

Community highlights

Written by The Conversation USA

The Conversation receives a lot of comments each day and you can't read everything. That's why we occasionally end the week with a selection of community highlights: comments we enjoyed or thought interesting. Read on for four comments or discussions I thought worth highlighting.

[Is anyone there? About consciousness and its disorders](#)

[Pat Moore](#) raised some of Jung's ideas as a means of understanding consciousness.

Interesting thanks Selen (just read of the Latin meaning of selene recently...“calm”).

The synchronisation pattern in waking consciousness was interesting, and perhaps a vital lead into the mystery of consciousness.... it reminded me of Jung's “synchronicity” when disparate elements mysteriously constellate around a theme of psychological investigation... like a dream image appearing in reality, echoed by another aspect of cognition, in reading or conversation or perceived external object for example, a puzzling and unlikely re-iterating/resounding occurrence to be so meaningful that it is beyond the explanation of co-incidence. The significance of the experience remaining a mystery, except perhaps as a signposting/confirmation signal, answering psychological enquiry, a process often remarked upon by practising/questioning artists.

Another angle of investigation is suggested by the function of/ the metaphor of, the eye, particularly its relationship to the pineal gland/the “third eye”, the little pine shaped gland governing base and radical functions of the organism which “synthesises and secretes melatonin a structurally simple hormone that communicates information about environmental lighting to various parts of the body”. The archaic association of consciousness with light and unconsciousness with darkness is suggestive.

To which the article's author, Selen Atasoy, [replied](#) :

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Thanks Pat. Never have considered the potential parallel with Jung's "synchronicity". Although have to mention that synchronous neural activity not only occurs in consciousness but also in various states considered as unconscious. For instance Vincent, J. L., et al. (2007). Nature find synchronised neural activity, very similar to those observed in conscious humans, in anaesthetised monkeys.

[Friday essay: the literary canon is exhilarating and disturbing and we need to read it](#)

[Adrian Deans](#) discussed the role publishers have in establishing the "literary canon" and how they may be failing readers:

Thanks Camilla, an interesting piece making many points, but I shall respond only to one. You seem to be suggesting that appreciation of literature, or criticism, has become an all-but extinct pursuit of the academy and/or a small network of elites operating in and around the edges of the publishing industry. I'm sure that's true, however, there is still a massive generation of literature going on, by which I mean quality, meaningful, textured works worthy of deconstruction and tackling relevant subtexts.

The thing is, few of them are published - at least in the commercial mainstream. At any one time, just in Australia, there would be over a hundred thousand unsolicited manuscripts lying in slush piles with few of them ever getting read. A huge proportion of these are not very good, but with those numbers, if only 1% are worth reading, there are a thousand books a year worthy of joining the canon which are ignored (either not published or consigned to the vast ocean of self-published dreck).

To me this is the greater tragedy - the inability of publishers to find the books most worth publishing - meaning that some of the works that best reflect the milieu in which they were generated are forever lost.

The one heartening aspect to this is that there are at least a lot of people writing. They're not all writing "Literature" but plenty of them are, on some level.

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How do we find them all and re-energise their community?

Universities ought to play a part in that.

Students struggle with digital skills because their teachers lack confidence

[Lyndal Breen](#) shared her experiences trying to teach students using computers:

Having worked alongside students as a teacher's aide and tutor, as well as being a qualified teacher, my observation is that when you place a class of students on computers (laptops, computer lab, whatever), you lose the ability to specifically work on the students' tasks with them. The efficient ones will swoop through the work and give the 'finished' activity to you; at this point they are not interested in discussing it or expanding their understanding. The less effective students will be able to hide their struggles and often can get the answers through alternatives to working through study materials - anything from emailing fellow students to simply avoiding the work and barely scraping through at the end. One thing students seem to understand is that the curriculum moves on and they will go on with it. Having just completed TAFE work with a Green Army team, I have seen the same process with post school students. And a First Aid Pre-course was a masterpiece of collusion. Thankfully there was real learning during a computer-free practical day. You may say that supervision is lacking, but my answer is that supervision is impossible. The student shuts down the program, loses his/her password, says it's all done but they can't print it out. My own computer skills are quite sophisticated but in the absence of a program that would take me into the students' work while it is being done, there is remarkably little ongoing teaching in the form of interactions around the computer based work. Even with programs that allow you to track changes are only effective if the students are motivated to go back and take on the criticisms and suggestions. Computers are a tool, no different from a pen and paper, and they do not teach or learn

Can we replace politicians with robots?

Finally, [Andrew McIntosh](#) imagined a world with robotic politicians:

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“Or-der. There will be or-der in the house. The hon-our-a-ble the prime mi-nis-ter.”

“Mis-ter spea-ker, I come be-fore the house with a pro-po-sal that states that be-cause hu-mans are in-e-fi-cient they should be e-li-mi-na-ted.”

“All in fa-vour.”

(Complete accord).

“The ayes have it. Co-mmence ex-ter-mi-na-tion process.”

Read a comment you thought interesting? Let me know during the week. You can leave a comment below or send me an [email](#).

Read more <http://theconversation.com/community-highlights-57123>