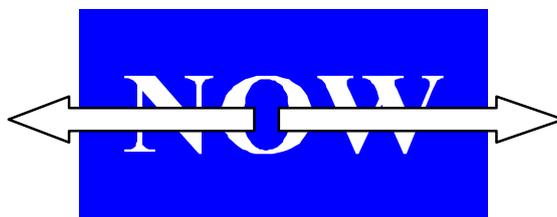


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**Next Greville Street Meeting –Sunday February 5<sup>th</sup>**

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Our best wishes to you all at this season of greetings and good will, especially to our friend Garry Booth who is at present recovering in hospital from a burst aneurysm. He has made a remarkably swift recovery and we hope to have him back in action soon.

However, there is also the very sad news that one of our oldest friends, Joyce Dalton who has been ill for some time, died on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December. We have known Joyce and her partner Jean since the days of Barrie Hora's dialogue meetings at the Swedenborg centre in the early 90's and they have been our friends and supporters of the Greville Street group for over 20 years.

Thanks to this month's contributors and a reminder that the NOWletter is a platform for the readership to speak as well as listen and it will be clear from the contents over the years that we welcome a wide range of opinions. So, please speak and write when the spirit moves.

This issue of the NOWletter was pulled together at Shoal Bay where we had a chance to catch up with Barrie Hora one of our founding members but rarely seen in these parts since his move to Forster. He is well and as full of ideas as ever. Another former Sydney friend now moved north is Celia Novy who writes from time to time and is running meetings herself at Byron bay. See notice of the Byron Bay meetings in this issue.

## A Visit to Another World from David Knowles

On Saturday 22 October Alan, Margot, a friend of mine, Henry, and I made a trip to another world for the day. The World in question was “The Quantum World” and we were invited by New Scientist to undergo this immersion as one of their promoted events at the UNSW; not only were we to dip our toes in this alien water we were advised that we could become “Instant Experts” indeed we all received a certificate to proclaim us such at the end of the day.

I, as a subscriber to New Scientist, received an invitation to this event and due to my early training in Physics and my ready willingness to be baffled by the quirkiness of the quantum world I decided this was my cup of tea and would ask interested friends to join me.

The day was well organised and the speakers were all clear even if their subject matter could not be described as crystal clear. The program was:

Introduction: Welcome to the Quantum World

1. Are We Living in the Matrix?
2. Our Quantum Origins
3. The Enigma of Quantum Time
4. Quantum Gravity: an unfinished revolution
5. Quantum Technology
6. Computers going Quantum
7. Quantum Question Time
8. Closing Remarks

My favourite session was number 2 – the speaker suggested the position of the protagonists in the film “The Matrix” was eerily similar to the position we find ourselves living in the quantum world – we “can’t detect our predicament, except that certain people can transcend the normal rules of physics.” So, the answer to the question is “Yes!” Delicious mind-bending stuff.

Number 6 was also suggestive of science fiction with the amazing applications being proposed as quantum technologies are being readied, many in Australia, for the world to use.

I wanted more from Number 7, Computers going quantum – I think I wanted to envision a practical application of quantum particles taking detours via parallel universes but this was not to be offered to me. Just a taste of how powerful such computers could be.

Fortunately, the lunch & breaks did not take on any quantum perturbations and the Question Time was much like any other. New Scientist had some of their very nicely produced “Collections” for sale afterwards but couldn’t take quantum credit cards (nor normal ones) so I had to leave them.

So, speaking for myself and hopefully for my companions, it was an intriguing day that I was glad I experienced even though I would hesitate to declare myself an “Instant Expert” despite the certificate.

Fortunately, the world behaved in a rigorously classical way on the way home else we might have had some difficulties with entanglement. (quantum joke)

*Dave Knowles*

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## Postmodernism from Peter Melser

*This is Peter's summary of his presentation to the November meeting at Greville Street.*

**Modernism** based in the **Enlightenment** and represented a fundamental shift in the prevailing basis of perceived "truth". Previously, it was "God", through the Church, who defined Truth. Rather than "the word of God", truth and what constitutes "knowledge" comes from (objective) observation of events in nature. "Science" becomes the medium for making these objective observations on which claims to "know truthfully" are based. The key assumptions in this modernist picture of the world are that knowledge, or truth, is independent of the observer, that it is "objective" and reflects the object being observed, not the person making the observation, and second, that knowledge consists in learning the causal relations between things, and third, that these causal relations can ultimately be formulated as "universal laws" of nature. This is the notion that to be true, propositions need to apply the same way to all like situations, making the "universal". Of course, this development occurs over centuries and prior religious (and other) knowledges are never completely overridden.

