerned with ongoing devotion and service.

However, the positive education described in the book of that name does include biography (see pp. 86-8), and the description includes these sentences from Geelong Grammar's Vice-Principal, Charlie Scudamore (p.66):

> My favorite way to explain ["Pos Ed"] is to "know thyself in order to help others". It re-

> flects the great philosophers in this field, and it also emphasizes one of the key foundations of Geelong Grammar School – service to others.

Full credit for that; but its emphasis is not Seligman's and does not require his version of positive psychology. "G*nōthi seauton*", "Get to know yourself", meant to Socrates and Plato something deeper and wider than "Discover your strengths and weaknesses."

The need for good judgement and the limited scope for measurement in many situations are clear if we consider a question and rather thoughtless answer quoted from Scudamore (p.208):

> What do I look for when hiring new staff? I look for three things – passion, passion, passion.

The genuineness and depth of someone's passions for a subject and for teaching it need to be judged by experienced persons, both sympathetic and cautious, who become acquainted with the applicant; they are not measurable through his or her numerical answers to questions. As Scudamore would agree, the prospective teacher needs also to have enough moderation not to be passionate about only one view or mode of teaching.

I am not attracted to Huppert's term "the science of well-being" (p.54), but I see that there is value in the kind of survey by questionnaire (see *Flourishing* pp. 26-28), that she and Timothy So have used in the 23 nations of the European Union. I accept that they would say to me: "As a non-practitioner of our kind of measuring, you are in no position to judge how valuable it is."

In her introduction to Chapter 4, Huppert refers (p.53) to the identification by So and herself in 2013 of five features of flourishing beyond Seligman's PERMA: "resilience, emotional stability, vitality, optimism and self-esteem". She adds that they "can be regarded as the characteristics displayed by flourishing people". She also writes "and perhaps other characteristics such as autonomy and grit". I would add 'mental and' before 'emotional' there, and often employ the word 'perseverance', along with 'moderation', to cover some of this ground. I would give prominence to the moderating role of reason, as by 'reasonable optimism and self-esteem'. But I welcome it that she is referring to qualities valuable in themselves.

She says: "Once wellbeing and/or flourishing have been defined, measurement can follow" (p.53) and "Measuring what matters is really crucial" (p.54). I take an open-ended view of the qualities we may reasonably recognize as among constituents of well-being. We can define and/or illustrate them, but their implications vary with ages and contexts. (Consider autonomy.) Students, and of course others, have a greater need to **grow** in appreciation of these qualities and their importance than to ask themselves in a questionnaire how they stand in relation to them, and so derive a score. Time is nearly always short, especially in public secondary schools that lack Geelong Grammar's resources of staffing, and I think that more important than attempts to measure progress through questionnaires are talks, booklets etc., and discussion arranged and spontaneous, in assemblies and classes, about such qualities and frequent difficulties in the way of developing them, and unfailing encouragement to do so. However, I note and admire Geelong Grammar's readiness to help other schools take on positive education and to ask its own community for funds for doing so (p.23f).

I end with some remarks about how we may conceive of the quality **wisdom**, and how to relate it to Christianity and any other form of religion. Wisdom is a developed combination of our capacities for perspective, synthesis and criticism; in contrast with it are narrow-mindedness, exaggeration, uncritical reliance on one's own tradition, and gullibility. Mill says that the wise person "has sought for objections and difficulties, instead of avoiding them, and has shut out no light which can be thrown upon the subject from any quarter" (*Liberty*, in the last sentence of para. 7 of Ch. 2). Geelong Grammar has the striking motto "*Christus nobis factus sapientia*", "Christ [was] made for us wisdom", by or from God. The words are from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1.30). 'Wisdom personified' catches some of the meaning, and, as Fr Hugh Kempster has remarked to me, Paul may well have had in mind the presentation in Proverbs of wisdom as feminine. He turns away from "the Greeks" and their philosophizing, i.e., their seeking of wisdom: all Christians need is to be "in Christ Jesus", and there is wisdom enough. But that will not do: we need the wisdom to enquire concerning any form of any religion what its teachings and practices have been and are, and to explore, often with others if we can, what in them we have good reasons to accept as true or valuable and/or what to reject. Wisdom is nowhere easily or painlessly acquired, and should never be lightly or without qualification attributed to oneself or others, but there is no better aim in life or education than to seek it and act accordingly.

John Howes

A Chinese researcher in Britain

JUANJUAN WU, *who took her first degree and her Master's in English in universities in China, is working towards her doctorate at Melbourne, examining writings of British women who travelled to China in the late 19th century. Here she writes of an unforgettable time she spent in Britain in August-September 2018.*

To travel to Europe had always been my dream, but seemed unaffordable and unattainable. I did not think seriously about it until this June, when I discovered that some scholarships and grants could support me in a research trip to Britain. It has been a great privilege to receive the Margaret Watson Centenary Travelling Fellowship and the Robert Heaton Research Support Award, provided by the Graduate Union of the University of Melbourne. In May, I applied for the Arts Graduate Research International Grant, funded by the Faculty of Arts in the University of Melbourne. With my supervisor Professor Deirdre Coleman's strong support, I was one of the recipients. In August and September, I was travelling in England and Scotland, visiting universities and libraries, and then went to Croatia via Venice to attend a conference, returned to Italy for sightseeing in Florence and Rome, flew to China for a few days at home, and returned to Melbourne. I write here about my visits to universities and cities in Britain.

When I left Melbourne on August 19th, I was anxious about the prospect of being always on my own, with no one to welcome me to a new place, and with little possibility of making new friends, as I would seem to be always on the move. However, alongside all these worries and fears, and restlessness, there was also unconcealable excitement about making a journey I had longed for. I was going to see **England**, that country I had so often imagined when I read novels by Jane Austen, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf and many others who have enthralled and inspired me. It was also the country of the women travellers whose descriptions of their experiences of China I am researching.

London

I arrived at Heathrow Airport in the afternoon of the 20th of August. I was welcomed by the sunshine and warmth of the London summer. I had only two nights in London, and I walked to take in whatever I could. On the first evening, I went to Tavistock Square and saw the bust of Virginia Woolf. The evening glow cast a golden coat onto the trees, and their shadows on the grass were stretched long and slim. I imagined Woolf taking her strolls there, ruminating over plans for her last books. Next morning, walking slowly from Bond Street to Westminster Abbey, I retraced part of the route taken by Clarissa Dalloway, the main character in Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway*.

