

CONFERENCE REVIEW

The Better Way Conference,¹ Bath, 20–22 May 2022

Reviewed by **Christian Buckland**

Bringing together some of the most prominent and respected scientists, doctors and thinkers of our time, the Better Way Conference provided the opportunity to critically explore fundamental and important aspects of today’s world. Healthy debate, open conversation, freedom of speech and the scientific method have all been systematically eroded and attacked over the past two years. So, the opportunity to immerse oneself in the fundamental topics covered at this event was a true honour and a wonderful experience.

The event, hosted in the historically healing city of Bath in the United Kingdom, asked crucial questions; How do we actively create a world in which people thrive? How do we restore independence and credibility in the media? How can the law serve human rights and be a lighthouse for sovereignty? How do we address environmental health challenges? The event certainly jumped into all of these questions with passion, expertise and respect for one another. With many of the world’s most recognised and respected names – including Drs Tess Lawrie, Kat Lindley, Ryan Cole, Peter McCullough, Robert Malone, Jessica Rose, Pierre Kory, Geert Vanden Bossche, Maria Hubmer-Mogg, Mark Trozzi, Dolores Cahill, Bret Weinstein, Robert F. Kennedy Jr, Reiner Fuellmic, Rob Verkerk – I know I will have missed off many other extremely prominent figures, and for that I must apologise! The calibre of speakers allowed for true conversation, and wonderfully, not everyone agreed on all points – which is exactly what was needed!: true, honest, credible, conversation with complete respect for one another’s opinion.

As expected given the high-quality credentials of all the speakers, there was, indeed, much-

needed scientific discussion. Data, statistics and medical facts were presented with opinion that was not always agreed upon but was welcomingly debated. The data were presented in ways that, for a non-medical person such as myself, made sense, without feeling it had been watered down. Guidance and solutions also prevailed within the scientific and medical conversations, providing hope and optimism after such a bleak dark age for science.

The first conversation surrounded such an appropriate question for the conference: ‘How do we reclaim science together?’ After the dangerous and callous attacks upon the scientific method and community through censorship and agenda-driven politics, that caused unnecessary suffering and led to lives being lost, some of the most academically credible scientists and medics were brought together to talk openly about their views on science, in an inclusive manner. This was a highly emotive topic, with some questions asked that the mainstream media refuse to even acknowledge exist, let alone entertain debate about. As mentioned, not everyone agreed with one another, and that was the magic of the first conversation – *that* is science! This was a truly phenomenal opening conversation that ran well over time due to the intensity, passion and integrity of all of those involved.

As a psychotherapist, for me this highlighted something that is becoming scarce; the ability to disagree, to become passionate and heated but still hold the ‘other’ in mind with compassion and respect. ‘Bravo’ was the first word that came to me at the end of day one. This conversation did something powerful and moving: on its own, it started the ball rolling in responding to the title ‘Reclaiming Science

Together’. It certainly set a precedent for how science needs to move forward.

In addition to the first conversation around the reclaiming of science, there were interactions between highly experienced and qualified lawyers and human rights experts, discussing individual and collective sovereignty. How do we protect our hard-earned and long-standing civil and inalienable rights? Discussions surrounding our further relationships, relationships with the environment, nature and the animals with whom we share our planet. In addition, the role of media, and the urgent need for it to be revolutionised, were discussed and debated.

There was so much to gain from a psychological perspective in the conference. All of the conversations had existentialism and humanism at their core. Psychotherapy is supposed to be the place where the unspeakable gets spoken, and this conference shined a spotlight on what happens when important topics become unspeakable. Science is no longer science, medicine becomes beholden to politics and the pharmaceutical companies, and the media becomes aligned to the state – resulting in greatly increased and unnecessary human suffering. To provide a platform for people from all around the world to come together to listen, talk about difficult topics and share ideas on how to do things better was extremely uplifting for the human soul. For me, the kindness of not only the speakers but also of everyone attending stood out as one of the most important take-home points. People chatting, people hugging, I also saw tears shed. We were all human. During the weekend conference, it felt that humanity had come back together, and a crucially important human-level connection, that had been stifled and lost for two years, was back. Recharging, refreshing and re-energising are some of the immediate feelings that come to mind when revisiting my experience at the conference.