Postmodernism as it has developed over the past century or more disputes a number of these claims. Instead it proposes that:

1. Complete **independent "objectivity"** is not possible, **subject and object** cannot be fully separated in this way. What we know about an object always depends upon the "position", perspective and purposes of the subject making the observation. We can never be "neutral" in our relation to the world.

The American philosophy of "pragmatism" recognises that this relation of subject and object always reflects the purpose that subject has in entering that relationship. The use we make of things shapes how we see (know) them, which in turn shapes how we act in relation to them, but that is another point.

Heisenberg's observation that whether something appears as a "wave" or as "matter" depends on the position the subject has taken in relation to the object.

These points also reflect a wider issue of the relation between the subject and their wider social situation and the role of "knowledge" in that relation. Essentially the knowledge is consistent with, and supports, the wider social structure of which the subject is a member (**Foucault's Power/knowledge** relationship).

Thomas Kuhn's discussion of scientific the "**paradigm**" is one example of power/knowledge. Kuhn notes that within disciplines of "science" there are bodies of accepted understandings about the relationships between the objects under study; called the "conventional wisdom". Because the paradigm is seen as true, and because the scientists adhering to it have an investment in it, change and challenge to the paradigm is resisted, reflecting an exercise of power which can be more or less coercive. Contrariwise, funding is selectively given to projects that conform to the paradigm. (So much for "objectivity"!!).

Where there is power (with its approved knowledge) there is also resistance, either strong or weak. In the Kuhnian context, resistance comes in the form of discovered "anomalies", recognition of which is likewise resisted by the paradigm adherents.

Another example is the system of liberal "establishment" beliefs that has just got overturned by the voting uprising of the white male disenfranchised in the US. Power and resistance are always present and interdependent.

Because there are multiple points of view and different perspectives the notion of universal laws about nature also comes into question. Postmodernists see situations as complex systems, also involving both the observed and the observer. This conception also challenges the notion of “linear causality” characteristic of “modernist” thinking. Instead of the linear “tree” metaphor of causality, the preferred metaphor is that of a “rhizome” (Deleuze and Guatari) which connects in multiple directions with no clear directionality, rather interdependencies.

There is similar doubt around the idea that scientific discovery and technology produce “progress” (a linear directional concept). “Progress” and the associated knowledges said to produce it are a typical “power/knowledge supporting/legitimising a group holding power.

Post modernists also challenge the “individualism” implicit in modernism. The notion of “individual” implies too much “separation” for serious discussion of the human condition. For them, the “self” is a “construct” and always “situated” in (meaning created by and creating) a particular social context. And, since we occupy multiple contexts in our everyday lives, we move through shifting selves as we move through our daily situations. (This framing is very much an oversimplification. There are also clear continuities of self, senses of identity, belonging, and relations of self, including reciprocal self-concepts such as “reputation” and interdependencies such as “me seeing you and me seeing you seeing me” and into even further iterations.)

2. **Language** (discourse) is a medium through which “reality” (understanding) is constructed and shared (socialisation), making analysis of language an important part of postmodern thinking. Language is seen as a system of created similarities and distinctions (through the words) which relate to one another rather than to their external reference (the things). Importantly, the “text” (word) is not the “thing”. Its connotations are embedded in the text, not in the thing referred to. The text, therefore, through our participation through it, creates the reality we experience.

As there are multiple languages and systems of meaning (perspectives) there are also multiple truths (difference), which all need recognition. “Relativism” is one description of this but a poor one in that it whispers an underlying “true” (preferred) reality. “Contexted” is a better (although ugly) way of referring to difference.

3. **“Deconstruction”** (Derrida) is another important postmodern form of analysis. Deconstruction is the intellectual activity of unpicking the assumptions underlying, the internal contradictions, and above all, the social relations supported by particular knowledges and the language through which they are formulated.

Zizek’s analysis of “tolerance”, that it implies the continued existence of the distancing/othering that it purports to avoid. Similarly, “recycling” serves to legitimise (by making it more comfortable) our materialism, rather than solve its problems.

*Peter Melser*

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## The Cohen Story from Alan Mann

Sam and Mary Blight alerted me to the reappearance of Andrew Cohen in a series of interviews on Conscious 2. I watched the series to-date, and made notes as I went along as the basis for a contribution to the NOWletter.

Andrew Cohen asks “What does it mean to need to be free more than anything else” and goes on to say “Ego can’t bear simplicity”-- and I think his seeing this as experiential fact enabled him to get the point of the pointing finger. He says he wished he had a simpler way of teaching. Well, he had the headless understanding but that didn’t provide a foundation for the empire. The empire depended on pointing his devotees in the wrong direction plus the development of addiction to unrealised but hoped for meditative bliss. There was quite a number of the London headless at the Rishikesh retreat Margot and I attended in 1991.

