Learningguild Letter

2021

Dear members and friends of Learningguild,

Three subjects this time: “cheerful courage” and the nouns ‘heart’ and ‘soul’. Double inverted commas for the first locution because I am both quoting and using it; single for ‘heart’ and ‘soul’ because I’ll explore uses given to those nouns, in each case along with counterparts in other languages, and think about which of those uses we should maintain or adopt.

1

The quoted words are from the last line of the first verse of a hymn by the prolific hymnwriter Isaac Watts (1674-1748):

> Awake, our souls! Away, our fears!
> Let every trembling thought be gone!
> Awake, and run the heavenly race,
> And put a cheerful courage on.

I do not have a belief that anyone is on a course to heaven; but that matter requires what is so rare, cooperative discussion between believers and non-believers.

What is courage? There **are** for most of us fears, or trembling thoughts, and courage sets them aside. It is a refusal to be dominated by them, to be “daunted”, to use a word now rare. Though courage generally needs to be persistent and persevering, it also often needs initially to be “got up”, “taken in both hands”, or, in Watts’s words, put on, like a reliably warming and fitting coat on a very cold day. Watts’s analysis is acute. Key questions for a person receiving or needing therapy might often be expressed by “What are my fears? What are the thoughts that have made me tremble? What has tended to discourage me?”.

Courage is a disposition (not a mood) and needs to be developed, partly by exposure of oneself to the risk and the experience of failure (and often by getting help and encouragement in dealing with that), and partly by learning to distinguish courage from brash foolhardiness, the taking on of what one cannot do. It requires confidence, not always of one’s survival (e.g. in wartime), but that one is taking the right course, whether in following or in declining to follow some authority’s order or known preference, or in keeping going when one is tempted to despair and give up.

‘Cheerful’, again a disposition word, as is ‘dauntless’, could not be replaced by ‘smiling’, or even by ‘cheery’. One may not be able to smile at all, except politely, at the funeral of a child, or at a diagnosis of cancer. It is an opposite for ‘gloomy’ and ‘dejected’; to maintain cheerfulness springs from appreciation of long-term goods, often good relationships, in human life. This mindfulness “stands us in good stead”, as we say, indeed steadies us and may steady and cheer others, when there is much to be saddened by.

2

The word ‘courage’ is derived from French, which has long employed the same spelling, and takes its origin from the French ‘*cœur*’, the Latin ‘*cor*’ and the Greek ‘*kardia’,* meaning a heart. Words whose first application is to physical organs are extended to dispositions not just metaphorically but because the disposition really is often associated with them: so ‘stomach’ in ‘no stomach for the fight’ and ‘bowels’ (= inner parts, and so compassion), as in ‘the bowels of Jesus Christ’ and ‘bowels and mercies’ (Philippians 1.8, 2.1, AV).

‘Stout-hearted’ stands in contrast to ‘faint-hearted’, and we may say of someone that he or she has lost heart, or (often of a group facing adversity) that we or they are in good heart. ‘Whole-hearted’ is in contrast with ‘half-hearted’. ‘With all my heart’ and, concerning speaking, ‘from a full heart’ express depth and genuineness. The true lover gives his or her heart to the beloved one. Why is ‘heart’ used in these ways, and is it dispensable? The locution ‘My heart beat faster’ suggests the answer: the physical heart often does match in the vigour of its beating one’s excitement in facing danger, or in realisation of how much is at stake, or in seeing a family member or friend again – and so on. One might say that the heart is not only a kind of pump, but also the locus, in a normal person, of a physiological change associated with eager response. One can, however, be or seem “heartless”.

I invite the reader to explore citations including 'heart' (and 'courage' and 'soul') in the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, of which a copy may be borrowed from me. The metaphorical use of 'heart' is indispensable. How much it often matters to speak and write "from the heart" is suggested by these two sentences from the philosopher A.J.Ayer's first autobiography *Part of my Life*. He visited the US in 1938, and writes thus (p.206) about the letters he sent to his then wife while he was away:

> Throughout my journey I wrote her a series of very long letters which might have had some interest as a travelogue; but she did not like them because they were too impersonal. Whatever my feelings, I have always found it difficult in writing letters to strike a personal note.

In marriage and other close relationships one needs, of course, to "have a heart", and so be ready to adjust one's behaviour in response to the other's disappointment.

3

How do uses and so meanings of 'soul' differ from, and how resemble, those given to 'heart'? There is for 'soul' no reference to a physical organ, nor is 'soul' much used, as is 'heart', in connection with confidence or enthusiasm. On the other hand, each word is mainly employed to indicate what is thought to be of central importance or fundamental in a person. There are metaphorical uses where the talk or writing is of something or someone in implicit comparison with others: so we use such locutions as 'Brevity is the soul of wit' and 'He was the soul of the party'. There is also synecdoche (using for the whole a word for a part), as in "Old King Cole was a merry old soul". But neither of the two main uses of the word are of such kinds.

One appears in the second line of the sonnet written in 1802 by William Wordsworth (1770-1850) in contemplation of London as it appeared to him from Westminster Bridge:

> Earth has not anything to show more fair:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty.

In modern prose or conversation we might perhaps say "A person would have a dull soul …". The reference is to the capacity (realized or not) of a human being to recognize and respond with deep feeling to something judged to be beautiful or of an ultimate importance, such as the development of and care for a child. Hence the adjectival use in 'soul music' and the hyphenated 'soul-searching'.

