



June Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Every day is different and at the time of writing it is not possible even to guess what things will be like when the June newsletter goes out. If we are to avoid a state of constant anxiety we have no recourse other than to live very much in the moment. Strangely enough, the next moment will grow out of the one we are in now so how we inhabit the moment we are in is of vital importance. Hopefully it will give the following moment the best possible chance of becoming something creative and beautiful; or are we just going to perpetuate an endless chain of anxiety and stress? The philosopher Sartre seemed to think we would do just that.

June is an interesting month, they all are! But there is something about the month of June that is difficult to define. It brings us to the longest day. This seems to me to be a bit of a let-down as the summer has hardly got properly started before the days begin to get shorter again. But on the other hand it brings us a few of those amazing nights when the sky in the north is a strange, luminescent green and seems to hint at a whole other dimension of awareness and being.

The further north one goes the more the theme unfolds and it must surely have a profound effect on the psyche of those who experience it on a regular basis. I know I had to keep getting up to assure myself that the 'white night' was still there when I was far enough north to be able to experience it. There was little chance of sleep. Fortunately one seems to need much less sleep when there is plenty of sun and daylight.

Here, in our rather variable, cloudy climate, we scramble along as best we can and again even the weather compels us to live in the moment. Celebrations, planned in warmer, sunnier climes, are more likely to happen than those on British soil. They

can be rained off or compelled to adapt beyond recognition in undercover venues; and now-a-days it is unsafe to plan anything at all.

Not to despair! it is quite amazing how rich the moment can be. The senses are constantly providing us with information that needs to be processed and the inner world of the psyche, where this takes place is like a vast unexplored planet, with laws and modes of being that we barely understand. The sense of there being in all this an actual authentic 'self' gives me endless interest and concern. Dreams, myths and legends constantly refer to the quest for this self as a journey home. Coming home to oneself has been the dominant theme in countless epics; but where is it? What is it? Does it really exist and if so, how and where do we locate it.

For those who have yet to even begin this vitally significant journey, lock-down could be a great trial, but it may also provide the stresses that might eventually initiate an amazing inner adventure.

There is a limit to the amount of time and energy one can spend in the pursuit of an authentic self but it is a quest and a journey that one can keep coming back to in odd, quiet moments, which some of us may now have an abundance. In the inner world of the psyche, as in the outer world, the sun is always shining somewhere just as there are places where it is always dark and obscure. Our ancestors at Stone Henge were only too aware that at the summer solstice they had to mark the considerably more vital station of the solstice in December.

Bringing opposites together is a vital process in a healthy psyche. Now, from pictures taken in space, we can see the planet as a functioning, integrated whole: dark and light, hot and cold, abundance and desert. It is more difficult to see humanity as a whole and harder still to see the individual, divided psyche as a whole; but we need to try and the current situation gives so many of us an unexpected and invaluable opportunity.

Brian Gill

Chairman

CATCH UP

As you will all know by now we will not be able to hold meetings in the near future so can take it as read that it will be at least September before anything might change for our age group.

Some groups may be able to have Zoom meetings on line and if any of the leaders have tried it or thought about trying to organise something on these lines, please let me know how it goes. I know that Gerry Riley has run a couple of debating meetings in this way which proved successful.

Activities during June and July are cancelled and we break then until September normally. Should there be any further news on U3A matters I will let you know in the July issue. Ed.

Zoom Time

Information by Gerry Riley



I've been Zooming Around During this Crisis. Have You?

Now I am not talking about driving over the speed limit or even running instead of walking or dare I say tuning up your mobility scooter; No, I am talking about Video conferencing!

Now I am sure many of you have heard of this and may be quite a few of you have been using it yourselves. So, for those people, you need not read further unless you wish to.

First what is Video conferencing, of which Zoom is one very popular example? Well it is the ability to have communication between parties, not only by voice as you do when using your telephone but a significant extra that allows you to see the people you are communicating with. This communication does not take place using the traditional telephone network, but as you might have suspected, via the Internet; that wonder (or curse) of the modern era.