Psychology has played an important part in the unfolding events of the past two years, and it

was certainly part of this conference – whether through discussions surrounding the use of unethical psychological techniques to drive behavioural change of the world’s population, such as adherence to policies with no scientific basis; how group-think and ‘othering’ became not only tolerated but promoted by establishments, governments, governing bodies and media; or the psychology of losing one’s identity. The psychological implications for everyone who has been, on some level, traumatised by the events of the past two years could be observed in all the discussions.

Focusing as it did on *solutions*, the conference also provided insight into how to communicate with others who do not agree with you, how to reach those people from whom we have become disconnected through fear and differing viewpoints; and how to manage the health consequences from the covid-19 chapter. All the conversations helped to bring people back together, a way forward to heal from the societal splits and divisions that have occurred – a better way forward.

An observation I noted was that the word ‘compassion’ was used every day on multiple occasions, and it beautifully fitted the overall theme for the conference. We need to be more compassionate and understanding, and to care for those around us. We are all human beings with our own fears, dreams, hopes and connections, and the existential nature of humanity had a spotlight shined brightly upon it. An awe-inspiring quotation from Maajid Nawaz, from one of the opening conversations:

We are not soulless pieces of biological organisms that can be hacked, but rather we are full of mystery and wonders. From the source we came and to the source we shall return, and that journey is the true magic of life.

This awakened the existential analyst in me, and reminded me of some fundamental questions and observations: What does it mean to be human? How do we want our world to be? What goodness and what atrocities are we all capable

of doing to one another? These questions ran deep throughout the conference conversations, and would have resonated with many of psychology’s most renowned existential thinkers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Kierkegaard. Interestingly and worryingly, though, echoes of Hannah Arendt’s warnings on government overreach and the march towards authoritarian thinking and totalitarianism governing could be heard within the concerns of many speakers at the conference; some speaking from a medical and scientific perspective as well as those coming from the legal, justice and human rights viewpoint. This reminded us to pay attention to history and the dangers of psychological manipulation, government-controlled media and propaganda.

I was honoured to be asked to speak on one of the panels during the ‘Managing C19 Health Consequences’ conversation, and I spoke about the psychological damage for those who have been injured by the covid-19 vaccination. My presentation followed on from a most heart-moving and tear-jerking speech from a woman called Caroline, who has been injured by the covid-19 vaccine and is a co-leader for a vaccine-injured group in the UK. She bravely and kindly came to speak in order to highlight what life is like for someone who has been vaccine injured, and how they are treated as a whole by society. Those injured have been silenced, censored, dismissed and attacked, simply for speaking about their lived experiences. Many have suffered severe life-changing injuries – physical injury caused by the vaccination and psychological injury caused by government, media, medics and society’s reaction and response to them. In addition to all other aspects already discussed, this conference provided an opportunity to raise awareness for those who have been injured, to gain acknowledgment that severe injuries have occurred and are occurring, and to show – like

every other topic discussed at the conference – that what we have done so far is not good enough, and that there is a better way. I hope the message resonated with many people, like it has done with me.

I would like to share my heart-felt thank you to the World Council for Health² for organising this momentous event. It personally provided me with hope and optimism for the future, and I believe for the hundreds and hundreds of people who came in person, and for the thousands of people who watched it live-streamed, they also felt the same way. Bravo to everyone involved. There truly is a better way!

Notes

- 1 See betterwayconference.org. At the time of writing, all speeches from the seven conversations can still be watched with a time-limited 25%-off virtual pass
- 2 See worldcouncilforhealth.org.

About the contributor



Christian Buckland is a clinical psychotherapist, with qualifications including Doctor of Psychology in Psychotherapy and Counselling. He has a specialist interest in the assessment, treatment and management of eating disorders, and is the psychological advisor for a national eating disorder charity. In addition to his clinical work, Christian sits on the Council of Management for the Southern Association for Psychotherapy and Counselling.