The other main use occurs, often very prominently (as traditionally) in Christian contexts, though now in some of these hardly at all. Here is the relevant section of the Shorter Oxford's entry:

> The spiritual part of a human being considered in its moral aspect or in relation to God and his precepts, *spec[ifically]* regarded as immortal and of being capable of redemption or damnation in a future state.

'Spiritual part' has no clear meaning. The U.S. version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church has the following, in its glossary, for 'soul', with an obscure first sentence that adds nothing clear to the second:

> The spiritual principle of human beings. The soul is the subject of human consciousness and freedom; soul and body together form one unique human nature. Each human soul is individual and immortal, immediately created by God. The soul does not die with the body, from which it is separated by death, and with which it will be united in the final resurrection.

Why, it might be asked, are you putting all this and more before your readers? Not only because this or a similar use of the word 'soul' has had great prominence in Western thought, but also because it remains prominent in many people's prayers and belief-systems and is presented by many teachers to children, young people and congregations as something to be accepted – and therefore deserves careful and critical attention.

Wikipedia's entry for "May God have mercy upon your soul" describes the widespread use of this or similar words after a sentence of death in English-speaking countries. It has been in accordance with the wording of the funeral service of the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer (1662), a service used for centuries, in which the committal of a human body to the earth or to fire has begun with:

> Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother/sister here departed ….

It is broadly within this tradition of thought and expression that Isaac Watts wrote his hymn, calling on souls to awake, and to run the heavenly race, i.e., to live in accordance with a firm belief in a heaven promised to believers (and, according to many, only to those who as humans had believed in Jesus Christ as their Saviour).

I shall not enter here into the question whether any whole belief-system of this type is a reasonable one. Let us instead consider the dislike of 'soul'-talk that has

grown up in Protestantism, and perhaps some reluctance to go on engaging in it among Catholics.

A noted Anglican theologian, Austin Farrer, wrote in *Saving Belief* (1964), on p.140, oddly using 'soul' as though it were an NU, a noun for something thought of as uncountable with that noun:

> … we have no interest in trying to isolate a piece of us called soul, which tends to outlive the body's collapse. Our immortality is the new gift of God, not the survival of our old nature, whether in whole or in part. It was pagan Greeks who taught about immortal soul…. The Bible teaches no such doctrine, God alone can give us a future. It is better, then, to talk about the resurrection of man than about the immortality of soul.

Apart from the questions "What is resurrected, and when?" we might ask whether the matter is so simple concerning what "the Bible teaches", in particular in the New Testament, where there is confidence that death is not the end. There seems no alternative to the rendering 'soul' in most places in Matthew, Mark and Luke where the Greek word '*psuchē*' is employed' (whence 'psychology'). In particular Jesus is depicted as reinforcing the commandment (Deuteronomy 6.5) "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might", though with a counterpart to 'mind' added in Mark and Luke and used instead of 'might' in Matthew. If reference to the heart is to depth of love, and reference to might is to its strength, reference to the soul is perhaps to that in us which orders and directs, though it may do so complacently, as in the case of the rich man (Luke 12.15-21).

In contrast with maintaining a doctrine of "the resurrection of the body" (see the Wikipedia entries for "universal resurrection" and "Christian mortalism"), one might take seriously the attribution to Jesus in all three synoptic gospels of a comparison to angels of those in heaven who have been human. Luke (20.36) even has him calling them *isangeloi*, equal to angels. Paul in the famous Chapter 15 of I Corinthians does not use the word '*psuchē*', but the paradoxical expression trans-lated by 'spiritual body', and says "I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (vv. 44, 50). The *SOED*'s entry for 'angel' begins with "A **spiritual being** [my emphasis] more powerful and intelligent than a human being".

Is the word 'soul' one that we need, whether or not we ourselves give it any religious significance? I think so. We need the word 'mind' and not just 'brain'. (How inept if the actual book called *Cambridge Minds* had been called *Cambridge Brains*! Stan van Hooft, however, thinking of Ryle's treatment of 'mind', has said to me that it could have been called *Cambridge Thinkers*.) When we say that a person has a good mind, we do not mean only that she or he has a well-functioning brain, or even intelligence. We are often thinking rather of a developed and mature state of being. Nevertheless, human minds, like human souls, are the result of operations of particular brains.

'Mind' will not cover all the ground that 'soul' does. Nor will 'feeling(s)'. We need 'soul' to indicate the capacity (often obscured or overlaid, as in that rich man) to appreciate what is "deep" or profound, or beautiful, or thoughtfully sympathetic, and to be discontented with the superficial and the self-centred.

There is a remarkable paragraph in the great conductor Bruno Walter's tribute to Kathleen Ferrier that ends (perfectly?) with our word. It is on p.113 of the book of memoirs *Kathleen Ferrier* (ed. Neville Cardus, 1954), and I quote much of it:

> … when she sang religious works [by Bach and Handel] … we heard more than the performance of a highly gifted artist …; there spoke an inspiration which could only come from a deeper source than interpretative talent, and I am sure that in a longer life … it would have become a dominant force in her soul.

As this paragraph suggests, there is a strong association between 'soul' and religion. But the word need not be and ought not to be the possession of religious believers alone. We should also avoid any suggestion that it belongs to aesthetics and even to feelings alone.

What is the connection, if any, between souls and "morality"? It depends on what that word conveys to one. If it is largely conformity to society's expectations, for the sake of "respectability", nothing at all. But Kant (see T.K. Abbott's collection, p.357) has said:

> There is … one thing in our soul (*Seele*) which … we cannot cease to regard with the highest astonishment …, and that is the original moral capacity in us generally.

