

Persephone Arbour

Conscious Ageing - the grand adventure?

Turning Pages

A collection of comments on, and conundrums of – a well-lived life

4 Money and Trust

“Our own life is the instrument with which we experiment with the truth.” Thich Nhat Hanh

This quotation inspires the life I have attempted to live – experimenting with the truth. It took me many years to understand that, of course.

This is part four of a small collection of my writings, some old, some new. They contain musings on my life and the world within which I live it.

Money and Trust

“This was an article that I wrote in Australia and, given the current financial mayhem – I thought it might just bring a smile and a tad of optimism at this time!”

I write about money from a personal perspective, as someone who has lived with lack, with plenty, and all the places in between. From 1975-1986 I was a disciple of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (now known as Osho), and had decided to take the step of moving into his new commune in Oregon, USA. Osho saying simply, *“Trust in Allah, but tether your camel first,”* has been like a banner that I am finally learning to read! During my life, there has been much trusting and not enough tethering. My initial meeting with Trust was not balanced with good custodianship.

When all the money I had left (from my savings and the sale of my house and car) was given to the Rajneesh Foundation in 1982, I kidded myself it was because I wanted to find out what life was like with no money at all! Of course, I was lying (to myself). This was no real experiment in “having no money,” I was just playing to my vanity, to my image of being “holy,” self-sacrificial in some way. There I was, with Dickon, my youngest son, moving

into the commune where, as far as I knew, we would be taken care of for the rest of our lives!

Our community was building a city there called Rajneeshpuram. Then I did, in truth, have no money other than my monthly \$10 Rajneesh Humanities Trust card. This was given to those of us who were residents as pocket money, to spend as we pleased.

When the final break-up of that experiment came, there was huge regret at having not been more practical. However, it was also the beginning of learning about Trust. Once, in the early days in Poona, I had asked Osho the question: “What is the difference between non-doing and laziness?” He answered that when non-doing, one is wide awake and alive; when being lazy one is fast asleep. That just about sums it up. In these years since 1985, I have gradually managed to start living the answer he gave me.

Three times since then I have found myself penniless, or very close to it. However, somewhere deep within, Trust has held out her hand. Tentatively taken at first, but gradually grasped more firmly as experience showed me her beauty and her reliability. This growing familiarity with Trust has enabled me to grow, move, jump and live as fully as I know how. Trust enables courage, gentle positive action, and enterprise. She is always there, in the background, supporting, and encouraging. If you go to sleep, Trust will not help you.

An example: In 1988, living in Australia, my partner Jonathan and I decided we would build/create a retreat centre in the country. We behaved “as if”: buying one hundred acres of land with its tiny little house, starting the necessary re-zoning, behaving with certainty, “knowing” (trusting) that whatever we needed to complete the dream would be provided. It was. Jonathan made a clear decision that the only way we were going to raise the money for the necessary building was by playing the lottery. I was totally sceptical, but he played each week on a random-choice ticket. After three months, he won approximately AUS \$700,000 from two wins, five weeks apart from each other – an astonishing amount of money. I firmly believe this came to us because he trusted that it would, and put his trust out strongly in the form of regular lottery tickets, whilst continuing with all the preparatory work that was needed for the centre. There was a great deal of practical action – the other half of the balancing act between trusting and doing. We certainly did not sit back on our rear ends and wait!

Five years later, we found ourselves penniless and in debt. No, we did not spend up big, gamble, or fritter the money away. A beautiful centre had been built, completed and much loved by people who came.

However, we were both inexperienced in business and were not good custodians of our income, or the money we had in the bank.

I, in particular, wanted the centre to be perfect and did not listen to the quiet voice that said, “Your task is to build the buildings, not to decide what they are for.” Of course, I knew what they were for! I knew about running growth centres didn't I? Hadn't I helped with the creation of one of the most beautiful growth centres on the planet?

What happened next was a profound lesson about pride leading to over-spending and, in our case, extravagance. Both of us were unwilling to cut corners in any way – so, of course, we finished up in debt.