Later I strolled through St. James's Park to Buckingham Palace, and then walked through much of Hyde Park until I found my way to a red-brick house with white windows, the home of the Royal Geographical Society. Only in 1892 did this all-male society start to elect female fellows. Isabella Lucy Bird was the first woman elected. She agreed to give a lecture on her observations of Tibet on the condition that she be made a fellow. Unfortunately, I could not get into the main parts of the house, but in the basement reading room I was allowed to examine photographs and slides about China that Mrs Bird had left. They gave me a sense of what she cherished during her many perilous journeys in China between 1894 and 1897.

I went on to the White Garden, a stunning tribute to Princess Diana at Kensington Palace. I sauntered in the tranquil and scented garden for a long time, revelling in the blooming roses and many other flowers.

Cambridge

The next morning I took a train to Cambridge. I was lucky to have accommodation at Sidney Sussex College, for five nights until the 27th. At the University Library, I studied Constance Gordon-Cumming's manuscript "Pagodas, Aurioles and Umbrellas" and Edith Blake's unpublished journal "A Journey in China, Korea and Japan". It was a privilege to see, touch, and feel these documents, more than a hundred years old. Gordon-Cumming's is like a scrapbook: a very personal and long-time collection of watercolours, sketches and figures cut from magazines and newspapers, testifying to her lifelong passion for Eastern culture.

Cambridge has had romantic associations for me since I was 12. That year I learned at school "Farewell to Cambridge", a beautifully composed poem by a famous Chinese romantic poet Xu Zhimou, who briefly studied literature at King's College in 1921-2 and was a lifelong admirer of Thomas Hardy. The poem itself was adapted into a song and the choir of King's College has sung it. In 2008, a carved stone was placed behind the bridge at King's, displaying the opening lines of his

poem. As I sauntered along the River Cam, the golden willow trees along the banks waved and danced in the sunset's glow, casting elegant shadows on the rippling water. Everything was so gentle, tranquil and romantic: even the rain had a soothing and purifying power. I thought often of some ancient towns in China. Walking down the alleys and side lanes every morning and afternoon, between Sidney Sussex College and the University Library, was especially enjoyable. On the second-last night, in the gardens of King's, I watched an open-air performance of *Twelfth Night*, part of the Cambridge Shakespeare Festival. The joyous feast of performance warmed my heart during that chilly night, fulfilling my dreams.

I bade farewell to Cambridge after a morning tour of Trinity College. A guided tour was too costly for me, so I wandered alone from the grand Trinity Gate through the Great Gate and then roamed from the Great Court to other courts. Here the clock, the imposing fountain girdled by lavender, and every brick and stone seemed to tell their history. I wondered what it was like when great poets such as George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, John Dryden, Lord Byron and Alfred Tennyson and writers such as Vladimir Nabokov spent their time there. I left Cambridge thinking of Xu's poem:

> Quietly now I leave the Cam,
> As quietly as I came.
> Gently wave farewell the clouded
> Western sky aflame.

Taking trains to Edinburgh on a day of heavy rain, I felt lonely, as I had not spoken to many people in Cambridge except for staff in the Manuscript Reading Room. I struck up a chat with a lady who was sitting next to me. We talked about our wish lists, and she told me that her late mother had always wished to travel to China to see the Three Gorges along the middle reaches of the Yangtze River. Her mother's wish was like that of Mrs Bird, who journeyed up the river by small houseboat in 1890s. I shared Mrs Bird's travels with her. We said goodbye at Peterborough after much pleasant talk.

The shifting landscape outside kept reminding me of some scenes from *Middlemarch*. The changing colour of the land, and the cows and cottages, gave me fresh sensations of pleasure. The rain finally stopped as the darkness gathered.

Edinburgh

After about seven hours on the train, I arrived at Waverley Station around 9.30 pm on the 27th of August. The stars in the dark sky sent a shiver all over me. After much hassle, I checked in at Pollock Halls in the University of Edinburgh, where I stayed for seven nights. Next morning I had a pleasant view of the Salisbury Crags, and beyond them Arthur's Seat. Blooming lilies made a spectacular view in the garden. Their large and magnificent flowers waved elegantly in the breeze. I was reminded of lilies growing all over the valleys and hills in my home town, Xinhua, in Hunan Province. Here I saw many flowers and plants familiar to me. After all, Scotland was home to the botanist Robert Fortune, the famous plant hunter who, disguised as a Chinese man, travelled to China's inland to collect tea and other novel plants in the first half of the 19th century. Among more than 200 Chinese plant species he had introduced to the UK, some must have found their way into the soil of Scotland, and even into this garden. The red roses along my walk to the National Library of Scotland also fascinated me as I remembered Robert Burns's lines "O my love is like a red, red rose / That's newly sprung in June".

The grey stone facades of buildings standing along the roads on my way to the National Library of Scotland gave me a new sensation. I stepped onto the cobbled street on the Royal Mile, finding myself in the steep narrow closes that separate the tall and ancient buildings, and started to walk down the old winding roads of Haymarket. I could not but hold my breath and admire. The hustle and bustle, the crowds of tourists, and the mixture of many languages spoken enlivened the Old Town. A young man wearing a kilt played bagpipes in front of St Giles' Cathedral. The Scott Monument towered against a grey sky, dark clouds hung low, and flocks of ravens (or crows?) skirted the spires. An eerie beauty sent my imagination to Scott's gothic novels. Edinburgh Castle gave a panoramic view of a city of expansive beauty and fascination.

In the National Library of Scotland, I was able to locate material written by Isabella Lucy Bird: the manuscript of a draft of a lecture on China, which later became part of her travel book *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond*, letters to her sister, eloquent and insightful correspondence with her publisher John Murray IV. There were also many photographs taken during her travels in China. I was deeply impressed by her bela ted but unyielding passion for the art of photography. Her handwriting was elegantly fancy, but difficult for me to read. I photographed every document available there and hoped I could make the most of them to enrich my thesis. I also visited the Scottish National Gallery, in the hope of seeing portraits of Mrs Bird and Miss Gordon-Cumming. There was neither: very few portraits of women accompanied those of Burns, Scott,

Robert Louis Stevenson, Thomas Carlyle and many other great minds who had shaped Scotland's history. How much work we still need to do to discover and tell the stories of great women and make their voices reverberate.