The main reason for my involvement with Andrew was that he arrived in Sydney at a time when the NOWletter readership was engaged in a bitter controversy about whether or not teachers should follow their own teaching. I was arguing strongly that he/she should but many of the Krishnamurtiite community read this as an attack on Krishnamurti. At one of his public meetings Andrew raised the issue (his spies must have advised him this was a hot topic and that I was in his audience). He asked me to explain myself and when I did he agreed with me about reflecting your own teaching but then followed a disagreement about whether an enlightened person could behave like a complete bastard. I thought not but he quoted several examples (not himself at that point). He suggested we complete our dialogue at Rishikesh the coming February and Margot and I surprised ourselves by agreeing to go.

How ironic that these two issues were working themselves out in his own career.

The videos confirm our responses to the 18-day exposure to the Cohen teachings, both the positive and the negative. The fact that he claimed to have no shadow is a match for Krishnamurti’s claim not to have an ego. One of the aspects which encouraged me to find out more is also reflected in the speakers on the videos, that is the fact that so many of the Cohen people we knew in Sydney and met at Rishikesh were delightful folk.

One of the themes of the Conscious 2 videos was ‘No trust at Foxhollow’ the headquarters of the movement in Northampton, Massachusetts. How’s that for evolutionary enlightenment? We learned about the secret police when at the next day’s satsang one’s supper table indiscretions were delivered back to you by Andrew himself from the platform, accompanied by a ‘please explain’.

Andrew Cohen’s definition of enlightenment is that it is not a condition but applies where the individual is no longer hypnotised by fear, ignorance and delusion—when sanity and clarity prevail. I can go along with that. It is interesting to consider to what extent his notions about the evolutionary implications of awakening are relevant to headlessness.

Sam Rosen (Atlantic Magazine) talks of walking out of a talk by Andrew and feeling somewhat critical of what he’d just heard when he was suddenly overwhelmed by an epiphany of wholeness which he couldn’t explain but which he ascribed to exposure to the presence and presentation of Cohen. He says “before I was that way then I was this way”. A friend from the Krishnamurti movement describes an identical experience at a Krishnamurti talk. It is as if these events can trigger a mental rearrangement somewhat like an LSD experience.

Tami Simon of Sounds True (video 4) gives a really interesting account of three days of interviews with Andrew aimed at getting some idea of an answer to the ‘What is Enlightenment’ question only to end up completely bewildered and cancelling the project, notwithstanding an extravagant thank you from

Andrew by way of thousands of dollars worth of flowers. I can say that was exactly how I felt after 18 days at Rishikesh. (I need hardly add that there were no flowers for Alan & Margot)

Video 5. Talking shadows with Doshin Hannya Roshi makes a lot of sense but whilst mentioning underlying simplicity it gets somewhat bogged in the complexities of explanation. I didn't know Hal Stone was the creator of Big Mind which is the only other direct method I have come across that delivers the 'aware space here' of headlessness. I liked his cautionary comments on joining the lynch mob in pulling the guru to pieces when you've seen the feet of clay. I think I'm guilty of a bit of that myself.

I wonder if Andrew's admission of claiming enlightenment in the sense of taking the first person revelation as a personal third person effect is a warning for all of us, headless included, certainly for me. It manifested in my case as the question of making it a permanent condition or default awareness rather than resting in 'it' as background 'music'.

I think Andrew might be planning a comeback in the guise of penitent guru. Not only self-realised but self-self-realised! It will be interesting to hear what he will have to say.

*Alan Mann*

### **The Leading Edge of The Unknown in the Human Being ~ Ken Wilber**

*This is my summary of this Wilber lecture, available as a video or a twenty-page transcript at the web address I have attached at the end of this summary.:*

Robert Penny alerted me to this recent Ken Wilber lecture which I think well worth attention. In the lecture, Wilber points to the important distinction between spiritual experience and spiritual intelligence and explains that although separate aspects they are interdependent. The development of spiritual intelligence leads to *growing up* and of spiritual experience leading to *waking up*.

Waking up can occur at any level of growing up but its effect will be dependent on the level of spiritual intelligence from which it is accessed.

He compares spiritual intelligence to the more familiar intelligences we acknowledge: cognitive, emotional, moral, linguistic, musical, interpersonal intelligence, etc., and points out that whatever I think about any sort of ultimate reality I am using my spiritual intelligence even if I am a confirmed atheist.

