



HUMAN VALUES IN AGING NEWSLETTER

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H.R. Moody, Editor

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AMAZEMENT WHEN IT'S OVER

This past month poet Mary Oliver died, and it's fitting to remember her with her very own words:

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.

I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

For more on Mary Oliver and her work, see:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/mary-oliver>

For reflections on Mary Oliver and her impact, see:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-life-s-purpose/201901/mary-oliver-how-live-your-one-wild-and-precious-life>

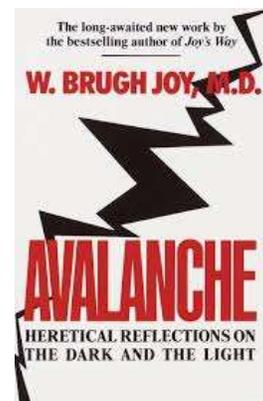
THE AFTERNOON OF LIFE

"An inexperienced youth thinks, indeed, that one can let the old people go, because in any case there is nothing much that can be done with them: life is behind them, and they cannot be considered as much more than petrified pillars of the past. But it is a great error to assume that the meaning of life is exhausted with the period of youth and growth... The afternoon of life is just as full of meaning as the morning, only its meaning and purpose is a wholly different one."

-Jung, The Psychology of the Unconscious

ELDERHOOD

"Elderhood is the shadow side of incapacitating old age. In the concluding phase of our life cycle, Elderhood brings us to the threshold of a mystery as profound as that of birth and procreation... the mystery of death and personal dissolution... Elders till and prepare the soil of the younger generations, guiding them into a successful relationship with Life and with Death. Elders are the sculptors and the guardians of culture and civilization. They are the great teachers of life, second only to the Master Teacher, which is Life itself."



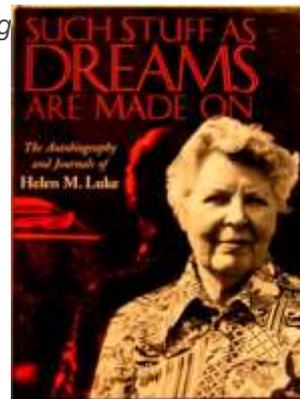
From Brugh Joy, *Avalanche: Heretical Reflections on the Dark and the Light* (Ballantine, 1990).

LATER LIFE DREAM

“A Burning House”

The following is a dream of Helen Luke, at age 88:

I dreamed of a house in which I was living, with other people living in other rooms of it. There was a fire in adjacent property and the firemen were at work, but it began to look as though our house was threatened. I was talking to a fireman and he asked whose house it was. I suddenly realized that it was not a place I had rented temporarily but my own house. I said so clearly, yet at the same time felt a kind of clarity and release, as though if it burned down no one but myself would be the loser, and it didn't matter to me much. There was no sense of danger to anyone's life in the dream, only to possessions.



This dream image of one's own house can often symbolize the self or the totality of the dreamer's personality. In this case the dreamer has recognized that the last stage of life entails loss: burning down or destruction of what she had taken her self to be. She "suddenly realized" that this life of hers was not "rented temporarily" but was indeed her actual existence, her "one and only life cycle, one that permitted no substitutions," as Erik Erikson phrased it. Erikson, of course, classically framed the distinctive psychological struggle of old age as "ego-integrity versus despair."

In "A Burning House," faced with loss, Helen Luke's attitude is far from one of despair. Her attitude at first seems perplexing. Rather than integrity or self-affirmation, Luke feels "a kind of clarity and release" when her house is burning down. The feeling of the dream embodies a movement the great medieval mystic Meister Eckhart called "Gelassenheit" or "letting go." In this condition of detachment

Luke can look upon her self and say "No one but myself would be the loser, and it didn't matter much."

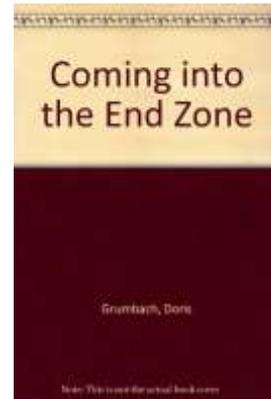
For more, see Helen Luke, *Such Stuff as Dreams are Made On* (Parabola, 2000)

I ALLOW MYSELF TO BE LOVED

"How does one grow old with grace? There is a prescription, I believe, but it is not easy to follow. We must feel at home in the world, and then reside in peace with ourselves. We must not so much demand to be loved as to love. For if we love, selflessly and unpossessively, we are then loved."