That capacity is to recognize that one must not deviate into self-deception or selfishness but seek truth and respect one's own and others' humanity and true good.

Yours in Learningguild,

John Howes

Gratitude for Jack Gregory

Jack, a member of Learningguild, died in June 2021 at the age of 97. There is a folder containing very valuable written memories of him that were read at the funeral and have been given to me by his son Martin, and members and others are welcome to come to 23 Fallon St to read them. I gladly excerpt below. Either online or in print, one can read one of our best-ever publications, Jack's memoir of 1997, *Teaching and Learning in the Victorian Education Department 1940-50*, which begins from his starting out as a student teacher at the age of sixteen.

Martin's account of his father includes a chronological survey. Up to his retirement in 1985, Jack had spent 18 years as a professor of history at La Trobe University in Melbourne, after teaching at the University of Melbourne before and after postgraduate study of Chinese history at London. Martin writes:

> Dad was a natural teacher and I will miss the almost audible switch that would flick in his brain as he swapped from conversation to lecture mode in order to impart some historical or philosophical wisdom to whoever was fortunate enough to be present.

Liz Jamieson, the sister of Mary who married Jack during his time in London, tells this remarkable story:

> Mary told me … that on their honeymoon she heard … beautiful music at one of the places they were staying, and she came down to investigate the source, only to find it was Jack seated at the piano. I believe he was playing the lovely melody from *Moulin Rouge* which would evoke many happy memories for them both in the years to come. In Jack's usual unassuming way, he had never mentioned being a pianist, which was an added joy as Mary was such a music lover. I loved to hear Jack play in later years. There was something moving and emotional in his playing: I never wanted it to end.

Mandy, one of the daughters, writes frankly and gratefully:

> My early memories are of a distant father in emotional pain who took my mother's attention away from me. … you fought hard to beat the dreaded Black Dog and came back to us all when I was around ten.
>
> That's when the father, role model, man I admire and treasure came home. You and Mum gave us the kind of upbringing that many people envy. Way ahead of your time for being liberal with a small l, you taught us the importance of respect and tolerance for all, of the capacity to listen, truly actively listen to others with compassion, interest and empathy, and of recognizing how fortunate we were. You taught us at all times to think and act with integrity.

Janet, another daughter, says:

> I will miss Dad's intellect, sense of humour, the sound of his playing the piano when I walked in the door, sharing a red wine, his love of good debate and his open-mindedness.

To quote Martin again,

> Music and books were the two key pastimes for Dad for all of his life.

Gillian Neale, a student of Jack's at Melbourne sixty years ago, has this memory of his lectures in the course called Far Eastern History (a title Jack thought Euro-centric):

> You would come out … feeling intellectually stimulated, and aware of the depth of scholarship and research we were being privileged to benefit from, conscious of finding new horizons where there had been no view to speak of at all. Truly, the Far East we had been used to before those lectures became the near east for us.

Christine Hirst writes about the books they talked about when she visited him at Karana, the comfortable home where his last eighteen months were spent, and readers may well decide to follow up this reference:

> I read Jack's book *The West and China since 1500* and took notes, and we talked about it. It seemed more important than ever that we understand this relationship, and his book was all the more timely.

In the introduction to a "final lecture" that Jack wrote to be read to an audience gathered to commemorate him, he says:

> I have been a most lucky man, sustained throughout my life by great love from those who have been close to me, and by great beauty in many forms, including some created

by my own dearest companion in life. In my teaching my interests and energies were divided between Chinese and Western history. I draw on both these traditions to try to convey to you more fully how, entering the last years of my life, I look on death.

First from a 17th-century Frenchman, himself drawing on Lucretius, the poet-philosopher of ancient Rome: "Fear no more, and hope no more, about what follows after. Let the fear of annihilation, or the hope of living again in that sombre future, mislead you no more. Your state when life has ended will be even as it was before your life began. We are the prey of all-devouring time. Nature is forever calling us back to chaos, satisfying at our expense her never-ending love of change. As she gave us all, even so she takes all away. The doom of death balances the happy hour of birth, and we die wholly, even as we are born." (Jean Dehenault,, as quoted in Paul Hazard, *The European Mind 1680-1715*, p.148f.)

And secondly from China, a story about one of their sages – not Confucius but the one who once dreamed he was a butterfly, and on waking asked "Am I a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming I am a man?". When his wife died, his friends came to console him, and to join in the regular rites of mourning – as you are doing! To their consternation they found him cheerfully singing a song and drumming away on an upturned bowl. They chided him for showing lack of respect for his wife who had lived with him, brought up his children, and grown old along with him. He replied: "You misjudge me. When she died I was in despair as any man might well be. But soon, pondering on what had happened, I told myself that in death no strange new fate befalls us. In the beginning we lack not life only, but form. Not form only, but spirit. We are blent in the one great featureless, indistinguishable mass. Then a time came when the mass evolved spirit, spirit evolved form, form evolved life. And now life in its turn has evolved death. For not nature only but man's being has its seasons, its sequence of spring and summer, autumn and winter. If someone is tired and has gone to lie down, we do not pursue him with shouting and bawling. She whom I have lost has lain down to sleep for a while in the Great Inner Room. To break in upon her rest with the noise of lamentation would show that I knew nothing of nature's Sovereign Law." (Chuang-tzu, translated by Arthur Waley, *The Way and its Power*, p.53f)

