

An Open Letter of Thanks by John Kohut



Dear [Mr. Cassidy](#)

I have just [donated] to Open Age and wanted to follow up with my thanks.

The Open Age classes have not only helped keep me in touch with human beings during this wretched period of isolation where we find ourselves...

[\[The Open Age Courses\]](#) are also among the best courses I have ever taken--and I have taken many courses in my life, during my Bachelor's Degree at Harvard (I am a poor boy from the Canadian rural hinterland who studied at Harvard only thanks to a generous scholarship from the University), at SOAS, LBS, and online at UCLA, with edX and FutureLearn; and though they are a distant memory, in person (face to face, i.e. physical bodies turning up at physical buildings made of bricks, mortar, concrete, steel, etc.) at City Lit. there have been other courses, I am sure. But those come to mind right now.

The best single class I have taken in my life is without question was last Friday's [Philosophy Writing class with Tim Beardsmore-Grey](#). All of his classes have been great, but this single class was tremendous. It was one of the best writing classes I have taken (and my writing classes include those at Harvard, UCLA, and on the job training at Reuters and Bloomberg), but also one of his best philosophy classes.

When I complimented Tim on his work with us, the others in our Zoom class applauded. Tim is not just very intelligent, but also great at spreading his intelligence by speaking and writing in plain language. I urge Open Age to keep him on board at all costs. I see him as filling the role in philosophy that Simon Schama has commanded in History and Art, and Brian Cox in Science. Am I going over the top in praise? I would not bet against my predictions, if I were anyone else.

I have also taken the **Memoir Writing** class with [Emma Claire Sweeney and Jonathan Ruppin](#). There are four sessions in the course, each 90 minutes. What perfect timing for the course as I have just embarked on my own memoir. Thanks to them, I can write my memoir in some confidence that I am on the right track. But apart from how their course resonated with me, it simply is an outstanding course. Perhaps it will turn out to be the most important course in my life.

The third course I have taken at Open Age is **Life Stories** with Julie. Through attending her weekly, one-hour sessions, the creative writer within me has been truly unleashed. I would have taken another semester or her classes but I know I would get so involved in them I would use them as an excuse to procrastinate the bigger task of writing my memoir.

These have all been superb.

Of course, the reason those three courses stand as the top three courses of my 65 years of life (birthday is today, as I write you), may be partly because I am mature enough now to appreciate tuition in courses of any kind. If so, all the more vital it is to keep "old folk" such as me connected to life-long learning. Courses like these are not wasted on the youth, but they are at least as valuable to those who mature with several decades of life.

It has also been thrilling to hear other people in the Open Age groups speak, and to read their writing. We hear people speak about the "millennial novel" (by which they mean "Normal People"), but no one speaks of the over 60s generation in similar terms. **Perhaps one of the things that I discovered in the Open Age courses is that there are voices and stories unique to the individuals of my generation but which add up to something greater than the parts.**

In short, I wanted to thank you. When I expressed similar ideas to my Open Age philosophy class, I believe I saw many heads nodding. A few people clapped their hands. I thought as a birthday gift to myself I would take the time to share my ideas, partly to thank Open Age as a [charity](#), including the teachers and coordinators and fund raisers and whole coterie of energetic people behind it. I also wanted to express my thanks to cast my vote that **[Open Age's] work is vital, should continue, must continue, and if possible, expand.**

.... And thank goodness that we have Open Age Zoom classes to carry us through this coming winter of pandemic/lockdown. It would be inconceivable to me and I believe to others to try to get through the next few months without Open Age Zoom classes.

Best wishes

John Kohut
[Open Age Member & Contender for No. 1 Fan]

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