
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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