Thank you all for accompanying me to that Great Inner Room. I am sure you understand nature's sovereign law and will not break in upon my rest with the noise of lamentation. Most of all thanks to my dear wife who lived with me, brought up our four children, and grew old along with me, making my sometimes uncertain progress through life a "peaceful road" such as the Chinese wish upon travellers setting out on long and possibly hazardous journeys. My life journey has indeed been mostly a peaceful road, made joyful and interesting by those who have accompanied me on it. For a time, I know, I shall live on in your memories and love, and that is immortality enough for me. Who can tell where the ultimate end, the ultimate reality lies? Do we wake or dream, our birth but a sleep and a forgetting and what we call death a return home? I certainly do not believe that I am returning home to some personal god who has in any way been interested in my particular journey through this world. Still, being (like that butterfly-dreaming sage) sensible of the uncertainty that lies at the heart of things, the last thing I will say to you, my fellow travellers, is "May the Lord, the Force, the Tao – whatever it is that sustains you – be with you as constantly as it was for me.

And now exult and jubilate with me to the music of Mozart.

Learningguild and I are very fortunate to have been invited to choose books from Jack's wide-ranging library. (How false and dangerous is the belief that libraries and bookshops should have on their shelves the latest books rather than those judged most valuable.) At present nearly all the books that belong to the Learningguild Library are at 23 Fallon St. However, we are entirely willing to designate particular members as **stewards** of particular books, then listed, who hold them as long as they wish unless return is requested.

We have received a copy of Jack's own book of 2003, *The West and China since 1500*, and one of his 1ecture, published in 1971, *The West and China: an historical perspective*. Other books of history include K.S.Inglis's *This is the ABC*, covering its history from 1932 to 1983, and John Mulvaney's *Digging up a Past*, which is both an autobiography and a survey of his own pioneering work in archaeology in Australia.

There are the two famous collections of F.R. Leavis's literary criticism, *The Great Tradition* and *The Common Pursuit*. We are grateful to the Gregory family for the books mentioned here and many more.

JH

Communicating with children who have autism spectrum disorder

JOHN NEALE *has been a teacher for 53 years, always in Melbourne, mainly in the northern suburbs. He started in 1970 on a government teaching bursary to Melbourne State Teachers' College. He obtained the Trained Secondary Teacher's Certificate in 1973, having majored in physical education, and then the Higher Diploma of Teaching [Secondary], and completed the University of Melbourne's Bachelor of Education course in 1979. Most of his early teaching was in PE and geography, some in social studies, English and junior mathematics. He has spent the last 13 years as a PE and classroom teacher in a special school for children with autism.*

As a regular state secondary school teacher I first came across a student with autism about twenty years ago. I had heard the term 'autism' used before, but I never really knew any more than that the student with autism had learning and behaviour difficulties for which allowances had to be made. When the opportunity arose to change my focus by teaching in a "special school" for autism, Bulleen Heights in Lower Templestowe, I had to learn fast, especially by meeting and observing the children.

The causes of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are still uncertain. Among them may be environmental factors such as chemicals that surround us and that we ingest, flu injections and other inoculations, different gene combinations, family history, older parents, poor foetus development and lack of oxygen at birth. In the autistic child, brain development is different in the first few years: some essential brain cell connections are not reinforced or established, so that everyday emotions, communication, and some physical actions are missing. On the other hand, some ASD students are gifted with special abilities. I have come across students who have memorised every number-plate in the staff car park, have a wide knowledge of other listed data, or are musically gifted.

The signs of ASD become apparent around the age of two. The child may not respond to others, be over-sensitised to noise and change of environment, and be in his or her "own world". The disorder is on a spectrum: mild cases may show only easy upsets in social situations, medium ones repetitive behaviours including "stimming" (self-stimulating and coping behaviour, about which I say more in an end-note) and extreme ones frequent violence, screaming, destruction, self-harm, and running around and escaping from formal settings when given any chance. Many children are non-vocal or may have a vocabulary of no more than basic words and a limited range of understanding. Children with autism can have their senses overwhelmed by noise, light, crowds, unfamiliar places, people they don't know, and too many distractions. Their environment therefore needs to be carefully planned and managed.

Early intervention is now recognised as the best way to address autism, so young children are given specialised education at an early age in a school such as mine, to prepare them for learning basic life skills and for further learning in such a school.

The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is one of the main teaching tools at our school. It was developed in 1985. There are small cartoon-type cards, called pecs, that picture vital things and activities, such as a glass of water, a toilet, food, a chair, playing, running, sitting, standing and jumping. Different emotions are also indicated, such as those expressed in such words as 'happy', 'sad' and 'calm'. Pecs can be used individually to tell the student to sit down, or to ask if they want to go to the toilet or go and play. The class teacher often uses these pecs to let the students know what is coming next. Daily class schedules are posted in the classroom or carried around with the class so that the students know what is going to happen and in what order. This knowledge gives them a routine to follow daily, alleviates anxiety, and allows them to know that if they complete this task then that will happen next, and that they may have a reward. A great teaching tool. Another is the communication Ipad, particularly for the non-vocal student. The Ipad has pecs pictured on the screen, and when the student touches the pec picture the Ipad vocalises the pec, for example with the statement "l want some water". This is really helpful communication between teacher and student and allows the student to get attention and overcome any anxiety.

Most of my work has been in physical education classes, but occasionally I am a classroom teacher. Here is a numbered list of some of the principles I have learnt through internet research, my own experience, and discussion with colleagues.

