
If you're 120

Tom Dening

If you're 120

You've lived for almost 44 000 days
 Through 30 leap years
 You could have blown out 7 000 birthday
 candles
 You'd have been in middle age by World War I
 You could have known folk who remembered
 Waterloo
 You might well think de Gaulle was still in
 charge
 In your lifetime cars, computers, tumble dryers
 came

If you're 120

There wouldn't be any schoolfriends left
 Your grandchildren could be 80 plus
 They might die of old age first

You'd be rather small by now
 Nor see too well, nor hear
 Need help with washing, dressing, maybe feeding
 By vital village girls of six generations on

If you're 120

You might not bother thinking much
 You wouldn't need to plan
 Sit and smile secretly, instead
 You couldn't buy a house, insurance, holidays
 You don't run, cook, make love any more
 They spoil you rotten and make a birthday fuss
 Nobody's been this old before.

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 WISDOM FOR PSYCHIATRISTS

Only one patient

Larry Culliford

There is only one patient: oneself.

Look at them before you, one at a time. Do not
 two eyes, nose, mouth, ears mirror your own?
 This patient – this person – is endowed like you
 with vision, hearing, taste, smell, touch. Also
 feelings: sorrow and joy; anxiety, peacefulness;
 anger, guilt, shame, bewilderment, equanimity.
 Is this not so?
 "But thoughts, words, deeds: these are differ-
 ent", you say.
 Do not words and deeds begin with and depend
 upon our thoughts?
 When did you last, in meditation, watch your
 thoughts pass by uncensored? And have you

recently studied your dreams dispassionately,
 without fear? Is there no imagination within
 you? Are there any impulses to speech or action
 you could perhaps have forgotten?
 Heart and mind: these do not so easily forget.
 Everyone's blood is red. Everyone's tears are
 salty. If you know even a little something about
 empathy, you will know what I mean. And you
 will have the gratitude of many.

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