



Division; fudoshin; nationalistic identity; acceptance; just enough booze #11

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 June:

- Free Online Meditation Circle on Fridays/Sundays from 19:30-21:00


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

A wider perspective


🌍 “A person's identity ... is like a pattern drawn on a tightly stretched parchment. Touch just one part of it, just one allegiance, and the whole person will react, the whole drum will sound.” In response to the nationalistic attachment that can come out of declaring allegiance with a single identity, [Amin Maalouf emphasises](#) the importance of embracing all labels we go by, not in conflict with one another, but acknowledging how they inform the whole.




China and India are butting heads over border claims in the Himalayas and riots have broken out across the U.S. Two different, by very related examples of the power latent in nationalistic sensationalisation. [George Orwell](#) characterised nationalism in two parts. First, in assuming that human beings can be classified like insects and that whole blocks of...tens of millions of people can be confidently labelled “good” or “bad.” Secondly, the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognising no other duty than that of advancing its interests. Nationalist rhetoric looks safe in times of uncertainty - it's easy to identify with. But in ‘building a wall’, of the mind or in physicality, is to see partition which gives rise to conflict. A counter to nationalism is empathy and education. [Here's](#) the recommended reading of National Ambassadors from across the world.


 The latest CO2 concentration (ppm) measurement (as of June 2nd, 2020): 417.90 ppm; June, 2019: 414.5 ppm, 25 years ago: 360 ppm.

Closer to home

 Owing violence in self. Fudoshin, the 'immovable mind', is the mind that has met all challenges of life and has attained a state of complete composure and fearlessness. The objective of Fudoshin is to guard against, what Buddhists term, the '4 sicknesses of the mind' - confusion, doubt, fear, surprise. Reactions to all these can include violence. In light of the external shows of violence in the world today, I suggest we could do better for ourselves, our communities and wider systems to work on our own violence - our monkey minds. See below for an intro to Zazen.

 You don't have to be a Zen student to know about detachment. The idea is not to resist distraction but remain attentive to it. To hear your thoughts and to be in confluence with them and yet simultaneously be unaffected by them. Intimate, yet separate. To begin a practice of detachment is to lean toward observing rather than reacting to thoughts. Ironically, in striving for detachment, one is attached to that end. This is one of many paradoxes in Zen literature. With time, the learning reveals itself, deepening into a blend of object-subject mush. The practice is simple and tough. Here's an introduction to Zazen practice led by Zen Mountain Monastery.

Notes on compassion

 When sitting in meditation, I sometimes find myself confronted with a self that inspires fear and loathing in me. I see hypocrisy, selfishness and deceit. I see laziness and lack of conviction. It is easier to turn away than to sit with these sensations; far easier to reject, to objectify these parts and call them evil. Easier still is to project them out onto world, finding a suitable scapegoat in the visible spectrum of light. To turn away from these parts of self is to be closed to a connection that could otherwise evolve. This separation is suggested as the main cause of suffering by many texts. Keeping open in times like these reminds me of the importance of the work. After all, the violence we do not resolve in self has a habit of making its way into the world. I remember to breathe and observe.



Here're some koan's (riddles that Zen students use during some meditation practices) to assist in unravelling deeper subtleties about the world and yourself. See how you get on.

Artistic expression



Poetry Corner

 Anger against beasts - Wendell Berry

The hook of adrenalin shoves
into the blood. Man's will,
long schooled to kill or have
its way, would drive beast
against nature, transcend
the impossible in simple fury.
The blow falls like a dead seed.
It is defeat, for beasts
do not pardon, but heal or die
in the absence of the past.
The blow survives in the man.
His triumph is a wound. Spent,
he must wait the slow
unalterable forgiveness of time.

Things & Stuff

 The importance of balance...

 U.S. last of G7 to sign Global Partnership on AI

 Devonshire breeze through the leaves

Invitation: This week, why not take a few moments at the beginning of your day to record all thoughts, emotions and sensations that come into your mind just as you wake up. No sense making, no filter. Just write down everything. Do the same at the end of each day. Over the week, do you notice any patterns? What insight might be in these words for you?

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

Stay well,

Alex