1. Above all, keep learning about the individual child and his or her likes and dislikes, and hence devise specific and achievable goals for each one.

2. Calmly give directions and explanations that are clear and simple, reducing tasks to small and achievable steps.

3. Avoid distractions (e.g. excessive noise levels, crowding, overload of things to look at).

4. Create easy and predictable routines, with simple class rules and consistent structures.

5. Directly teach procedures and skills to be used in play, including the proper use of equipment.

6. With a home base for each activity, seek to ensure smooth transitions from one class or activity to another.

7. Have a reward system.

8. In PE, give plenty of opportunity for vigorous and repetitive exercise: walking and even hiking, running and swimming. (It can lessen aggressive behaviour, improve attention span, and promote all these: weight control, self-esteem, confidence, happiness, and positive social outcomes.)

9. Maintain activities that require and promote balance, agility and coordination.

10. Use an object that connects a particular student with PE, e.g. a favourite sensory ball, and play music before and after a session for warming up and cooling down.

11. Find and use ways of linking PE with science, geography, maths and history.

12. As for every good teacher, be encouraging and enthusiastic.

In summary, educating children with autism will be successful if we combine three factors: structuring the environment to be familiar, safe and not overstimulating; ensuring an effective method of communication to suit each child; and minimizing adverse behaviours by knowing what each child likes, how he or she can best be rewarded, and what trigger factors need to be kept in mind.

I have found working with these special children in this school setting much more challenging, rewarding and personal than I found mainstream teaching. In such work, the teacher has to think about and discuss different strategies for each child and implement those that he or she decides to try.

A note on stimming (mentioned in my third paragraph). It includes constant tapping, vocal sounds, hair-twirling, hand-flapping, rocking, spinning objects, obsessions with certain objects, and rearranging them. Most of these behaviours are not dangerous, but head-banging, biting and punching, eating or swallowing common objects, and excessive rubbing and scratching need to be controlled with alternative strategies and activities. All these behaviours are or have been present at my school to different degrees. Students who have behaviours of concern have an approved "Individual Behaviour Support Safety Plan". This involves identifying the behaviours of concern and possible triggers, and gives other relevant information, such as known warning signs, known preventative measures, known corrective measures, trial measures and cautions. All school staff who work with these students are required to read this document and sign it. It is prepared by the class teacher, the school psychologist and the school administration.

Three sets of volumes available

Encyclopedias are not infallible, as undergraduates need sometimes to be reminded. They are sometimes sources of oversimplifying remarks which, with "Discuss", make good exam questions! But they provide overviews that offer a student a wider, or at least another, perspective on a subject or area than what a textbook or a lecturer has provided.

John Pottage, a member of Learningguild, himself conveyed to our Library many books when he knew that he was dying, and they include the eight-volume *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards and published in 1967, and still valuable 55 years later. I recall being grateful for the article on probability.

I contributed to and have the second and enlarged edition (2001) of the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, edited by Lawrence C. Becker and his wife Charlotte B. Becker, who both died in 2018. The first of Google's obituaries for the former tells an astonishing story of his not letting polio from the age of 13 stop him, and, since he could not use his arms, typing with his toes. The second gives his "five strategies … for living well with a disability".

From the Gregorys Learningguild has received the three-volume and three-author history *The Victorians*, published in 1984 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of European settlement. Margaret Howes, the secretary, mastered the new skills required by word-processing. One writer calls her "our lynchpin" and another says "It is largely as a result of her efforts that the work was completed on schedule." The indexes of each book, *Arriving*, *Settling* and *Making their Mark*, convey the range and detail of the enterprise.

JH

A woman's decision to give up alcohol

DR CLARE HOLBERTON *reviews the recent book by* ***HOLLY WHITAKER****, an American, entitled* ***Quit like a woman****, and subtitled* ***the radical choice to not drink in a culture obsessed with alcohol****. Clare graduated in medicine and surgery at Monash University (in Melbourne). She now works in sexual health in Canberra and also visits the NSW town Young. She and her husband Professor Stephen Howes, who manages our website, are members of Learningguild.*

Holly Whitaker's book is a very personal account of one woman's decision not to drink alcohol, and a call to action.

The book details the impact of alcohol on the author's life and the steps she took to liberate herself. A no-holds-barred account with a lot of social media jargon and profanity, it is targeted at young women who are encouraged to re-examine their relationship with alcohol.

Her book is timely: a systematic review in the *British Medical Journal* issue 6 in 2016 revealed that the gap between males and females regarding alcohol use and related harms is closing, and that this trend is most noticeable among young women.[1]

The revised Australian guidelines 2020[2] recommend that to reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, healthy men and women should drink no more than ten standard drinks a week and no more than four standard drinks on any one day. In my work as a doctor, I encounter women consuming significantly more alcohol than recommended, who find it difficult to address the immediate and long-term impacts alcohol is having on them. Those motivated to change their drinking habits often find that they are undermined by family and friends or cannot access services in a timely fashion.

Whitaker argues that alcohol is a ubiquitous poison. She notes similarities in the ways that the tobacco and the alcohol industries aim to attract women to their addictive and harmful products, often manipulating and co-opting feminist ideals in the process. The account of Edward Bernays's Lucky Strikes product placement in 1929 is illuminating: for more information, google "The Original Influencer" by Iris Mostegel.