Oxford

My Edinburgh visit ended on September 3rd, and early on a rainy and gloomy morning I took the train southward to Oxford to consult the heritage left there by Emily Georgiana Kemp (1860–1939). I stayed in St Hugh's College, founded by Elizabeth Wordsworth, the great niece of William Wordsworth and herself a prolific author. My room had a breathtaking view of the leafy, extended and beautiful gardens blooming with yellow and pink roses, golden sunflowers, and other flowers. I took enormous pleasure in strolling along Banbury Road and Parks Road to the Bodleian Library. My heart leapt up when I saw the sunset that cast the Radcliffe Camera half dark and half golden. I wandered alone along High Street, Merton Street and Deadman's Walk, soaking myself in the atmosphere of great learning, and feeling my faculties expanded. Music from churches and chapels enthralled me. As I walked, my footsteps made clean and sprightly sounds on the cobblestones.

I could not find words to describe the large and ancient buildings of Oxford, as my knowledge of European architecture is very limited. Its difference from the architectural styles of China stimulated me to reflect on two different cultures. The primary building materials themselves, the stone widely used in Great Britain and the wood used for traditional Chinese palaces, pagodas and gardens, tell us a lot about two cultures.

In the Ashmolean, I studied Kemp's watercolours, sketches, plates and photographs. There are also several Chinese objects she collected during her travels to China and brought back to England. Wearing gloves as instructed, I carefully examined every object. So fresh are the watercolours as if they were just finished yesterday. Photographs had turned yellow, but the moment captured still has the power to talk to me even more than a century later. The immediacy made possible by the privilege of coming here and looking at these objects helped me a lot to forge a closer and more intimate contact with Kemp, who called herself "a devoted friend of China".

I also visited the Somerville College chapel, which was anonymously donated byKemp in 1932 to build a house "for the promotion of the spiritual life, mainly by prayer and meditation, for those of all creeds and nations". It is "a house of prayer for all peoples", and so for all people of different religious faiths. Immersing myself early one evening in the ambience of peace and quietude in this neoclassical chapel, I could not help wondering how Kemp's travels in the Far East shaped her religious and spiritual ideals, and how her myriad encounters there influenced her view of old China. While I was standing in front of this plain plaque, my thoughts were roaming across time and space, following Kemp along the trans-Siberian railway, tracing her journeys to many far corners of my country. Outside the chapel, trees of different shades of green basked in the evening glow of early September, and a mellow breeze sent leaves on rhythmical and gentle movement.

Goodbye England

On the warm and sunny morning of September 11th, I left Oxford for London, as I was to fly to Venice on the following morning. Farewelling Oxford saddened me, as it marked the approach of my goodbye to England. Returning to London somewhat allayed my melancholy. To make the best out of my remaining hours there, I went to explore the British Museum. There I lost myself in the glory of so much of human history and the splendour of civilisation. Pulled by an instinctive force to empathize with my own culture, I was enthralled and stunned by the Sir Percival David Collection, where about 1700 Chinese ceramics are displayed. I was struck by the collection's variety, originality, delicacy and breathtaking beauty. With a mixture of pleasure and sadness, I took the train to Luton Airport and so concluded my British travels. The intense excitement, joy and happiness have lingered in my memory, urging me to make another such journey when opportunity comes.

> I believe in the fundamental value of multilingualism, as an amazing world resource which presents us with different perspectives and insights, and thus enables us to reach a more profound understanding of the nature of the human mind and spirit. In my ideal world, everyone would be at least bi-lingual.
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> David Crystal, *English as a Global Language*, p.x of the Canto edition, 1998.

A Chinese university teacher's year in Melbourne

DR XIN ZHAO *is one of Learningguild's overseas members. He is an associate professor in education at Southwest University, near Chongqing, in China, with a particular concern to study and explain the nature and influence of teachers' emotions.*

From August 2016 to August 2017 it was my great honour to be a visiting scholar doing research at the Graduate School of Education in the University of Melbourne. This stay and the travel were fully funded by the China Scholarship Council. I wanted to learn of the educational research tradition in Australia, and then to integrate its cutting-edge theories and methods into my own academic research. This enterprise was extremely hard at the beginning not only because the tradition is complicated, but also because I faced the challenge of dealing effectively with the language barrier as soon as possible. Although I had studied at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for one year, it was many years since I had spoken English for long hours.

Fortunately, my English improved rapidly. I benefited from persistent intensive reading of English texts and frequent contacts with Australian counterparts. Conversation with many friends helped me to become more fluent.

It was through Dr Max Stephens, who has visited China several times, and is the Vice-President of Learningguild, that I got the privilege of working at the University of Melbourne. Without his help I would have encountered many more difficulties. He often gave me great encouragement when I applied for government funding; he told me it would be his pleasure to provide me with accommodation in Melbourne before my year's stay; he prepared an invitation and visa materials for me; he helped me to handle all the entry formalities for the School and get the library card; he recommended a number of Australian scholars to me; and so on.

My interaction with Dr John Howes is also a precious memory for me. I think of him both as a teacher of English grammar and usage and as the President of Learningguild. He annotated many sentences I composed in accordance with the method of learning set out in his booklet *Sentences to Study and Change*, and drafts of papers I wrote, and on Friday afternoons I had a tutorial with him in English expression. He invited me to join in Learningguild's fortnightly Sunday Meetings. The combination of a talk and discussion and an afternoon tea organized by his wife Margaret and himself appealed to me very much. I experienced a sense of a western tradition of informal friendly discussion in someone's home.

I had wanted to see something of rural areas and life in Australia, and on October 29th 2016 I was one of a group of Learningguild members who visited Heathcote, a town in central Victoria, to be guests of Louise Joy and her partner Daryl Grubb. We enjoyed a picnic lunch in a beautiful garden and had pizzas for dinner. I especially remember Pink Cliffs, a visually amazing place to which Daryl took me, close to Heathcote. I wandered through intriguing mini-gorges and cliffs of fine pink clay. I checked Wikipedia and found that Pink Cliffs was created by early gold-mining activities: sluicing work in the 1880s revealed the "pink" hills. We found a variety of stones at this geological reserve including smooth ironstone with a distinctive volcanic appearance. It's a great area for bushwalking and photography, and for exploring the unique landscape, discovering wildflowers and wildlife: kangaroos, butterflies, and even snakes.

In the Graduate School of Education Professor David Clarke was my co-supervisor. His cross-cultural classroom study not only broadened my research horizon but also opened a new field for me, giving me a cross-cultural perspective on teaching. I believe that this perspective will soon become more common in Chinese approaches to curriculum and instruction. Moreover, to be deep in talk with David once a week in the café in the Graduate School always benefited me a lot. Time after time I gained some new thoughts and insights, and also some stimulating confusion.