It is very interesting to note that if you go back to the 1950s or 60s and to be honest even into the 70s there have been a proliferation of science fiction books predicting all manner of futures. Many talking about routine trips to Mars and bases on the moon, flying cars and working weeks of just 1 day or less because of the proliferation of microcomputers, which weren't that micro anyhow. However, hardly anyone predicted the massive rise of the Internet and its greatest companion the smart phone or tablet, together with wireless communication both in the home and outside. It is this fusion between the smart phone or tablet and the internet that has made Zoom and other video communications possible on a wide scale basis. A significant inclusion on all tablets or smart phones is the built-in microphone and camera, which is important as it avoids having to buy these as separate items and add them, with all the extra complexity that could bring.

I find it fascinating when having more recently viewed 2001 A Space Odyssey, first shown more than 50 years ago, that one of the protagonists travels to the moon base via a large space station and, whilst there goes into a "phone booth" to have a video call with his young daughter. Where are our moon bases and space stations that ordinary people can travel to even 19 years after the prediction was supposed to happen? However, equally we don't have to use phone booths anymore when out and about. I guess the closest to our smart phone was the hand-held communicators used in Star Trek, but even here they are voice only and they can only be used for that purpose not all manner of other functions. Yet equally the people in the show can teleport anywhere, have instant medical diagnosis and can travel faster than light. Yet another example of how predictions are far from perfect.

This form of communication has been a Godsend during this lockdown, enabling families and friends to still see and talk to each other when normally they might well

have been meeting in person. Zoom in particular, has taken off in a big way. There are several competing technologies as well; WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Microsoft Teams and quite recently Google's own version available inside Gmail.

What makes Zoom and Microsoft teams better is that that they are not just available for one to one or small numbers of users, but they can easily be adapted to large-scale meetings of the under of 100+ participants. In the latter case it is imperative, that a host can control who can speak and be seen to ensure that too many do not try to talk at once. Also Zoom can allow participants to virtually raise their hand using a button to signal they wish to ask a question. They can also send questions by text if preferred. It is also possible to share documents and pictures from your computer or tablet with others in the meeting.

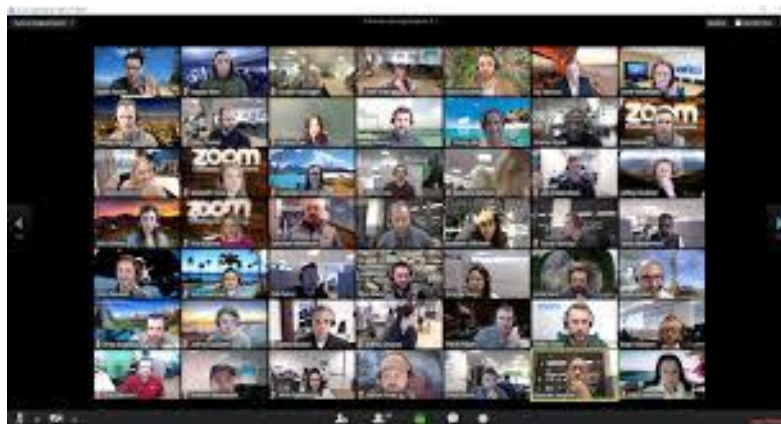
I personally have now used Zoom for:

1. Talking with family members and even having on-line quizzes with them
2. Talking with a bunch of friends in the Ramblers that I normally go out walking with.
3. Attending several on-line seminars that are of interest to me.
4. As some may know I run a U3A group for debating various issues. I have used Zoom during the lockdown to continue the debates virtually with up to 5 participants.

As I am retired, I do not need to have work related meetings, but Zoom has been used very successfully for this and has enabled so many more people to work from home. Who knows many may continue this practice after the crisis is over, reducing traffic congestion and carbon emissions and making public transport less crowded. It is also interesting to note that Zoom has even been used to make a series of short TV programs about the lockdown, where each actor remained in their own home and Zoom is even used in the daily Corvid-19 government briefings for the journalists to put their questions to the minister and science or technical representative.

So who knows we may well be having our AGM via Zoom in the not too distant future!

Figure 1 - A Zoom online-meeting in progress



BRIDGE GROUPS

Tony Swarbrick would like anyone interested in joining on-line Zoom groups for Bridge during this time to e-mail him at: groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk this works quite well and has recently started up; Tony will explain and advise on how to go about it.