The author has herself struggled with addiction to alcohol, but does not call herself an alcoholic and indeed thinks that is the wrong way to frame the issue. She encourages all women to think deeply about their patterns of drinking. She recommends asking not "Am I an alcoholic?" but specific and uncomfortable questions such as "How many times have I suffered a hangover, regretted something I said, or kissed someone I didn't want to, because of booze? Does drinking feel like it takes more than it gives?".

The author argues that, by stigmatising and focusing on those with the disease of alcoholism, we fail to address the toxic impacts of alcohol on all bodies and on society in general. The data in the book is taken from the USA, but in 2013 the Australian Institute of Criminology estimated that alcohol misuse cost society over 20 billion dollars in lost productivity, traffic accidents, and legal and healthcare costs.[3] This figure does not include harm to others including family and sexual violence. Whitaker discusses the impact of alcohol on her sex life with brutal honesty.

She is critical of the twelve-steps approach of Alcoholics Anonymous which has changed little since 1935. She views it as patriarchal, disempowering, and religious. Instead, she suggests a "feminine-centric recovery" that has six elements: working with our core beliefs, weakening and breaking the cycle of addiction, adding healthy coping mechanisms, getting at the root causes, practising sobriety, and creating an evolving recovery. Most of the book is a deep dive into these six elements. Whilst Whitaker talks specifically to women, there is no doubt in my mind that men dealing with the impact of alcohol also need to address the same six factors.

The author credits Allen Carr's *The Easy Way to Control Alcohol* for many of her insights. It would have been good if she had mentioned the SMART Recovery program, a secular addiction treatment that has existed since 1994 and has several similarities to the approach Whitaker advocates.

Some very useful advice is included in the book. The section on how to establish a therapeutic relationship is sensible. In the chapter "What do you do for fun if you don't drink?", Whitaker is whimsical, funny and practical. She also addresses the attitude that by quitting drinking she has become the one with the problem, or, in Australian parlance, the wowser. By their very presence, non-drinkers may uncomfortably challenge their friends and family to examine their rela-

tionship to alcohol. Given how ubiquitous it is in Australian society, how polished alcohol marketing is, and how under-resourced and stigmatised treatment programs are, to choose not to drink is indeed to make a radical choice.

1. Slade T, Chapman C, Swift W, et al. Birth cohort trends in the global epidemiology of alcohol use and alcohol-related harms in men and women: systematic review and meta-regression. BMJ Open 2016;6:e011827. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2016-011827.

2. National Health and Medical Research Council 2020. Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

3. Manning M, Smith C & Mazerolle P 2013. The societal costs of alcohol misuse in Australia. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 454. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi454.

A review of *Making up Sentences*

The third edition of John Howes's book, subtitled an introduction to grammar and good writing, with a wide range of exercises, *was published in 2021 by Learningguild.* **JOHN DRENNAN**, *the reviewer, is a member who has taught English, including English as a second or a foreign language, in several countries, beginning in 1957. He holds,* inter alia*, several master's degrees and other graduate qualifications in linguistics, applied linguistics, and related areas.*

This book (its title often abbreviated to *MS*) comprises a comprehensive guide to modern English grammar and a smaller component on rhetoric. Students who master them should be enabled thereby to produce very acceptable, even excellent, writing, especially if they complete all the exercises provided. John, the author, an accomplished classicist, draws on many years of relevant experience, e.g. in teaching English to pupils whose language background is other than English, and in teaching philosophy, of which he was once a professor, mainly to university students. His habitus (that valuable word can be googled) includes the longstanding liberal tradition of the *trivium* (the set of the three paths grammar, logic and rhetoric: see S. J. Curtis, *History of Education in Great Britain*, 1948), and the stances of early-mid-20th-century British educationists such as Sir John Adams (*The Student's Guide*, 1938). John's own literary style somewhat resembles that of John Buchan: he is both concise and comprehensive. He is an admirer of R. W. Burchfield's *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage* (1996).

MS is intended for both native and non-native speakers of English, younger and older, whether studying largely alone or with a tutor or in a class or group. The collection of actual grammar rules that it explains and exemplifies, and whose application it recommends, i.e. its main content, actually goes little beyond that which I recall teaching to years 7 and 8 schoolchildren more than 60 years ago, though some, perhaps many, such pupils would not have mastered all that material, e.g. appropriate use of subjunctive and conditional verb forms.

Although its grammatical subject-matter seems appropriate even for younger secondary school pupils, its method of presentation leaves something to be desired, for those younger ones in particular. It requires very conscientious learners, willing to do the exercises thoroughly and to comply with the frequent advice to refer back to previous sections when prompted to do so. For them *MS*'s presentation is probably an advantage: it promotes self-directed and active learning.

MS has no illustrations, no diagrams, and few items that might be called tables. Thus it lacks some of the main features that create learner-friendliness (at least for the average learner) in such modern textbooks as the *Latin for Today* series, of which Book One, by M. D. Gray & T. Jenkins, appeared in 1928). *MS* consists almost entirely of sentences, so favouring the serious and conscientious learner. The sentences are indeed very well articulated into chapters, sections and paragraphs, with important words effectively printed in bold type.

The writing is clear and well crafted. Quite often, however, the sentences are so complex that the learner, in order to understand them, would need already to know the grammar being explained, at least function-

ally (i.e. in use, though without knowing the relevant grammatical terms or labels). This applies to some of the author's longer definitions of grammatical terms (particularly that on p.29 of 'subject' in his use of the term). His commendable precision, and care to note exceptions to general rules, inevitably lead to the sort of complexity which, for at least some learners, would hinder comprehension.