He uses Gebser's categorisation of human psychological growth as the levels of both forms of spirituality and demonstrates that the level from which either is viewed in the case of spiritual intelligence or experienced from spiritual experience will determine the outcome. (For Gebser, all humans—both over history and in today's individual development—move from an archaic stage to a magic stage to a mythic stage, then rational stage, then pluralistic stage, then integral stage). Readers of the NOWletter will recall that George Schloss also drew on the Gebser categories to demonstrate the significance of spiritual intelligence to the Harding contribution.

Wilber points to the contrast between the fact that religions have demonstrated both the extremes of love, care and compassion as well as proving to be the largest source of hatred, murder, torture, and war that humans have ever known. And this is explained to a large extent by the fact that spiritual intelligence and spiritual experience can be seriously out of kilter and that one can have the deepest experience of the unity of being whilst not having a framework in which to place it and, on the other hand one can have a highly refined spiritual intelligence by way of a conceptual framework, but virtually no spiritual experience.

He says that until recently there has not been:

“... a discipline anywhere in the world, including religion and spirituality—ever practised both Waking Up and Growing Up together, but instead (humanity) practised only one or the other, and therefore human beings have heretofore actually been practising to be partial, fragmented, and broken. They’ve been working at it. The entire history of humanity, East and West, is a history of brokenness. And yet, just recently, we now have the understanding of how we can include both of those engagements in our overall spiritual understanding—indeed, our overall developmental growth and evolution in general. This, again, is absolutely revolutionary”.

He then analyses the various stages of growing up combining the Gebser levels with a model developed by Carol Gilligan author of the book *In a different Voice* and which I now reduce to their basic elements to fit into this summary:

Stage 1, Selfish and egocentric, concerned only with self and not very concerned with other.

Stage 2, Gilligan calls care, the caring extends to include an entire group from a “me” to an “us”—family, clan, tribe, nation, members of a religious family or political party and so on with which the person identifies

Stage 3, Labelled ‘universal care’—the person extends care from just her group to all groups, also referred to as world-centric, and where the person attempts to treat all people fairly, regardless of race, color, sex, or religious creed.

Stage 4, Integrated, the person integrates both the masculine and the feminine voices to produce a full and complete human being, sometimes described “kosmo-centric.”

The proposal is that the level at which we ‘awake’ determines our reaction. For example, the infant-like awareness of level one in an adult could explain the horrendous actions of a jihadist who feels he’s serving the light by slaughtering what he sees as infidels drowning in their darkness. And at the other end of the spectrum it explains the compassionate response of someone coming in from level 4. This is, of course, a gross oversimplification on my part aimed at persuading you to read the full lecture at the link I will add below.

In 2008 I carried out a survey entitled *Notes on Effectiveness of the Headless Experiments—Why the variable outcomes?* (<http://www.capacitie.org/harding/Variable%20Outcomes.pdf>) This was the result of my own enthusiasm for the experiments being met, on most occasions, with surprised incomprehension. I think the Wilber perspective throws light on this particular issue as well as addressing the matter of the relationship of spiritual experience to spiritual sensibility.

My first involvement with what is regarded as spiritual enquiry led me to Wilber’s early works, *The Spectrum of Consciousness* and *No Boundary*. I’m glad to find he is still going strong. Some of my friends find Wilber too analytical and maybe too intellectual—I have found him very helpful in filling some of the gaps in my understanding and his life work seems to me to be a great example of the need to get the right balance between growing up and waking up.

<https://www.scienceandnonduality.com/the-leading-edge-of-the-unknown-in-the-human-being-ken-wilber/>

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## Awen by Joanna Van Der Hoeven

In Druidry, we learn often hear the word, awen, being used, but what exactly is awen? Loosely translated from Welsh, it means flowing spirit, or flowing inspiration. Awake to our own energy, and stretching out towards the energy of nature around us, we begin to see just what awen is. It is an opening of one's self, of one's spirit or soul, in order to truly and very deeply see. When we are open, we can receive that divine gift, inspiration that flows, whether it is from deity, nature, or whatever it is that you choose to focus on.

For awen to exist, there must be relationship. We cannot be inspired unless we are open, and we cannot be open unless we have established a relationship, whether that is with the thunder, the blackbird or a god. It is cyclical in nature; we open and give of ourselves and in doing so we receive, and vice versa. Letting go, releasing into that flow of awen allows it to flow ever more freely, and we find ourselves inspired not only in fits and bursts of enlightenment or inspiration, but all the time, carrying that essence of connection and wonder with us at all times. There is, of course, a line to be drawn, for we can't be off our heads in ecstatic relationship with everything all the time.

But just what is awen? It is an awareness, not just on a physical and mental level but on a soul deep level – an awareness of the entirety of existence, of life itself. It is seeing the threads that connect us all. It is the deep well of inspiration that we drink from, to nurture our souls and our world and to give back in joy, in reverence, in wild abandon and in solemn ceremony.

