

Lacan on jouissance; intuition & subconscious mind; eye massage; the weighing; critical open-mindedness #9

How do we respond to change?


Hi, I'm Alex Staniforth; Artist, Coach, Trader. In these bi-monthly letters I'm exploring how our species makes meaning and takes action in the context of an ever evolving dynamic world. I write this as a place to share and collect thoughts as we explore these topics. I hope this blend of information serves to raise some interesting dialogues.


We have a couple of events coming up in May:

- Free Online Meditation Circle on Fridays/Sundays from 19:30-21:00
- Online Exeter University Learning Set on Wednesdays (TBC). For more info and RSVP contact via email below

If you haven't yet visited our website, you can visit [here](#).

A wider perspective

 In Freudian psychoanalysis, the pleasure principle is the instinctive seeking of pleasure and avoiding of pain to satisfy biological and psychological needs. Where Freud relates instinct to biological and psychological needs, Lacan explores instinct as a dance of experience between desire and drive beyond rudimentary needs. Instinct, or jouissance as Lacan might see it, is a nuanced blend where self and object of desire interrelate in a complex subject-object mush. Looking at one's relationship with self, others and the world in this open, and yet critical way can help to better explore the complexity of relationships.

 Owing to both the importance of his work and relevance in being aware of bodily responses to stress in this time of uncertainty, we build on our introduction to Bessel Van Der Kolk's work in PS Review #3; sharpening our focus into the role of memory and the evolving psychobiology of post traumatic stress. While this may seem unrelated to you, there is often sound insight found looking into probabilistic tail events - an inquiry into PTSD could reveal a new way of looking into your own responses to certain stimuli. How we perceive life is very much a function of our personal and environmental contexts.

🔥 The latest CO2 concentration (ppm) measurement (as of May 5th, 2020): 416.44 ppm; May, 2019: 415 ppm, 25 years ago: 360 ppm.

Closer to home

🦎 In times of uncertainty, it's quite usual for the mind to switch gear away from calmer, more considered sense making to more fight-flight thinking. In this process, our cognitive minds direct attention to perceived threats - essentially our reptilian brain scanning for potential dangers. A combination of this looking for danger and our limited cognitive ability to constantly analyse presents us with informational overload. We become stressed and our minds become increasingly cluttered - hindering our ability to make reasonable judgements. Taking time to unpack these thoughts is important - and may reveal some interesting insights to you also. Here's a process you might find useful.

🧠 Open mindedness and critical thinking are two pillars that make up our liberal way of being. When acting from a place of flow, openness encourages freedom and expression, where critical thinking provides the space for inquiring into the meaningfulness of freedoms in their context. Over the past decade, liberalism has on the whole turned a blind eye to its own critique and has indulged in expression - even lashing out at the those who wish to continue this dance of expression and critique. In this time, there is grave need to understand the value of both, and how they complement each other. Christopher Dwyer Ph.D offers his thoughts on both the interplay of open mind and critique, and into ways of better responding to the anxiety in this dynamic.

Notes on compassion

🧠 Tension is the symptom of many afflictions. Beyond being physically burdened, tension is most commonly associated with lack of flow, or lack of expression - be that sourced externally or self-imposed. The most common source of expression is the mouth, as it is through the mouth we explore, share and communicate. If you notice your jaw is clenched, tense or tender, there is a good chance this is due to some kind of emotional build up (assuming your dental hygiene is not the cause). If you notice this, you might like to practice the massage exercise; observing thoughts, sensations and emotions that arise for you. What do you notice in relation to this tension?



Being at home and having much greater contact with screens over physical people is likely to cause eye strain in many of us. This can leave us feeling disassociated, tired and cranky. Dr Grace Chan guides a face massage for face tension release - a process which some claim can also increase eye health, though I can not speak to the validity of this. Of course, wash your hands first. At the very least, this encourages blood flow to areas of strain around your face and helps to loosen your face muscles.

Artistic expression



Tree against eclipse 20/03/2015 09:29

Poetry Corner

 [The Weighing by Jane Hirshfield](#)

The heart's reasons
seen clearly,
even the hardest
will carry
its whip-marks and sadness
and must be forgiven.

As the drought-starved
eland forgives
the drought-starved lion
who finally takes her,
enters willingly then
the life she cannot refuse,
and is lion, is fed,
and does not remember the other.


So few grains of happiness
measured against all the dark
and still the scales balance.

The world asks of us
only the strength we have and we give it.
Then it asks more, and we give it.

Things & Stuff

 [Lava waterfall in Yosemite](#)

 [MK Ultra by Rosie Kay Dance Company](#)

 [Triadic roots of human cognition](#)

If you've found anything here stimulating and want to chat, then get in touch via my email: aostaniforth@gmail.com.

Stay well, Alex