Now, back in China, I continue to teach and do research at Southwest University. I feel deeply that this one year in Melbourne has been a great help to my work. The perspectives offered by Max and David have helped and enlightened me in my exploration of matters related to teachers' emotions and classroom teaching. John has helped me to improve my English so that I am now able to read all kinds of English writings, write and correct English papers, and communicate well with foreign teachers and students. Though I have had just one year in Melbourne, contact with friends in Australia will continue through email and post. I look forward to meeting these friends again.

Studying Spanish in Colombia

JULIAN FANG, *whose concerns include international development, policies about food production, and kitchens and restaurants, spent four months in the second half of 2017 in Bogota, Colombia.*

I was fortunate enough to be selected as one of three Australians to participate in the ELE-FOCALE program. It is an initiative from the Colombian Government that aims to promote the country as a destination for Spanish learning while also fostering intercultural exchange with South-East Asian countries. This year, around 60 people were chosen from countries including China, India, Bhutan, Japan, the Maldives and many others.

Participants were required to take a Spanish language test before departing so that their level in Spanish could be ascertained, and were allocated to one of many universities according to their results. I was placed at Universidad de la Sabana, a private university in Chia, which is a small town about an hour by car to the north of central Bogota. Daily life in Colombia was vastly different from that of Australia, but certainly very enjoyable. I learnt many things in a short space of time that I believe will prove useful.

I was unsure what to expect of the quality of this program, and Colombian higher education in general. In fact I found that both the facilities and the professors at Universidad de la Sabana were outstanding and contributed to a positive learning experience. Classrooms, libraries and study areas were well equipped and maintained to a high standard, probably owing to its being a private university. At Universidad Nacional, a public university in Bogota, there looked to be less attention to the upkeep of university grounds. The difference between public and private universities certainly looked greater than obtains in Australia. I was impressed by the quality of my language professors, all of whom proved to be invaluable for my learning of Spanish.

In Colombia, I felt like a student again for the first time for a long while. I could focus on my learning before and after class without distractions such as paid work and volunteer responsibilities. I used my free time to enjoy reading in depth about topics of interest such as the United Fruit Company's influence on the banana trade in Colombia, Alexander Von Humboldt's work in science, and the writings of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. I also felt as though I was immersed in my subject matter, as I was required to practise Spanish in daily life.

My class schedules for Spanish were very different from those I had had in a master's course in development studies at Melbourne. In Colombia I spent one semester fully immersed in learning Spanish. At Melbourne, I took up to four different classes in a semester. I found that spending three morning hours each weekday, 9 – 12, meant that I always arrived fresh, having completed the required homework. I don't think having more time in class each day would have aided my Spanish much. I was afforded enough time in the afternoons and evenings to pursue personal interests, and inevitably put things I had learnt in class into practice.

I enjoyed meeting new friends through participation in sports such as tennis, volleyball and table tennis. I was also glad to spend some time learning about Colombian gastronomy in various settings such as professional kitchens, households and farms, and by reading books and attending gastronomy lectures. I explored various museums in Bogota and travelled widely around Colombia.

The warmth of Colombians really stood out for me as something special. I was amazed to see how welcoming they are to international visitors. It was as though each individual I met wanted to dispel any negative expectation of the country. Everyone seemed to want me to experience the very best of Colombia and I generally felt secure and welcome.

Another thing I loved about Colombia is that there are many towns and villages called *pueblos*. More than the big cities like Bogota and Medellin, these are usually distinctive for one reason or another. Usually the *pueblo* is built around a main church and an adjacent park. Some *pueblos* are renowned for a particular industry, while some simply have loads of charm and colour. For example, Barbosa is a place that specialises in producing *bocadillos*, guava snacks comparable to quince paste. People eat it alone, or with really simple cheese called *queso campesino*, farmers' cheese. Guatape is popular because it is so colourful. Villa De Leyva stood out to me because its town square is one of the biggest I've ever seen: it is a very significant colonial town. Others are just plain beautiful, and have so much character to them.

Colombia's lifestyle is relaxed and somewhat enviable. It has one of the highest numbers of public holidays in the world, with 18 "extra" days off through the year. Family bonds are kept strong. It is not unusual to see in one household the elderly parents as well as their mature-aged children. Attendance at church on Sunday is common.

All up, I enjoyed a wonderful stay in Colombia which has contributed to my personal and professional development. The main reason I applied for the program is that Nathalia, my Colombian partner of five years, had repeatedly suggested I use her country as a case study for some of my assignments in development studies. I never did because I didn't want to write about a place which I hadn't visited and of which I had only a little understanding. Now I do have first-hand experience of a country that has achieved so much in a short period of time in tackling issues such as illegal drugs and civil war.

One of my main motivations for learning Spanish was to be able to converse with Nathalia's parents, who do not have much English. As a result of classes, daily conversations with native speakers, and plenty of private study, my Spanish has progressed to a B1 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. I'm confident that this will leave me better placed than before when applying for jobs. Moreover, I now more fully appreciate the value of language as a way of connecting with different cultures. My experience with Spanish has also served as a reminder not to neglect my Cantonese, and so I have made a conscious effort to speak it more to my parents. I have also since felt a desire to learn another of my parents' native languages, Mandarin, and I hope to do so with Nathalia, so as to share my family's culture with her.

I'm extremely grateful to the Colombian Government for the opportunity to learn Spanish as part of the ELEFOCALE program. I don't think there's any better way to learn a foreign language than to live where it is the primary one.

Colombia, then, is outstanding in many respects: the quality of its universities, the abundance of a fascinating culture, the hospitality of the people, the beauty of the landscapes, and of course its suitability for learning Spanish.

ANU and the University of Papua New Guinea: a new partnership

STEPHEN HOWES *is a Professor of Economics in the Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University, and Director of the Development Policy Centre within that School, on behalf of which it manages the partnership he here describes.*

The University of Papua New Guinea was established just over 50 years ago, in 1966. The country gained its independence less than ten years later. The short gap illustrates PNG's youth as a nation and its unpreparedness for independence. It would be difficult to determine why Australia, whose formal administration of what is now the southern part of PNG began in 1906, waited sixty years to establish a university there.