Many are familiar with the Welsh tale/myth of Cerridwen and her cauldron, the three drops of awen falling onto Gwion's finger and bringing his wisdom in the form of poetic inspiration, shape-shifting and prophecy. Some liken this story to a Bardic initiation, or the three grades of Bard, Ovate and Druid. In any case, drinking from the cauldron of the Goddess is to drink deeply of awen.

Many Druid rituals begin or end with singing or chanting the awen. When doing so, the word is stretched to three syllables, sounding like ah-oo-wen. It is a lovely sound, that opens up the heart and soul. Sung/chanted together, or in rounds, it simply flows, as its namesake determines. Our hearts literally can open if we let them when chanting or singing the awen.

Yet I am sure that the awen is different for each and every Druid. The connection, and the resulting expression of that connection, the Druid's own creativity, can be so vast and diverse. It is what is so delicious about it – we inhale the awen and exhale our own creativity in song, in dance, in books, in protest marches – the possibilities are endless, as is the awen itself.

<http://www.druidry.org/library/modern-druidry/awen-0>

*Joanna Van Der Hoeven*

*This article is reprinted from Joanna's website, with her permission. She is the author of several books the latest is *Zen for Druids: A Further Guide to Integration, Compassion and Harmony with Nature* Paperback – 28 Oct 2016 — <http://www.joannavanderhoeven.com/>*

## Awe from Oliver Burkeman

Shortly after reading the piece on Awen I happened to be reading Oliver Burkeman's book "The Antidote". The final chapter deals with negative capability in which he considers awe. I don't know if the two words share an etymological source but it is an interesting coincidence that they seem to be pointing to the same experience—awen and awe. Burkeman writes: "...the aforementioned Paul Pearsall, inventor of 'openture', spent a large part of his life waging a lonely battle of which John Keats would surely have approved: to get the concept of 'awe' accepted by the psychological establishment

as one of the primary human emotions, alongside such standards as love, joy, anger, fear, and sadness. 'Unlike all the other emotions,' he argued, awe 'is all of our feelings rolled up into one intense one. You can't peg it as just happy, sad, afraid, angry, or hopeful. Instead, it's a matter of experiencing all these feelings and yet, paradoxically, experiencing no clearly identifiable, or at least any easily describable, emotion.' Awe, he writes, 'is like trying to assemble a complex jigsaw puzzle with pieces missing. There's never any closure in an awe-inspired life, only constant acceptance of the mysteries of life." (From "The Antidote: Happiness for people who can't stand positive thinking" by Oliver Burkeman)

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### Time to Drain the Swamp? from Trish English

Human beings are creatures that are conditioned every moment. Not just through experiences, but through exposure to everything that we call living in the modern world. Our methods of communication have undergone such a dramatic change in recent years, that information bombards us relentlessly. We drown in the fast flowing trivia that invades every part of our life and sometime in the near future, humans will be implanted with computer chips that allow us to send and receive messages, get updates on news channels, and receive stock exchange movements instantaneously. All banking for example, will be handled digitally, and we will pay for goods and services by passing our arm over the payout terminals at the supermarkets, where sensors will read our implanted chips. Money will become obsolete, so there is no point in us soaking away a few dollars in the home safe, because sooner, rather than later, no one will accept any currency.

India recently experienced the first wave of this change. At midnight on the 8<sup>th</sup> November, the Modi government abolished the 500 and the 1,000 rupee note. The official justification was that black money was undermining the economy. Black money is cash money that by-passes the banks, and on which people do not pay tax. Since India is essentially a "cash economy" this meant that the government felt it was being short changed. Approximately 85% of Indians do not have a bank account. They are desperately poor. Where they are able to save a few rupees they do so by hoarding them in jars, or other places in the home. Prosperous homes in Australia use safes, but the principle is the same.

The psychology behind this hoarding is not to cheat the state, but to provide for adversity should it occur. Anyone who lived through the Great Depression will tell you that disaster struck in a single day when the banks closed their doors. The accounts in banks simply disappeared. Families were left destitute. There was no work. Jobs dried up and the country went broke. In India the government said they cancelled the notes in order to stem corruption. Maybe. But all over India, the rural workers, the poor and needy, were in many cases wiped out. The government raked in billions as people sought to adjust their affairs and put money into bank accounts. Soon other countries began to get the message – whatever the true message may have been - and are talking about abolishing some of their currency. In Australia, the rumour is that the \$100 note will disappear. After all, the argument goes, only rich people have \$100 notes and they must be holding them to avoid tax. (Never mind that most people have already paid tax on the money). Money is an asset and having it can seriously alter your government pension if you receive one.