LUNCH GROUP _ cancelled until further notice

Meet at 12.45 for 1pm

COLIN STREDDER



ROTA 2020 COFFEE & TEA



If you cannot do a duty, please ring me, JOAN BENTON, ON 608 6226. Please let me know if you don't think that you are on my list and you would like to volunteer

Further duties cancelled until further notice due to the constraints of the Corona virus.

NOTES OF ACTIVITIES AT NON - SPEAKER MEETINGS 2020

Cancelled until further notice

SPEAKERS 2020



AUGUST BREAK As yet we do not know what the situation will be after the break but will keep you informed.

Thursday 3rd September – Glynn D. Parr

Under, over and up the River Mersey

Thursday 8th October – Brian Anderson

Images from the edge –

Thursday 5th November – Michael Murphy

The terrible tale of Gin

Thursday 3rd December – Barry Humphrey

Christmas songs – a look back

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

23rd April 2020 -

AGM

postponed

3rd September 2020

later)

First meeting after Summer Break? (will be advised

PLEASE NOTE IN YOUR DIARIES: there are three weeks between the meeting on September 17th and the following one on October 8th after which they will continue at fortnightly intervals.

Windermere Walk Friday April 17th 2020

Cancelled for the moment

Gerry Riley



ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Dates for U3A Art Appreciation Group meetings.

Cancelled until further notice

Bernadette has recommended checking out the National Gallery on line:

The National gallery @ng-london.org.uk where there is a choice of virtual programmes and some interesting talks about a selection of paintings and painters to be found.



THEATRE OUTINGS - SOCIAL OUTINGS EVENTS

NOTE FROM TONY SWARBRICK:

Bowness Trip (17th April)

Blackpool Trip (7th October)

Tony Swarbrick
(Group Coordinator)

Cancelled – hopefully postponed.

Manchester Ship Canal **Cancelled – hopefully postponed**

email groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk

**Tony hopes to be able to reschedule these trips for 2021
Ed.**



**A friend sent this tongue in cheek story regarding the present
worldwide predicament, which I thought I would share with
you. Ed.**



‘HEAVEN’

It is a quiet Thursday afternoon in the dark energy of space known to earthlings as Heaven. All the Immortals save one have left the Heavenly Palaces after the weekly Thursday morning meeting with The Ultimate Immortal, known colloquially among the Heavenly Host as Zeus. It is the Immortal for Universe “BigBang13.7bn” who has been requested to remain for a private word with Zeus.

The choir of seraphim which has been humming along in the background like a celestial bee hive now starts a gentle crescendo to announce the return of Zeus. There is a fanfare from the orchestra of cherubim. The majestic spirit never appears but the presence is all embracing. The choir settles back into its eternal hum, the cherubim nod off.

“I asked you to stay so that we could have a little chat about that free will experiment which you have introduced into your universe” says Zeus. “There have been grumbles among many of the other Immortals about this” he adds. “I would like to hear your views on how the experiment is working out”.

God, for that is the name of the Immortal for Universe “BigBang13.7bn”, smiles uncomfortably. “On the whole” he replies “the experiment works well, certainly for the first few lifetimes of stars.”

“Tell me more” says Zeus, “wherein lies the problem?”

“There is a corner of my universe” God replies “which has seen so many waves of star formation that one particular galaxy now has all the natural elements”.

“This seems to me to be an unavoidable development” says Zeus.

“Indeed” replies God, “but one planet called Earth, has evolved a life-form which is now so advanced that it is close to creating even more extreme elements too”.

“Tell me more about this life-form,” demands Zeus “how has it developed so far, and what effect is it having on the other life-forms which I presume inhabit this planet”?

“Well”, says God, “this particular life-form has now achieved a method of communication called speech which allows it to communicate intelligently with all its fellows. This allows it to work together to dominate all the other life-forms and literally to change the face of the planet. It is also an extremely fecund species and since it has eliminated any potential predators it has expanded in prodigious numbers to almost all parts of the globe. There seems to be no limit to its present or indeed future capabilities and it seems to lack the corporate wisdom to check itself or to realise its utter frailty in cosmic terms.”

“How long do species normally last on your troubled planet?” asks Zeus.