UPNG began with a strong faculty. The Department of Economics was headed by Anthony Clunies-Ross, who became a prolific author and Professor of Economics at Strathclyde in Glasgow. While at PNG, he did ground-breaking work with Ross Garnaut, who was serving in the PNG government at the time, on the taxation of natural resources.

Another feature of UPNG in its early days was its links with the ANU. Between Sir John Crawford's terms as Vice-Chancellor (1968-73) and Chancellor (1976-84) of the ANU was his term as Chancellor of UPNG (1972-75). Until recently, a position was reserved for an ANU representative on the UPNG Council.

With growing law-and-order problems, and the currency depreciation of the late 1990s and early 2000s, expatriate faculty left and links with ANU fell away.

My first visit to PNG was in 2006, when I was with AusAID, the body then responsible for managing Australia's aid program. (AusAID has since been abolished, and aid management has become a responsibility of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.) When I left AusAID and joined ANU, I continued visiting PNG, and started engaging in research there. Our main research project involved a collaboration with the National Research Institute, the government think-tank. My counterpart left for a government job, and the NRI had difficulty finding a replacement. I started wondering where the economists were. I learnt that, though UPNG was

not the only university in the country, it was the only one in which economics was taught.

The School of Business and Public Policy within which the economics department is situated is a relatively dynamic one. But that department was on the verge of collapse. Several faculty had left for more lucrative positions in government. In 2013, there was only one full-time staff member in the department, a young tutor. Clearly, something needed to be done. I wasn't sure exactly what, but I managed to get a position up within the Australian-aid-funded volunteer program. One of my former students at Crawford, Rohan Fox, applied, and spent 2015 in Moresby working at UPNG as an economics lecturer.

Fortunately, we were able to get a much bigger program off the ground because of the interest shown by the Foreign Minister in UPNG, and her strong support for the need to rebuild it and to reinvigorate the partnership with ANU, in particular in relation to economics and public policy. As a result, we've been able to develop a very close relationship between the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy, and the UPNG School of Business and Public Policy.

As a result of the subsequent funding from the Australian aid program, we were able to put in place not just one volunteer lecturer in Moresby, but first two faculty members, and now five. The five are all ANU faculty, but all of them live in Port Moresby and work as visiting lecturers at UPNG. There are currently two in economics and three in public policy. Of course, ANU didn't have lecturers interested and able to go to PNG, so we had to advertise widely. But three of the successful candidates did their PhD at ANU, and this has helped build the links between the two universities.

It's a very unusual program. I doubt that the Australian aid program has anything like it in any other countries. I know a few other aid programs support tertiary twinning programs but not to this extent. It is also an expensive program. Moresby is generally regarded as one of the world's more dangerous cities. Our staff have to be put up in expensive hotels and secure apartments to meet Australian safety standards.

The project also brings with it huge benefits, in particular to the students being taught. We've conducted an economics exam every year since 2013 and it has been very pleasing to see an improvement in exam scores. We also help UPNG run an annual conference on PNG (the PNG Update) every year, and work on research projects together with UPNG staff.

We have also brought the one young tutor I mentioned earlier as well as two of the top students to ANU to do the Crawford economics master's program. Our hope is that they will go back and fill the various vacancies which still exist in the department.

There are other dimensions to the project. This year we are running a summer school at ANU for ten of the brightest UPNG undergraduates. Our hope is that this will help them going into their final year, and will also broaden their horizons, and get them interested in further study, and possibly an academic or a research career.

Finally, we now run what we call the "PNG Project", a program of research into PNG, with research undertaken at ANU, at UPNG, and now elsewhere. While our academics will come and go from UPNG, for many the interest in PNG will become lifelong. Rohan Fox, the young graduate I mentioned earlier who volunteered at UPNG, is still working at the ANU on our project.

It's an exciting time to be helping or working at UPNG. Australian aid is supporting not only our partnership but also a number of new buildings at UPNG – the first since the establishment of the university – including one for the School of Business and Public Policy.

Our project has funding to run probably to mid-2020. I'm keen that it should be extended. Ideally it should run in its current format for at least a decade. That's the time needed to rebuild the faculty.

Being involved in the project has taken a lot of time and effort. The funding from the aid program includes a component for management, and that takes most of the management load off me. But PNG is often called "the land of the unexpected", and academics who go to Port Moresby, and especially those who have families (whether in Moresby or left behind), will inevitably face challenges which, if they were in Canberra, would be purely private matters, but, because they are overseas, inevitably and fairly frequently become issues of duty of care.

Running a project like this is not a normal duty of an academic, that's for sure, but then I'm not a normal academic. I had a decade with the World Bank and then two years with AusAID before joining ANU. I'm grateful to ANU and the Australian government for the opportunity.

Minimal requirements for social cohesion

JONATHAN BURNS *reviews Michael Ignatieff's* The Ordinary Virtues: Moral Order in a Divided World *(Harvard UP 2017). Jonathan* i*s retired after a career in software and computer science. He tutors privately in maths and science to the tertiary level. His main interests are in relations between mathematics and natural language, and in theoretical physics. He is a member of Learningguild and a marker in the exam for the Learningguild Certificate in Reasoning and Expression.*

Ignatieff is a historian who served as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada from 2008 until 2011. Previously he had been a radio and television broadcaster and an editorial columnist for the British newspaper *The Observer*. He is now the Rector of the Central European University in Budapest.

In 2013, he proposed a fact-finding mission for the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, to mark the centenary of their founding as the Church Peace Union by Andrew Carnegie. "To observe ethics in action, I suggested, the Council needed to take ethics out of the seminar room and study how it shapes people's judgements and actions close to the ground where conflicts start." A team of four would visit and interview people in marginal communities around the world, in places removed from centres of authority and communication, and presumably not well-informed of global affairs. In some of these places there had been violence, or the potential for it might be hidden under a peaceful surface. Here Ignatieff hoped to discern "the ethical operating system" of a community, and "the ordinary virtues" that cement a stable way of life.

Ignatieff names the ordinary civil virtues as "trust, tolerance, forgiveness, reconciliation and resilience". These are to be found in his descriptions, but I have wondered whether he might have identified them in advance, and gone looking for them.

Each chapter takes in one locale. The team's first stop is Jackson Heights, New York, near the CCEIA's home base but sociologically far removed. For generations it has been a transitional home for immigrants finding their first economic footholds. "Sunflower Driving School, Nepal House, Travel House Nepal, IME Money Transfer, Ra Ra Group, Fundacion Mazabel, New Menka Salon ... and Al Muqsir's barber shop" are some of the businesses and offices surrounding Diversity Plaza. "There are more racial, ethnic and religious groups living together in this part of Queens than in any other county in the United States."