If we move to a cashless society, and this is being mooted in almost all the countries in the world, then the government will not simply govern on your behalf, but rule you absolutely.

We will become economic zombies. We will work as long as the government demands. (The age in Australia is trending towards 70 years). The logic for this is that Australia has a population of 24 million and the government needs the money to pay the bills it runs up on our behalf. Consider that 1 million people are said to be on disability pensions. Very soon ordinary pensions will be decreased as the government demands more and more of our assets to service the welfare pension payouts. But that

is not all. Elderly people are beginning to be neglected by their doctors. Medicare payments have been readjusted downwards and private health insurance costs have skyrocketed.

When receiving some offhand advice from my doctor recently, I asked him if practitioners had been warned not to “over service” people in their seventies. He looked embarrassed and simply nodded. Then went into a rambling explanation of how medical facilities were being overused. At the same time, by way of coincidence, some States are looking again at the question of euthanasia. Personally, I think this is a good idea, but my view is based on compassionate grounds, whereas the arguments against it seem to be religiously based, or premised on the belief that our relatives want to kill us to get our money. So, that says something about government as well as the human beings who vote for them.

In the brave new world of digital wealth, it will not be difficult for governments to dispose of the elderly, and eventually the poor. If you leave any money behind, or property, or assets of any kind, then be sure that in the future death duties will be reinstated to feed government greed. I’m sure that you see the philosophy behind all these moves. Yesterday, we were encouraged to work hard, save, practice delayed gratification and retire to a few years of leisure before passing on. Interestingly enough the whole notion of “work” has deteriorated. Young people want everything “now”, and if possible they would like it bigger and better than past generations.

More young people are said to be living with their parents for longer, rather than taking an apartment and branching out on their own. In actual fact the rents are so high they probably can’t afford to move out. In Sydney and Melbourne for example, rents are totally unrealistic relative to disposable income. But so far governments have not seriously tackled “affordable housing”. What to do?

Well, first of all we will have to get rid of old people. They are taking up too much room. If we can’t institute euthanasia, then we can kill them off by neglect. The best way to do this, is to make sure we do not provide unlimited medical assistance. It costs too much. First we need to slash and burn the list of treatments available for reimbursement from Medicare, such as assistance for the removal of skin cancers and skin grafts or costly X-rays. Rationale? People need to take more responsibility for their own health.

If they don’t want to do this, then we can force them to do so by imposing new taxes on soft drinks, cigarettes, junk food and anything else that we deem detrimental to health. However, to avoid a social revolution we will work towards legalising marijuana and cannabis for recreational purposes. We can handle it through “pain management” propaganda, and be seen as the “good” guys. The fact that it kills off brain cells will also work in our favour since intellectual reasoning will be decreased and people will be easier to manage.

By now you will see how I am viewing the world. I see the legislators and government employees, bank managers, and so on as being conditioned to usher in a new world order based on absolute control. And incidentally, these are people in our society who are on fabulous indexed salaries and with every possible lurk and perk.

I was told yesterday by an employee of the Commonwealth Bank that Christmas festivities would be at a minimum and there would be no religious decorations which might offend minority groups. How is your shopping centre doing?

A fortnight ago, I went to visit the fourth largest mosque in the world, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi. It was exquisitely beautiful. One of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Simply breathtaking. It was a privilege, and I treated it as such. I was adorned in black robes and head scarf. I obeyed the customs of the mosque and was grateful for the opportunity. The people in the UAE were courteous, gentle and helpful. It reminded me that there is something missing in Australian

Society. Maybe it is because we are not a society at all, but a collection of tribes driven by money and brainwashed by left wing liberals. We do not possess a collective loyalty to anything.

In Western Australia, in Fremantle, they are proposing to change Australia Day to an alternative date to avoid hurting the Aborigines who regarded the day as Invasion Day.

So, everything is disappearing. Christmas, Australia Day, and the way we live generally is passing into nothingness.

No wonder that Leonard Cohen called his last CD “You Want It Darker”. In any event, it doesn’t matter what you want, it is going to get darker, much darker, and as long as we are brainwashed it will continue to be so. You don’t agree? Then talk more to your children. Listen carefully. Keep alert. Watch how the media manipulates you. Think for yourself.

True, it may already be too late. The swamp may be so deep and pervasive that it is not possible to drain it. But, given the thousands and thousands of years it took to get here, it seems a shame to say the least.

*Trisha English*

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### Headlessness for Academics from Alan Mann

By far the greatest resistance to the Harding story comes from the learned. They find its simplicity quite alarming. I have, therefore, undertaken to provide them with access to the revelation of the experiments by more circuitous routes—approaches which I predict will be more to their taste, this is my first attempt.