“Usually about a million earth years” replies God.

“And how long has this species actually existed?” asks Zeus.

“In its present form about a million earth years” says God “but it is now finding ways to extend the normal life of a single member of the species and by implication therefore the length of the projected life of the species as a whole. A longer life of one clever man (for that is what the species calls itself) means more time for discoveries. The potential for combined discoveries from the whole species is therefore unimaginable.”

“So how is this a problem?” Zeus inquires.

“The core problem is that this is no longer a beneficial species. It eliminates other species at will, it uses the planet’s resources at unsustainable rates and is slowly but surely creating a species desert where only a selected few genetically modified food species will be allowed to survive. My worry is that in cosmic time this species will attempt to impose itself firstly at galactic level in a search for new resources and then at a universal level. It will in fact become its own”God”.

“And you will face redundancy” says Zeus “I see your dilemma. What do you propose to do about it, seeing that this is your experiment in free will?”

“I must confess to being at a loss” says God.

“Perhaps this is a problem for Satan” says Zeus, and to the assembled heavenly host he commands “send for Satan”.

The Fallen Angel arrives to a shrieking chorus by the Seraphim of the appalling music from Beethoven’s Ode to Joy and a strong smell of Bonfire Night.

“That just sounds like something that somebody deaf might have written” says Zeus.

“It was” acknowledges God, “the Fireworks Music might have been more appropriate”.

“So” says Satan, “to what do I owe the honour of this summons which calls me from the Abyss?”

Zeus explains the conundrum facing God in his experiment in Free Will and the difficulty that this has placed him in with the Heavenly Court. He asks Satan if he can propose any answers that will relieve God of his problem without nullifying the terms of his experiment.

The Fallen Angel allows himself to fall into a deep trance. He considers, he cogitates, he ruminates, and he muses. Eventually he smiles. "Your 'man' species is not as impregnable as he likes to think" he finally pronounces. "He thinks that he is able to control everything, but in his quest for ultimate domination, he has unleashed another evolutionary sequence which he has not yet learned to control. I speak of little things in the dirt, germs, bacteria, viruses, prions and other pathogens that he has not yet even discovered. As fast as he attempts to find an answer to the control of any one of these, it evolves into another form which is then even harder to control and even more virulent. Eventually his meddling will lead to the appearance of the ultimate uncontrollable pathogen. When that is reached it will sweep him away and he will go the way of the dinosaurs. And the beauty is that he will have unknowingly created his own incurable pandemic by the arrogant exercise of his own free will."

"Perfect" says Zeus. "Same time next week?"

Michael Butterworth

SENT IN BY HAZEL PALMER – VIEWS OF HER GARDEN VISITERS

Situated in quiet a quiet area with plenty of trees and bushes providing quick refuge for safety and nesting. There are three feeding stations plus a covered bird table, several drinking areas and a suet ball station, (this is very popular and better booked as it can lead to some unseemly behaviour). There is also a pond for bathing. The food is of high quality consisting mainly of mealworms and suet pellets with added delicacies of cake crumbs, sultanas, bacon rind and grapes and is highly recommended by previous visitors.





Regional Web site: www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events

For regional news and events.



AND FINALLY -----

What a long three months it seems to have been since the corona virus changed our lives and what an incredibly sad time for those who have lost dear ones. I'm sure that we are all hoping that it won't be too long before we can meet our friends again in person rather than by mobile or internet! Unfortunately it looks as though it will be a while yet before this can happen, certainly not before our summer break in August.

I do hope that you are all keeping safely away from the virus and enjoying the good weather at least; personally I have to admit to having caught up with several jobs in the house and garden that needed doing. Although there is not much going on in U3A, if anyone has any stories or unusual occurrences during isolation that you would like to share, I would love to hear them and include them in the next

newsletter.

By the way for those who usually really enjoy the annual Secret Gardens Event in Oxton village, which sadly like many events had to be cancelled this year, there are some excellent photos of some of the gardens on YouTube. I realise that some of you will have already done this but for those who haven't and would like to, simply Google, Secret Gardens, Oxton, Birkenhead. The gardens are really lovely and residents including businesses in the village work really hard to make it a success, raising welcome cash for local charities.

Eliane Davie --- Editor