Trust and tolerance are found, and also a careful respect for others' territory and manners by which friction is avoided. Individuals relate to families and mutual-help groups, not to strangers. Daily these transitory communities are getting by, but their serious intention is to get out, to better jobs, home ownership, and middle-class security. Optimism is perhaps the main condition of social order, together with a confidence that police and employers are playing fair. "Living side by side, as opposed to living together, ... requires passably fair public institutions, decent policing above all and a subliminal operating system − basic trust, basic reciprocity − constantly tested but constantly reaffirmed in the ebb and flow of daily life." A key word there is 'subliminal'. Civil manners here are unspoken, not professed in ideologies. One might call it the code of the thoroughfare.

The team travels to Los Angeles, also an immigrant zone but more dangerous and precarious. In Jackson Heights no community really stands out for advantage or hostility; LA is fifty years from the black-versus-white Watts riots, twenty from Rodney King; and since then there have been drugs, gangs and fiercely-held boundaries over ethnic turf. A half-official culture has risen in response, fostering communities and links between them. The team encounters Latino youngsters editing a bilingual local newspaper, and a group of ex-convicts working to keep the peace among African-American gangs; they keep going on private donations. The police department, aware of their old failures, is reformist, insistent on fairness and recourse. Religious ministers who have been at the work of reconciliation for decades are wondering whether they can succeed in passing their resolve on to another generation.

Here we see Ignatieff's list of virtues being consciously and urgently pursued. Their enemy is insularity of community and family, the unease of groups once bitten, passed down as tradition. The challenge is to lead them to seeing civil confidence as ordinary.

In Rio de Janeiro, on the steep hillside of Santa Marta, the team finds "the locked-in poverty of the shantytowns

that abut the prosperity of the new global middle class". These, called *favelas*, were once social dumping-grounds, a municipal problem to be bulldozed away. When this solved nothing, the authorities began to equip the poverty zones with the basic amenities, such as power, sanitation and paved streets. But the need remained for police protection against the drug gangs, and protection against the police.

The team speaks with Pricilla de Oliveira Azavedo, a policewoman who became a national heroine after jailing her own kidnappers. In the wake of a harsh suppression of the gangs, "Major Pricilla" became the figurehead of police reform. She is now seen daily in a precariously peaceful shanty community, where people are not packed up and ready to run, but can invest in refrigerators, TVs and other home belongings.

"We met with few suspicious stares. Everyone seemed at ease with strangers passing by. The neatness of the streets, the scrupulous cleanliness of the interiors, the total absence of garbage or evil odours all added up to a moral statement: that, collectively, house by house, neighbour by neighbour, a fragile kind of control over surroundings was being maintained."

Later the team meets with judges, politicians, journalists and academics to discuss Brazil's enduring problems of corruption and, just as they are conferring, massive, violent anti-corruption demonstrations break out across the country. It is a protest by middle-class people; "God help us if the *favelas* join in", a bystander remarks. Ordinary civility is powerless in this situation, a democratic reaction to high-level abuses. In 2018 Jair Bolsonaro has been elected, "the Trump of the tropics", promising a radical crackdown on violence and corruption.

The next stop is Sarajevo in Bosnia, remembered by Ignatieff from his childhood, in a peaceful time before the breakup of Yugoslavia. He was a reporter on the Serbian invasion of Croatia in 1991, and the massacre and the concentration camps that followed.

The wounds have not healed. Speaking with Muslim Bosnian survivors, Ignatieff finds dignified resignation and only the dimmest of hopes for a future perhaps a couple of generations away. There is no positive forgiveness between Bosnians and Serbs, but passive suspicion and helpless wishes that it won't happen again. However, the interviewees have their stories to tell. They are engaged in projects to retrieve names and remains of the anonymous dead, to give due remembrance to the many victims. Quite extraordinary virtues here indeed, not in pursuit of a way of life but in observance of a lost past.

The situation in Myanmar is just as harrowing. Ethnic massacres are going on, mainly by the Buddhist majority against Muslim Rohingya. Ignatieff's focus is not on ordinary people but on the political context: the failure of the democratic hero Aung San Suu Kyi to defend equal protections, and the insistence of the Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu on expelling the Muslim population. "This is fundamentalism, Buddhist style, the belief in doctrinal purity fighting for its life in a sea of relativism and decline." To find the neighbourly virtues in practice, one would need a much deeper immersion in the society than Ignatieff's team can afford, and in any case the situation is formless: much of Myanmar is still composed of small hillside tribes.

The team goes on to Fukushima in Japan, in the wake of the tsunami, reactor meltdowns and ordered evacuation: twenty thousand people were killed and whole towns displaced. Such a disaster leaves different kinds of stories. Ignatieff considers how unprepared the nuclear industry and the national authorities were for a crisis of this magnitude. Then, travelling to two near-demolished towns, he asks how ordinary people managed in the absence of capable central authority. Ignatieff's virtue of "resilience" is admirably apparent here, and has a great deal to do with conservative values of stability, tradition and communal symbolism. "I will return as a descendant of Soma samurai, at any cost. My will is unshakeable." So declares a twenty-one-year-old worker from the Fukushima Daiichi power-plant, and a native of the wrecked fishing village of Minamisoma. The villagers are united by their annual Horse Festival, once a show of power by samurai riders, which they mean to revive.

Japanese people have a long history of ethnic uniformity, with a shared vocabulary of values and judgements, wrought over generations. It is very different from a multicultural society with separate ideological enclaves. "'*Ganbaru*' means working with perseverance, 'toughing it out': after the Kobe earthquake, '*Ganbaru Kobe*' became a slogan of the recovery." '*Gaman*' means "enduring the unbearable with patience and dignity", and '*Shoganai*' "acceptance of your fate". When Ignatieff wishes to sum up the popular temper. these expressions of collective toughness are to hand. Much as I believe in individual judgement and critical thinking, this commonality of spoken values moves and impresses me.