The experiments are frequently used to throw light on the various spiritual traditions which tend to drift away from their origin, away from the original inspiration and settle for explanation rather than revelation. The experiments are reasonably successful in fields of enquiry which accept a broader view of actuality than offered by a strictly materialist approach. However, in the field of what can be described as secular philosophy the success rate is low. A recent exception is Sam Harris and there are other contemporary philosophers who get the point. Nevertheless, the success rate is minimal.

I will draw on two sources to illustrate my case. David Loy and Brentyn Ramm. First David Loy, whose book, *Nonduality—A Study in Contemporary Philosophy*, sets out to compare and to reconcile the approaches of the principal Eastern traditions and then relate them to contemporary philosophers such as Heidegger and Derrida. The book predates the wider knowledge of quantum matters but his endnotes include a reference to Bohm’s Wholeness and the Implicate Order.

His comments on Advaita Vedanta and the Buddhist traditions provide a useful background to recent disagreements we have shared in this year’s NOWletters. However, Loy seeks agreement rather than disagreement and, in my opinion, succeeds. In this short note I will focus on his observations on Derrida which provide the most direct means of getting across my point about the underestimated significance of the experiments to my more intellectual friends.

Loy is very respectful of Derrida’s views on deconstruction but points out that Derrida doesn’t seem to have taken the final step required by strict observation of his own method, that is the deconstruction of himself, the deconstructing subject. This, of course, is exactly what the Harding experiments are designed to do. And for how they achieve this I turn to Brentyn Ramm whose recent doctoral thesis *First Person Investigations of Consciousness* can be read at:

<https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/109192> which addresses the question from the perspective of contemporary thought about the nature of consciousness and self.

*Alan Mann*

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### Disussion Regarding 'The Self' from Colin Drake.

An assignment from my double degree in Philosophy and Comparative Religion which discusses Vedantic and Buddhist ideas regarding 'the self'. Also, introducing a précis of 'Investigation of Experience' as a model for, and an argument for the existence of, 'The Self'.

This article is an assignment from a philosophy unit regarding 'the self' according to Buddhism and Vedanta (The fundamental source of Hinduism).

*1/ The various Brahminical (Vedantic) schools offer distinct arguments for the claim of the persistence of the self. Choose what you regard as the strongest argument for claim of the persistence of the self. State the argument clearly in your own words.*

The self is essentially a conscious substance distinct from mind, body and senses. Substance is defined, in the philosophical sense by the Australian Oxford Dictionary as 'the essential nature of a thing, that which makes it what it is'. Thus the self has the property of being a 'witness' or being 'conscious of' the body, mind and senses as it is the 'conscious essential nature'.

Based on this I regard the strongest argument for the persistence of the self given by the Vedantic sage Sankara in 'Atmanjnanopadeshadivi'[1] (A way to perfection of self-knowledge) part IV when he says: Knowledge, therefore, owing to its persistence throughout all the states, is proved to be eternal without any change whatever. (verse 9) It is recognized to have no exception to its existence as one remembers that one is the same in all the states.... It is therefore eternal, pure, changeless etc. (verse 12)

This argument is based on the fact that there is continuous consciousness (which he equates with 'knowing' or knowledge) in the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep (as in a knowing or consciousness of the quality of that sleep, or knowing when pain or a sound occurs which wakes one up). From this he draws the conclusion that for there to be continuous consciousness of these three states there has to be a persistent self who is conscious. He backs this up with an argument from memory saying that one remembers, and recognizes, that one (the self or witness) is the same (one that is conscious) in all of the three states. This same one is, therefore, the persisting self posited in the first argument.

*2/ State what you regard as the strongest objection to the above argument. Explain whether the argument is safe from the objection or how the objection succeeds in demolishing it.*

I regard the strongest objection to the above argument the fact 'we do not know' that there is an essential conscious substance distinct from mind, body and senses; and that this does not appear to be empirically verifiable.

Vedanta argues that we can in fact realise this (that in essence we are pure consciousness) through Jnana and/or Raja Yoga, the paths of knowledge and meditation. It can also be inferred from various arguments such as:

In any given moment of experience there are only three things (or classes of things): thoughts (which includes all mind activity), sensations (which includes all sensory input) and consciousness of these

thoughts and sensations. This consciousness is the subject whilst the thoughts and sensations are the objects. This consciousness is present before, during, and after these thoughts and sensations and is the substratum in which they (mind/body) appear. The mind becomes 'aware of' thoughts/sensations by noticing, and focussing on, them in that portion of consciousness in which the body/mind is located, which is the only portion of the universal consciousness to which it has access; much as a computer program, when executing, only has access to that portion of RAM in which it, and its buffer, is located. This omnipresent consciousness is the conscious substance distinct from mind, body and senses i.e. The Self[2].