From Doris Grumbach, *Coming into the End Zone*, a journal of old age.

When asked how she prays, St. Theresa of Avila answered, "I allow myself to be loved."



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Generations United is now accepting nominations for multiple awards to be presented during the 20th Global Intergenerational Conference, June 12-14, 2019, in Portland, OR. An individual, team, organization, or community group can be nominated for their outstanding contributions to intergenerational work.

Deadline for award submission is February 22, 2019.

Details at: <https://guconference.org/program/awards/>

WEB SITES TO SEE

GEROTRASCENDENCE. "Gerotranscendence Theory: A Fresh Look at Positive Aging" at: <http://www.usccb.org/about/national-religious-retirement-office/upload/Engaging-Aging-Newsletter-Spring-2015.pdf>

ARTS. See "Visual Aging Studies: Exploring Images of Aging in Art History and Other Disciplines" at: <http://ageculturehumanities.org/WP/visual-aging-studies-exploring-images-of-aging-in-art-history-and-other-disciplines>

LONGEVITY. Population aging is one of the central historical trends of the 21st century. The Longevity Forum is committed to achieving longer, healthier and more fulfilled lives for as many people as possible. More about them at: <http://www.thelongevityforum.com/>

COMING EVENTS

SAGE-ING: "Death as Homecoming: Life is the Answer" (Feb. 10-15, 2019, Tampa, FL). Retreat led by Rabbi Nadya Gross and Rabbi Victor Gross at The Franciscan Center. Participants will write their individual vidui – deathbed confession – and begin the process of writing a Spiritual-Ethical Will. For details visit: <https://yerusha.org/sage-ing/sage-ing-part-2-death-homecoming-life-answer/>

AWAKENING THE SAGE WITHIN Workshop (Feb. 17, 2019, Westwood, CA). Free workshop with Connie Zweig at the Academy of Jewish Religion in Westwood (Los Angeles), 10 to 5 pm. Aging as a spiritual journey, exploring images and fears of aging, harvesting wisdom from life review, forgiveness to release the past, and facing mortality. For pre-registration email conniezweig@gmail.com
Registration at: <https://ajrca.edu/event/inner-work-for-elders-awakening-the-sage-within/>

LIVES WELL LIVED Film. Feb. 24, 2019 at the Joslyn Center, Manhattan Beach, CA; and Feb. 24, 2019: Temple Beth Am and LA Elderly, Los Angeles, CA. For details visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1946190922095214/>

RETIREMENT: "Reinvention of Retirement" (Feb. 26, 2019, 12:00 noon EST)

The 4th Tuesday Revolutionize your Retirement Interview with Expert's Series Features Connie Zweig, author of *Romancing the Shadow*. She is currently writing about the reinvention of retirement. Sign-up begins Feb. 19 at www.revolutionizeretirement.com. Accessible via phone and Internet, although questions can only be asked via Internet. Once signed up, details about the the call will be sent. Direct questions to Dori Mintzer at dorian@dorianmintzer.com

CONSCIOUS ELDERING in the Time of the Great Turning (Mar. 22-24, 2019, Seattle, WA). Friday, evening: "Befriending Our Elder Years." Saturday: "Conscious Eldering and the Great Turning," focusing on creating a legacy for future generations. Sunday morning: "Circle for Elder Activists," sharing ideas of engagement and activism. Facilitated by Lynne Iser and hosted by Rite of Passage Journeys in Seattle. For information and registration call (425) 485-7396. For more details visit Info@RiteOfPassageJourneys.org or www.RiteOfPassageJourneys.org

THE WORK THAT RECONNECTS: Retreat Workshop (Mar. 29-31, 2019, Philadelphia, PA). This workshop offers ways to draw strength and courage from the web of life, as we engage with our world and create our legacy for future generations with THE WORK THAT RECONNECTS. At the Pendle Hill Retreat Center, facilitated by Lynne Iser and Mordechai Liebling, based on the work of Joanna Macy. For details visit: www.PendleHill.org or call (610) 566-4507, ext. 137

"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

-Mary Oliver



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This electronic newsletter, edited by Harry (Rick) Moody, is published by the Creative Longevity and Wisdom Program of Fielding Graduate University. The Newsletter contains items of interest about humanistic gerontology; it does not publish original writing but is limited to brief and timely announcements.

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