The team's final stop is in South Africa, in particular the utterly destitute settlement of Zama Zama. "The people who live here are from Limpopo, a poor northern

province; others are migrants from Zimbabwe, driven south by the wreckage Mugabe has made of his economy." Even more than the Rio de Janeiro *favelas*, this is an economic sump, wholly neglected by government, with employment inaccessible. Yet a basic morale and hopefulness appears here and there. "I ask Andrew why he wants to be a social worker here. He says, in a whisper, that he lost his mother to Aids and he does not want people to get sick like she did. ... He looks at me shyly and says the word 'empower'; yes, he wants to empower these young women so that their lives do not end as his mother's did, so that before they die they can at least write their own names." It seems that the human resources of will and generosity are ready, if the confusion of tribalism, corruption and *apartheid* inequities ever clears.

Ignatieff takes a point of view I find enlightening: he calls the striving modern populations "post-imperial". There is no civilization-wide hegemonic authority to appeal to or blame; each interest within a nation can try to sway its more proximate national government. In effect this means democracy, with smart-phone electorates, and common knowledge of worldwide norms of justice, human rights and free speech. "For most of the people we talked to ... human rights entered their perspective as an inchoate belief that all human beings, as individuals, are equal. By this they meant equality of voice." All are commoners, all are citizens.

Considering all the above, what are the prospects for the ordinary virtues as Ignatieff presents them? If ordinary people have a new-found sense of individual worth, encouraging economic striving and a passion for justice, but also a new-found sense of democratic power and new allegiances, then resentment and mistrust may be expected, and these are inherently corrosive of the tolerant spirit of the thoroughfare. (Consider the Watts riots.) If the ordinary virtues can be quantified, serious research should be undertaken into whether the smartphone is killing them off.

Let me summarize the most apparent qualities of the ordinary virtues, as the survey shows them. First, they are tacit, not maintained by sermons and editorials, although in a stable monoethnic culture like Japan, or Judaism, they may be kept familiar through a traditional discourse. Second, they constitute trust and manners in a society, and may be strong or weak; they are no defence against an actual threat. Third, they gain their strength through practice and proof: in Jackson Heights they can be counted on, in Sarajevo they are a lost cause which might revive in a new generation. Fourth, they are gaining some strength through the new sense of post-imperial global equality, but they are eroded when tribes and interests are newly empowered to compete. And fifth, they are, after all, individual virtues, and as they prosper so does the individual's sense of living in a world of tolerant, trustworthy and ethical equals.

I suspect that Ignatieff came away from his journey conflicted – perhaps disappointed. The virtues he describes can be found, under the right circumstances, but they cannot be counted on in advance. They add up to a kind of supererogatory human grace, for which we can only be thankful when it appears.

I have been educated by Ignatieff's work here, both his many-sided background explanations and his first-hand experience. The simplest conclusion I can draw is: social disruption happens quickly and easily, positive institutions are built slowly, and the civic virtues in communities grow most slowly of all.

The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary:

Morale: The mental and emotional attitude of a person or group with regard to confidence, hope, zeal, willingness, etc.; degree of contentment with one's lot or situation.

Tolerance (meaning 3): The disposition or ability to accept without protest or adopt a liberal attitude towards the opinions or acts of others; toleration; forbearance.

Trust (noun, meaning 1): Faith or confidence in the loyalty, strength, veracity, etc., of a person or thing; relance on the truth of a statement etc. without examination.

Virtue (one of several meanings): any of certain moral qualities regarded as of particular worth or importance ….

Engaging with *The Guardian Weekly*

HANS EISEN *and* **JOHN HOWES** *write about the issue dated 22 December 2017 – 4 January 2018.*

Again this end-of-year edition of *The Guardian Weekly* was a treasury of information and informed comment. Our appreciation of it begins with no less than five articles related to the USA and particularly its current President, Donald Trump.

"Hardmen dare to tread in Trump's footsteps", by Simon Tisdall, describes some of the inept actions Trump had taken towards the leaders of other nations, or his reactions to their initiatives directed at the USA. They included the Presidents Kim Jong-un of North Korea, Xi Jinping of China, and Vladimir Putin of Russia.

"How big tech became public enemy No 1", by Olivia Solon, presents such facts as that the tech majors Facebook, Google and Twitter each admitted that Russian organisations purchased advertisements on their sites in order to influence voting in the 2016 presidential election. Explored also is the growing power and influence in the hands of these tech giants.

Alan Yuhas, in "Trump looks to space as the next American frontier", reports that, "like Bush and Obama before him", Trump has encouraged private organisations such as SpaceX and Blue Origin, owned by billionaires, to fill the gaps left by the Nasa-led space exploration programs.

The loss by the Republicans to the Democrats, in December, in the US Senate election in Alabama is seen by David Smith, in "How young and black Americans broke Trump's spell", as both a "humiliating" defeat for him and a triumph of "hyperlocal grassroots activism".

In our opinion all these articles are worth reading, but the fifth, by Jonathan Freedland and titled "Donald Trump is the master distractor" (p.26), is perhaps the best from which to obtain a broad understanding of the damage wrought by Trump. The central theme is that his tweets not only "trample daily on the norms that underpin a democratic society, as well as trafficking in the most inflammatory racism and sexism", but also distract us from the long-term impact he is having on the nation, particularly in appointments to the judiciary of many "hard-right conservative judges" and in acts destructive of earlier environmental protection.

It is a relief to have, as well as that grim story, the article "An annus mirabilis; all the things which went right in 2017", covering developments in energy, science, philanthropy (by footballers), and economics, as well as the #Me Too global movement and protection of animal species. There are valuable surveys for 2017 of European and African countries, and of Britain, on pp.22-24.

A short article by Matthew d'Ancona raises the fundamental question whether what the British PM, Theresa May, calls "the democratic will of the British people" is aptly determined by referendum. How much we need good examples of representative and consultative government in which parties and individuals respect one another, experts, and Parliament itself.

The history and the present emphasis of the *Guardian* are described superbly in a six-page article by Katharine Viner, the editor-in-chief, in accordance with two phrases she takes from the announcement in 1821 of its imminent birth (as *The Manchester Guardian*): "the spirited discussion of political questions" and "the accurate detail of facts". The context in which those values must be maintained is well illustrated in this sentence (p.38):

> Facebook has become the richest and most powerful publisher in history by replacing editors with algorithms – shattering the public square into millions of personalised news feeds, shifting entire societies away from the open terrain of genuine debate and argument, while they make billions from our valued attention.

The last two sections of Viner's article, in the course of which she is able proudly to say "The Guardian is now funded more by our readers than by our advertisers", admirably set out her conception of the agenda for the paper. This paragraph is striking: how well its second sentence accords with T.H. Green's cooperative liberalism!