Well, pride comes before a fall – it really does. We fell far, having to sell in order to look after Jonathan's son back in Perth, in the middle of a recession. So, what had cost AUS \$680,000 to build and outfit, we sold for AUS \$200,000! We parted soon after that.

When running a business, I forgot that it is not always a good idea to let the heart rule the head, to let emotional concerns come before practicalities. This is difficult sometimes, because it's often more fun to listen to the heart. The emotional content of our centre, Wandoo Hills – its beauty, the care with which it was furnished and presented – was a large part of the reason for our downfall. Our love for the place, wanting it perfect, shut out the voice of good custody.

Nearly 60 years old and alone, I started all over again. The miracle was that “losing” all that money was genuinely okay. I knew that the money had come for a purpose – a sincere, life-enhancing purpose. We had honoured that – the buildings had been built, had been, and still are appreciated. A much-loved group room was still available for my retreats, even though having to pay venue rental, and these were all blessings as far as I was concerned.

Funny, as I write these words, I can see for the first time a parallel with my feelings about Rajneeshpuram (or the Ranch as we nicknamed it), on which a few thousand of us helped to build an extraordinary city. The buildings in Oregon are still there. They are still being used for a life-enhancing purpose. The fact that it is not the purpose for which most of us assumed it would be, is irrelevant. The miracle that is that place, is still there and alive, still helping young people grow. In fact, I saw some photos of it taken recently and was thrilled to see the development and beautifying that has happened in the intervening years since we all left.

Whilst living in Australia, I swung from unexpected wealth to what most people would call poverty. In that swing, I made a momentous discovery. Within myself, my deepest self, there is no difference; I am still who I am – exactly the same – rich or poor. I have the same fears, the same feelings, the same desires. I still laugh and cry. Only the outward manifestations change – nothing essential changes at all.

I learned, through my pride, that if money is not respected, then money will not stay in friendship. It will go somewhere else. Through allowing myself to be fearful when poor, I learned that if money is tightly held, it will escape and not come back. Money has taught me to look at my laziness, my unwillingness to take responsibility. Also there is that old chestnut – blame (financial advisers and estate agents). How easy to blame others for my own financial difficulties.

There is a middle path, a path of common sense, a path of action and intent. It is not a path of blind trust as I had previously thought. It is a path of adventure and surprises. It need not be a path of struggle. It is said that the “search” is an active process, not a passive one. My attitude to my life and its wealth is an active one, not a passive one. Now, however, I find no attachment to outcome – the journey is sufficient unto itself. I may not always get what I want, but I know that what is needed will always be there.

Today a much older, grey-haired woman I find that eating and living is simple. There is no holding. I am generous, awake, and honest with my finances. Even, at times, still foolish. The difference is that I am now more aware. Patience has to be learned, which is difficult for an Aries person! Sometimes I have to ask for help, and that is not easy. There is a delicate path to be walked between consciousness and unconsciousness – so hard to stay in the former, and oh so easy to fall into the latter.

I am not suggesting that this is “the way;” not at all. This is intensely personal to me. All experimentation has to be in the spirit of exploration. Work is no longer “just for the money” or from a survival attitude. At my age I am blessed to still be able to create it. There is no difference between work and play, and this is a tremendous blessing. Any stress I feel is certainly self-generated!

Here is Trust, who has shown me that whatever happens in my life is for me, not against me. Trust was with me during my return to the UK. Savings for fare and pocket money were all I had when leaving Australia. However, I had no doubt at all that I was on track. I was offered delightful temporary accommodation, work and the opportunity to move into the countryside to finally create a real home again. This time, I have been a better custodian of the little I possess. Trust has been with me every step of the way – smiling and holding my hand. Money has been one of my greatest, most faithful teachers and Trust a close and loving companion.

Persephone Arbour

Conscious Ageing – the grand adventure?

Collect all eight, easily down-loadable e-books - Free!

- 1 And my Heart was Touched
- 2 Inconvenience
- 3 Travel into the Unknown
- 4 Money & Trust
- 5 Listening at Christmas
- 6 Growing into Wisdom
- 7 A Spiritual Puzzle Clarified?
- 8 Meeting & Relating

www.persephonearbour.com/free-ebooks