John uses 'subject-locution' where most other writers use 'subject' (or 'grammatical subject'), and his 'subject' corresponds to their 'referent [of the subject]'. His term is 'personed verb' where the traditional one has been 'finite verb'. He confines the word 'clause' to subordinate and coordinate clauses, and abandons the familiar term 'main clause', instead using his term 'backbone verb' for any verb that is not part of a subordinate clause (p.22). These breaks with tradition may confuse those who read other grammar books. On the other hand, the more intelligent learners could be led to commendably analytical reflection on linguistic phenomena and critical thinking about how best to describe them.

It remains to say something about the relevance of modern linguistics (the science of language) and applied linguistics. Linguists are inclined to criticise writings similar to *MS* on several grounds. Though in the case of *MS* the criticisms are almost fully answerable, they can be seen as offering deeper theoretical understanding of the context of language and its development, and as providing guidance for teachers in deciding how to use and supplement *MS*.

For example, it is a linguistic truism that language precedes any account of grammar, not *vice versa*, and that any account needs to change to reflect language changes over time. Here it is useful to distinguish the intrinsic grammar of a language (say, G1) from the grammar (say, G2) that is formulated and usually written down by scholars who have tried to discern G1 but need to simplify it in a way that can be fairly easily comprehended.

Some types of G2 have extended the classification of parts of speech beyond the nine types used in *MS*, e.g. by elaborating the 'rag bag' of adverbs (cf. P. Collins & C. Hollo, *English grammar: An introduction*, 2000). And some have extended or altered the system of sentence analysis used in *MS* (see the same book). In systemic functional grammar, following Halliday (see S. Eggins, *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*, 1994), a sentence is analysed in three different ways. (In practice you need to write the sentence and indicate all three analyses on three lines underneath it.) These kinds of analysis would differentiate between two different meanings of 'He painted a house' and indicate the virtual sameness of 'He gave Mary a book' and 'He gave a book to Mary'.

The Preface to *MS* might have been enhanced by at least some acknowledgement of the possibility of such alternative methods of analysis and of the limitations of the grammar adopted (*MS*'s G2) in adequately representing English's G1, and its rather procrustean tendency artificially to sacrifice reality to formalism.

One of the three main components of applied linguistics is the study of language acquisition. Its proponents tend to minimize the role and importance of formal grammar teaching. A senior lecturer in the area said to me some 23 years ago "If you're teaching at sentence level, you're 50 years behind the times." There are in fact eight or more different accepted methods of teaching English as a further language (see J. C. Richards & T. Rodgers, *Approaches and methods in language teaching*, 2014). Of these, the one called communicative seems to be most common these days. But to imagine that this method excludes specific teaching of grammar is to succumb to over-simplification and misrepresentation. Furthermore there is now a tendency to avoid over-strict or sole use of any of the accepted methods, and rather to make use of methodological insights from all of them (see W. Rutherford, *Second Language Grammar: Learning and Teaching*. 1987; R. R. Jordan, *English for academic purposes: A guide and resource book for teachers*, 1997).

In conclusion, I recommend *MS* as meeting a need, perhaps uniquely, and deserving to be used with and/or by the wide range of learners I listed in my second paragraph, as a supplement to communicative methods (where possible). Its value would depend on the learner's willingness to concentrate on each chapter until it is fully understood, to refer back to previous items where prompted to do so, and to do all the exercises.

MS is available without charge on our website learningguild.org.au. A print copy may be bought for $25 ($20 for members). Postage within Australia $9.

Many books large and small on grammar, punctuation, vocabulary etc. are obtainable in or through the Learningguild Library

A pope and a poem: initial discussion

Our program of Sunday Meetings in 2021 included reference to a film about Karol Wojtyla (up to 1978, the year in which he was elected Pope and took the name of John Paul II) and attention to a poem, Church Going, *by Philip Larkin. Here I initiate discussion, and invite it, on any one or more of several subjects.*

JH

The film can be found by going to www.youtube.com and putting its name *Karol a man who became pope* into the search bar. It is competently acted, and brings out the suffering of the Polish people and the persecution of the Catholic Church first by the Nazis and then by Soviet authorities. Karol Wojtyla attends a secret seminary, becomes a priest in 1946, and later a bishop, and advocates and practises a way of love rather than of counter-violence.

The length of three hours is hardly justified. The film is made in English, but I found I needed the subtitles. These, however, are full of errors and often nonsensical. One needs in any case to go elsewhere to learn more of this earlier part of Wojtyla's life.

I have been fortunate to find on Google substantial and thoughtful writing by Jane Barnes and Helen Whitney under the title *John Paul II: His Life and Papacy,* following their two-year preparation of a documentary *John Paul II: The Millennial Pope.* (Look for those two titles in reverse order.) The two women were working for Frontline, an American centre for investigative journalism. There are essays by one or both of them under six headings. The book consisting of these essays appeared in or about 2003.

They give this illustration of Nazi persecution, from a letter Hitler himself wrote to General Frank. Polish priests "will preach what we want them to preach. If any priest acts differently, we shall make short work of him. The task of the priest is to keep the Poles quiet, stupid, and dull-witted... . There should be only one master for the Poles, the German."

Unsurprisingly, Helen Barnes says at the outset:

> Over and over, we heard the following refrain: "To understand this Pope, you must go back to his Polish roots." Ultimately, everything we learned proved the deep truth of these words. All of the major themes of John Paul II's papacy can be traced to the shaping events of his life – a life whose roots are sunk in soil. His Christian vision, his vocation, his very emotions draw their depth and intensity from the country he left to become Holy Father of the Catholic Church in Rome.