> But our guiding focus, especially in countries such as Britain, the US and Australia, will be to challenge the economic assumptions of the past three decades, which have extended market values such as competition and self-interest far beyond their natural sphere and seized

> the public realm. We will explore other principles and avenues through which to organise society for the common good.

She also says "We cannot merely criticise the status quo; we must also explore the new ideas that might displace it". Yes, but also some old ideas, for example those of sequential and cumulative education that employs the best textbooks of that kind one can discover, and examinations (some calling for a close and critical study of such books) that require and so foster all four of cumulative learning, thinking for oneself, conciseness and alacrity. Not only economic assumptions need challenging: as both Plato and John Stuart Mill would remind us, so also do political, social, religious, educational and intellectual ones.

Learningguild will provide copies of any of these articles on request, and keep a wide range of copies of issues and articles for lending or for study in our library. Some of our readers may wish to consider subscribing to the *Guardian Weekly* or *Guardian Australia*.

Gratefully remembered

We record the deaths of three of our members. **EVA JONES** (née Joseph) was a retired social worker who often provided hospitality for our Friday-evening meetings at her home of many years in Cassels Road, Coburg. She had been sent from Berlin to England not long before the start of the Second World War, and was a schoolgirl in Blackpool, England. She passed on to us a little book in which she had carefully transcribed many poems. After the war she migrated to Australia. She became well-known as a psychiatric social worker who would often bring people together, sometimes in pubs. As a mature-age student she completed an Arts degree, and I got to know her when in 1968 she took my Philosophy I course at Melbourne and would come to the coffee-and-biscuits afterwards. She contributed to *Learningguild Letter* and at one of our meetings introduced us to some songs familiar to German children. Her personality combined warmth and alertness. She was indeed a good friend.

We gratefully acknowledge her bequest to Learningguild of $3000.

JOHN WILLIAMS was well-read in philosophy, theology and economics, and also a lively teacher of secondary English. He was a marker in the examination for the Learningguild Certificate in Reasoning and Expression and an enthusiast for it, and contributed to *Learningguild Letter*. He had a minimalist conception of the proper role of the State. He sometimes preached at St Michael's Church in the city of Melbourne. He had taken his doctorate in philosophy at an American university, and looked back with gratitude to his years in the Honours School of Philosophy at Melbourne. For many years he lived in an apartment in Abbotsford Street, North Melbourne. He was a generous donor to Learningguild, and near the end of his life donated numerous books to our Library.

JUNE CHAMPNESS, married to a farmer, living at Highton, now a suburb of Geelong, and tutoring in English, keenly received copies of *Learningguild Letter*. She had been a Wyverna, a woman member of tutorials at Queen's College when only men could be residents.

JH

General lessons early learnt

PHILIP HOLBERTON, *a retired general practitioner and a member of Learningguild, looks back on some aspects of his early education and its influence on him.*

An English teacher in my last year of primary school opened my eyes to the delights of literature. He read us Meade Falkner's *Moonfleet*, a rousing tale of smugglers and stolen gems, set solidly in the Dorset countryside. (I have given a copy to one of my grandsons: I hope he enjoys it as much as I still do.) Of the other books that teacher read to us, I still treasure T.H.White's *The Sword in the Stone*. I defy anyone to read the presentation of the joust between Sir Grummore and King Pellinore without laughing aloud. (Don't go near the Disney movie, an even greater travesty than his treatment of *The Jungle Book*.)

At Cambridge I revelled in having the run of the University Library (except the tall central tower, which was off limits: it was reputed to contain all the pornography.) I read accounts of the lost continents of Atlantis and Mu and Lemuria: that was salutary, as they were incompatible with each other as well as with the orthodox history of civilization's development. Even in the 1950s, well before the New Age, believers in Atlantis were prone to dismiss the orthodox account as a conspiracy.

The greatest influence on me was a single sentence of Kipling's: "You ought always to verify your quotations." It comes from his story "The Dog Harvey", in his collection *A Diversity of Creatures*. I don't know when I first met it. It may have come from my father, who brought me up properly on Kipling, starting with *The Just So Stories*, then *The Jungle Books*, and later *Stalky and Co*. He certainly put the maxim into practice. In those years *The Times*'s crossword often included a Shakespeare quotation with a missing word, and, if *The Dictionary of Quotations* failed him, he was capable of reading the whole play to find it. I had not long qualified as a doctor when I was inspired to action by the maxim. An advertisement for a medicament quoted an article in a reputable medical journal in support of its claims. When I tracked down the article, I found that the author put forward no original research but only quoted what he had been told by the manufacturer. I wrote to the editor and had the satisfaction of getting the wording of the advertisement changed. To this day I feel cheated if a non-fiction book does not have a list of references and a bibliography. The web certainly makes it easier to chase up references.

The other thing I gained from my education was a delight in the precise and accurate use of English. I passed this on in the early years of the next generation. My wife once said to our eldest son: "Go and look, the men have brought the new loo and it's a black one." Roger, aged 2½, came back saying "See, Mummy, white one loo, black one lid."

I once gave evidence in court. The victim had been stabbed in the chest. I was present when another doctor put a probe into the wound, releasing a bubble of air which proved that the lung had ben cut. I carefully used the passive voice, saying "A probe was passed into the wound", but when my evidence was read back I was recorded as saying that I had passed the probe. I had the transcript corrected. Later, when I was a Government Medical Officer, people used to come to me requesting medical certificates to back up their statements. If I had no personal knowledge of what had happened, I would issue a certificate only in the form *ipse dixit*: "So-and-so states …". If anyone thought that my signature gave more authority to the patient's own statement, that was their affair.

My current hate is the new English translation of the Catholic Liturgy. I am not alone in this. Fr Greg Reynolds, in his article in *Lg L* 1.2016, wrote that it was "causing so many of my brother priests so much angst". The translators were told strictly to follow the Latin, which they did even in the length and structure of the sentences. Cardinal Pell, who chaired the committee that had the final say, thought it was good to use a specifically liturgical language. An earlier translation of the Creed said that Christ rose from the dead in **fulfilment** of the Scriptures. No other word in our marvellous English tongue so perfectly expresses the sense of completion. Now we are given the bland and bureaucratic 'in accordance with'.

Altogether I now find it hard to "pray the Mass". I feel like James Elroy Flecker's Hassan, waiting for rescue in the House of the Moving Walls. All I can do is "study the reasons of the excessive ugliness of the pattern of this carpet".