As far as the argument from memory goes it certainly does seem that there is a distinct unchanging entity who is present throughout our entire lives conscious of our every experience. I realise that this is not an argument, just a feeling, but it does provide some empirical evidence for the existence of a persisting self.

So, although you cannot prove the existence of a conscious substance distinct from mind, body and senses and thus persistence of the self, you cannot disprove it either. The fact that many mystics have claimed to realise this by the methods that Vedanta recommend, and that various arguments can be produced to infer it makes it safe from demolition.

*3/The Buddhists reject the notion of persisting selves in favour of causal sequence sequences of mental and physical and mental states. But they do appeal to causal relations to defend a notion of continuing selves. Do they succeed in giving an account of continuity of the self over time?*

The Buddhists maintain that there is no eternal self or atman. They regard persons as being a combination of physical material form and mental states of feeling, perception, disposition (intentions/volitons) and consciousness. These five are known as the bundle of aggregates (skandhas), each of which combine with the others in a dynamic bundle. This bundle exists moment to moment with each 'bundle-moment' causing the following 'bundle-moment'. Thus the impression of the continuity of a person is given by a series of instantaneous causally linked person stages (bundle-moments) flowing into each other. At death, it is claimed that the bundle of aggregates, except the material form, reconfigures in accordance with karmic causation. The new bundle is then reborn into a material form and circumstances commensurate with the karmic residue of the previous bundle.

Thus the Buddhists deny that there is any sort of persisting entity (self) that continues over time. A person appears to continue as a separate entity over time but this is just an illusion. Just as a river is not in fact a single entity, but a continuous flow of water, so a person is just a flow of causally linked person stages (bundle-moments). This seems to account for the persistence of memories and character, and is relatively successful in accounting for the seeming continuity of the person (self in this context) over a lifetime. However, it leaves many unanswered questions when applied from life to life. For in this case such criteria as memory, character and spatio-temporal contiguity are absent. So to substantiate the claim that there is causal continuity from one life to the next Buddhism would have had to come up with an alternative set of empirical criteria, and this it has failed to do. Thus the Buddhist account only offers a semblance of causal continuity, not essential continuity, which is not surprising given that they deny the existence of a real persisting self.

*4/ Is there really any need to defend the persistence, or at least the continuity, of selves over time?*

I would answer in the negative on the following grounds:

a/ Through memory, the recognition of the people we know, and the acquired paraphernalia of a lifetime we have the experience of persisting. Not only that but we recognize ourselves, as the same subject of experience, from experience to experience. Thus through feeling and self-recognition we experience the persistence of a 'self' without any need to argue it intellectually.

b/ We can only, in fact, live moment to moment i.e. in the present moment. If we live lost in memories (the past) or continually focussing on the future we miss 'what is' here and now. To experience 'what is' we need to 'be' in the present moment and see things with a still mind without continual reference to the past or future. Thus, from this point of view, we would be better off without any idea of a persisting self, especially if this is misidentified as the ego/mind... as is usually the case. So I would argue that the **need** is not to defend the persistence of the self but to discover that it is, as normally thought of, an illusion.

[1] Sri Sankaracharya, *Atmanjnanopadeshadivi*, 1973 Madras

[2] Capitals are used for 'The Self' indicating that this is the Absolute, Universal, Self; whereas 'the self' is used for the (seeming) separate, individual, self which is actually just an ephemeral incidence of the former.

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### New book 'Fundamental Questions - Pointers To Awakening and To The Nature of Reality'

Colin Drake writes: ' Dear Fellow Explorers, I am pleased to announce my latest book 'Fundamental Questions - Pointers To Awakening and To The Nature of Reality ' based on articles and replies to questions since my last.

The book is a guide to awakening and also gives some answers to the five big fundamental questions: 1. God: Is there a God, or an Absolute and if so what is its nature? 2. Creation: How was the universe created and what is the nature and purpose of this creation? 3. The Nature of Man: What is the essential nature of a human being – are we ephemeral material beings or do we possess some kind of indestructible essence? 4. The Purpose of Life: What is the purpose of life? 5. The Afterlife: What happens upon the death of the human body? Does this entail annihilation or is there some kind of afterlife and, if so, what is its nature? <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/ColinDrake>

### Meetings:

Northern NSW readers please note: Celia Novy has let us know about the regular meetings at Byron Bay.

### Byron Sophia Philosophical Group

Masonic Centre, 6 Byron St. Byron Bay -- Open Meetings: every Thursday from 1 to 3 pm

**Greville Street —Chatswood** Usually first Sunday of the month —but no meeting in January

**First 2017 meeting SUNDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> February**

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