



# Ways of knowing

The place and role of the rational and of woolgathering

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. *Ephesians 1:17*



Branches of an almond tree in blossom, Vincent van Gogh

## Questions:

- In the poem *The Sun* David Whyte looks around at all the 'wild and faithful' growth under our sky and asks, Why are we uniquely privileged 'to refuse our flowering'?
- Whyte also speaks of the soul as 'the largest conversation a person is capable of having with the world' and Mary Oliver writes in *The Journey* of a 'new voice, slowly recognised as belonging to you which has kept you company (albeit quiet and unknown perhaps) as you stride deeper into the world, God's world'...

To what degree do you feel you are allowing the expansion of your 'largest conversation' and what it may bring?

## Reading material:

Radio 4's *Something Understood*, *Sleeping on it*: an interview with Guy Caxton\*, Professor of Learning Sciences at the University of Winchester.

*Both alike to thee*, Melvyn Matthews, p.47

*Falling upward*, Richard Rohr, pp 97-98

## The largest conversation

"Everything is gestation and then bringing forth. To let each impression and each germ of a feeling come to completion wholly in itself, in the dark, in the inexpressible, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one's own intelligence, and await with deep humility and patience the birth-hour of a new clarity."  
Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a young poet*

We consider intuition and dreamy states, allowing change and deepening and broadening the soul's conversation with its arch stimulator, God. Here is a transcript from an interview with Guy Claxton:

*"There are many more ways of knowing and thinking than just that linear and explicit, rational way.... I think we should now not be frightened of valuing the kinds of thinking that we call woolgathering, or daydreaming or ruminating...these unsung aspects of our mind.*

*We still suffer from the lingering legacy... [that] the best ways of thinking is the clear, the rational, the explicit and anything of the body is by definition not intelligent whereas the other ways of knowing come to us in a whole variety of voices...some of them come in dreams, some of them, come in metaphors and images. Our organ of knowing comes to us in hunches and inklings and impressions and promptings and all of these are not infallible but contain valuable intimations of what is going on inside us.*

*Creative people seem to be able to toggle between purposeful, analytical ways of thinking and a more inclusive, vaguer perhaps, more dreamy ways of knowing and they know that these two sides of their mind are not first class and third class but actually intricate allies in the process of thinking as well as we possibly can."*

We need a view of the self which is not dominated by reason, will and action, but one which is happy to live with loving attention, one which is content to live with an openness to whatever God offers.  
Melvyn Matthews

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