

BOOK REVIEW



A Plan Larger than I Could Draw: Stories and Perspectives from the Mind and Heart

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Graeme Perry

Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW
graeme.perry@mm.net.au

The iconic Sydney Opera House (SOH), this year, celebrates the 50th Anniversary of it's opening on the 20th October 1973 (Dow, 2023; Sydney Opera House, 2023). It's significance resonates with Noeville Clouten. In early 1963, as a recent Sydney University graduate from architecture, he gained a six-month contract as Sydney Opera House: Researcher and Guide. He was to interact with architect Utzon, project engineer Ove Arup and the NSW Government PR Committee, supporting the latter in combating the barrage of misinformation that asserted mismanagement and incompetence in the planning and construction process.

The first chapter of Clouten's work illuminates the back story of Jørn Utzon's non-conforming submission being drawn into consideration, exposure of a typical Sydneysider assessment of cultural needs in cartoonist Molnar's image, and perceptual insights gained from Utzon's personal confiding. The text then shifts to recount a personal narrative of 'critical incidents' in career progression that defines this whole work. Clouten offers some structural form for this work by sharing, "The eight essays in this book tell stories from my life experience as a student, an architect, an academic, an artist and traveller ... each essay explores issues 'of the mind' ... or 'from the heart'(p. ix)." Each issue type is illustrated within the three months of camping in Europe, working in Scandinavia, cars driven - Renault to Covair, presentations at Harvard and Yale on the SOH, and finally teaching at Ohio State University, all encompassed in this initial chapter. All combined evidence of a providential 'plan larger than I could draw' (p. 22).

The second and third chapters redevelop life periods quickly passed over within the preceding

chapter. Both dwell on unique 'coincidences' and the themes of the artist and traveller. The unpredictable outcomes of admiring both the MGB and the Citroen, of mumps and Le Corbusier, fjord cruise speculation and the Cunard water colour workshops, and a final resolution of the missing Kiama canvases are examples. Neville notes with sensitivity, the mutual interaction with Norene in planning and enjoying their shared experiences. The long way to Scotland via Mexico including the Mayan ruins, visits in Guatemala opening an itinerary to Panama, and safe arrival in Barcelona, confirmed for the Cloutens that

There are times when Christians can know they are in the right place at the right time. It would be wonderful to know this all the time, but God ordains that it is not so. The exercise of faith is fundamental to the Christian life amid the turbulence of ... events and ideas. (p. 49).

Faith helped look past 'stolen goods' and alternative outcomes for eye conditions encountered.

For science-oriented readers, Chapter Four will be of special interest as it investigates the application of photogrammetry (deriving measurements from a pair of stereoscopic photographs) to indigenous art, but the consequent outback adventures will potentially engage all readers.

Finding Faith in Kenya becomes the catalyst bringing earlier Ugandan and Nigerian architectural consulting and soliciting of philanthropic funding contacts, mostly resulting in unfulfilled plans (Chapter Five) into an expanding and currently continuing successful involvement with Rapogi Lwanda Primary School in western Kenya.

Clouten confides, "It was the belief that architecture could give life a gentler structure that turned my attention towards paying more than lip service to designing for human activities" (p. ix) and this professionalised goal is evidenced in this volume's sharing of reflections on a fulfilling life, personal beliefs and persisting divine motivation.

This work is recommended for all persons sensing the value of hearing other stories of faith, particularly the experiences of Christian professionals. Those knowing doubt, but seeking assurance within their personal journey of 'a larger plan' and affirmation of personal guidance, perhaps only known later in the backward glance. Neville's engaging style makes it an easy, pleasurable, positive read. **TEACH**

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Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

docile brain as normal, or ADHD as caused by the brain.

Medication Fix

“Unless your church rejects all medical treatments for any medical condition, I do not believe ADHD should be singled out. It is a real neurodevelopmental disorder” states a contributor to a faith-based ADHD blog. Here you have the juxtaposition of a modern and seemingly scientifically informed take on ADHD and an antiquated theological rejection of modern medicine. Yet, we need not accept the premise that one must reject or accept all forms of medication nor the assertion that ADHD is no different than any other medical condition treatable with medication. The notion that ADHD medication is correcting for a known biological deficit simply is not supported by the evidence. The predominance of the medical model and biological assumptions has led to a medication-first mindset when it comes to dealing with struggles with attention, concentration and impulsivity.

A Theological Approach

From a scientifically sound theological perspective, we can recognize biological predispositions as influential factors in terms of behaviours associated with ADHD. However, the brain is neither the sole determinant of behaviour nor is medicine the only way to produce changes in the brain and behaviour. When we put mental health struggles in the proper context of a Biblical worldview, it does not necessitate disregarding medical interventions. There is room for medication and therapy. God surely works through individuals providing mental health services.

The late Thomas Szasz noted (cited in Davies, 2013):

Our age has replaced a religious point of view with a pseudoscientific point of view...Now everything is explained in terms of molecules and atoms and brain scans. It is a reduction of the human being to a biological machine. We don't have existential or religious or mental suffering any more. Instead we have brain disorders. (p. 276)

Mental health struggles are not themselves pathological, but part of our human nature as fallen people in a fallen world. They afford us opportunities for spiritual growth, drawing us closer to God. They can be used in the service of Christ, our source of identity and comfort.

They also provide us opportunities to model a Biblical worldview by seeking guidance in God's word and turning to God in prayer.

We should recognize fallacious arguments and affirm that there are reasonable questions one can ask about the legitimacy of the ADHD diagnosis, the rising prevalence of ADHD, the potential for the school or home environment to be broken rather than the brain, and the extent to which school personnel medicalize disruptive student behaviour. Ophir's answers to these questions should give us pause. A brain-based explanation of ADHD offers to relieve us of our personal and societal accountability for our mental health struggles, but such a constricted view rooted in materialism is neither scientifically nor theologically sound. We should reject this Faustian bargain, think clearly and critically about ADHD, and appreciate mental health struggles as opportunities for growth.

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“one can ask about the legitimacy of the ADHD diagnosis, ... the potential for the school or home environment to be broken rather than the brain,”