Wojtyla was a professor of ethics before he became a bishop. In *Fides et Ratio* (*Faith and Reason*), the encyclical of 1998, by which time he had been Pope for 20 years, he emphasizes the importance of philosophy. His readiness for discussion with non-Christians appears in a long sentence in the Conclusion. I quote most of it, with admiration:

> the most pressing issues facing humanity … may find a solution if there is a clear and honest collaboration between Christians and the followers of other religions and all those who, while not sharing a religious belief, have at heart the renewal of humanity. (Sec.104)

John Paul had the human person at the centre of his philosophical concerns. A good survey, by John J. Coughlin OFM, called "Pope John Paul II and the Dignity of the Human Being", can be found by googling that title. The Pope emphasized all three of the body, the intellect, and free will in the development of persons.

What I miss in *Faith and Reason* is recognition of Plato's point that consistency is not enough, and that by critically identifying what are unsatisfactory starting-points or assumptions we may make progress towards what deserves to be an *archē*, a first principle. (See *Republic* 533f.)

One assumption fundamental to Catholicism has been that ultimately the Pope himself can decide what is and what is not allowable for loyal Catholics to do. John Paul remained convinced that so-called artificial contraception was wrong, and that the proposal that women could be ordained as priests was a big mistake.

What has led many Catholics away from orthodoxy is the reaction to clashes of this kind that they are more sure that what the Pope rules out is justified than they are of the right of the Pope to decide the matter.

How are we to use the verb 'know' and corresponding verbs in other languages in locutions of the form 'A **knows** that *p*', where the verb is empha-

sized and the letter is abstractive for any locution with which a statement could be made? That is a fundamental question in epistemology.

Pope John Paul has a remarkable paragraph (in Sec. 32) about "the martyrs", of whom he says that they are "the most authentic witnesses to the truth about existence". In it he says

> The martyrs know that they have found the truth about life in the encounter with Jesus Christ, and nothing and no-one could take this certainty from them.

They or some of them may **believe** it with entire conviction; but 'know' is the wrong verb here. 'Know', in a carefully strict use of it, requires more even than the matter's being "beyond reasonable doubt"; it requires that one could not be wrong. So one can know such "empirical" (and often "obvious") facts as that there is more than one university in Melbourne; but one cannot **know** that "the truth about life" is to be found "in the encounter with Jesus Christ" Whatever proposition is understood by those words can be believed, can be a matter of faith, but cannot be known to be true.

Where are we to **start** in thinking about what *Weltanschaaung* ("world-view") we can reasonably go on maintaining, or adopt? What is a satisfactory starting-point or *archē*? I start from **appreciation** in the two senses of the word that I distinguished in my last letter (2.2020), and preferably in many spheres of life. John Paul is onto something similar when he writes in Sec. 4 of *Faith and Reason*

> Without wonder, men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal.

From there to **the need to be serious.** I postpone, and first invite readers to consider for themselves, the question how best to explain what we can best mean by 'serious' in describing a general characteristic of some persons.

So we come to John Larkin's poem *Church Going*, of which a text can readily be found on Google. How valuable is this poem? I particularly invite discussion of that. Max Stephens has permitted me to repeat here a comment he made at the Sunday Meeting at which I'd presented it: he thought it self-preoccupied, with too much about the writer's own thoughts and actions.

The title's two words and some of the text envisage churches and cathedrals as becoming more and more disused, until they are relics or museums. Larkin admits to a habit of visiting churches, says of the one he's been in that it enabled its members to think of life as a whole, without the "separation" (e.g., one might say, of generations) so common in our time, and then uses the word 'serious' three times in his last stanza. "A serious house on serious earth it is", and (this surely applying to himself):

> … someone will forever be surprising
> A hunger in himself to be more serious,
> And gravitating with it to this ground,
> Which, he once heard, was proper to grow
> wise in,
> If only that so many dead lie round.

Human beings, then, can have this remarkable characteristic: to feel their need to be more serious, which requires seeking wisdom and not pushing aside thoughts of death. Pope John Paul II would rightly have said that central to wisdom is the recognition of wonder and love as paramount. But part of it is also the recognition of our conditioning **and** the need to question that conditioning: with that word I have in mind the environment of beliefs, attitudes and allegiances by which we were influenced in childhood, adolescence and perhaps well beyond. John Stuart Mill justly says of a certain kind of person

> The same causes which make him a churchman in London would have made him a Buddhist or Confucian in Peking.
> (*On Liberty*, Ch.2, para. 4)

How far has that applied to **me**, one should ask, in my moral, political or religious commitments? One indispensable part of seriousness, though many people rightly called serious do not recognize it as such, is to distinguish between causes and reasons, good or bad, and seek good ones for living in a certain way. The cemetery itself reminds Larkin of the need to be serious in one's perspective on one's own life. That perspective is far from Saint Paul's hypothetical one, in which he writes "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (I Corinthians 15.32, quoting Isaiah's description at 22.13). Few parents, few creative or cooperative humans, will share that attitude. What is wisdom here? It includes the recognition that human life is best when persons ask whose needs they must, and whose they especially can, both identify and help to meet, and then think, love and act accordingly.

As with 'free', 'fair' and 'clear', the adjective 'serious' requires some negative explanation: 'not casual or flippant'. To be serious requires resolve and thoughtful commitment. "What in particular am I serious about?" is the emerging question. But, again, discussion is invited.