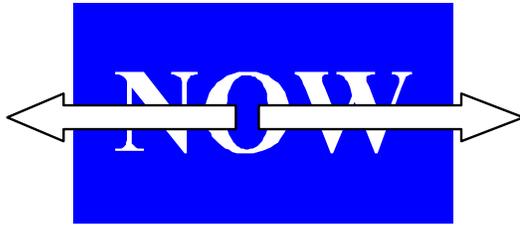


**Issue 146—March 2010***Email: awmann@optusnet.com.au**Website: www.capacitie.org***Harding Meetings—81 Greville St.****Next Meeting—date to be advised****(02) 9419 7394**

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**Editor's Note,**

This issue is largely taken up with responses to the last edition, in particular two extensive commentaries by Mark Beardmore who's first contribution was titled 'A Primary View of Reality' and appeared in NOWletter 108, June 2005. Joan Relke provides us with a postscript on happenings in Fairfield and Robert Penny adds a note to his recent letter. We open with Andrew Hilton's insider view of life in the mental healthcare field.

I have a number of outstanding contributions which require some editing and/or negotiation before publication so my thanks to both present and pending contributors.

**The NOWletter appears between 8 and 12 times every year and is a vehicle for news and views about awakening to what is really going on. The content is based primarily on contributions from readers, either their own writing or examples of what moves or interests them. Subscription is free.**

**Index of articles and back numbers from 1993 at:  
<http://www.capacitie.org/now/archive.htm>**

## **Is there life ahead? From Andrew Hilton**

*Memoirs, confessions and insights of a mental health worker positing ways to overcome the passivity or strategic withdrawal of mental health consumers.*

Community mental health in its current state is charged with the restoration and maintenance of stability in the lives of mental health consumers, with recourse to a bio-psycho-social perspective on the lives of mental health consumers. A conventional band of professionals is engaged in diagnosis and treatment, employing the diagnostic classification of illness.

Typically a young person returns to the community after a short stay in the psych. ward of a general hospital, following some kind of an acute episode. There may be a confounded family that the young person returns to, together with various practical problems of living to be sorted out, as well as follow-ups with regard to the efficacy of medication and the general restoration of order in that person's life.

Of course there are the swelling ranks of the long term mentally ill. Those who tend to unravel when they elect to either reduce their medication, flirt with illicit substances and/or alcohol, or feel threatened and/or undermined in a relationship, and who most likely shrink from larger social gatherings.

Community mental health centres triage. Critical problems, such as a young person's management post episode or clients in the higher risk categories receive greater attention. Suicides and self harming look bad in the statistics of a designated region.

As for on-going stability and so-called quality of life, essentially a devolution of mental health services has occurred. Some consumers are supported and live at home and can afford private rental but many live in public housing, some in licensed boarding houses, a few on the street. Programs such as HASI (targets those in public housing), ALI (licensed boarding houses) or PHAMS (particular high needs individuals living in the community,) or say The Salvation Army (for the homeless,) have evolved and now offer a degree of support.

It's not a politically correct observation but mental health professionals, working at a community mental centre, tend to be paid more than the workers in the programs just listed and might also tend to see, broadly speaking, their work as restorative or curative while the work involved in these nominated programs might be seen as 'welfare'. Baby sitting the 'worried well'.

Basically the system's aims for 'recovery' are pretty modest. The system is on about management and maintenance.

If there is evidence that attests to the accomplishment of goals in the life of a mental health consumer then the specific non-government organisation has a far greater chance of obtaining recurrent funding; a bit like a political party working to get re-elected rather than solving medium or long term problems effectively.

The organisation satisfies the requirements of an annual performance agreement and lives for another year.

It's all very simple. Funding authorities express agreements in terms of goals. Clients are viewed as successfully having completed agreed upon goals with the worker. And the workers themselves account for the daily activities of consumers in this tangible form, i.e., goal setting, homework, support contracts.

There is a problem. It's not that goals are not important to counteract societal disenfranchisement in the form of aimlessness and social exclusion, as well as being a burden on the economy, but ultimately the real desire of a functioning and targeted mental health system must promote 'the transition from the role of the patient to the role of agent'; in other words self sufficiency. Here is a response from the Education Officer from the Institute of Psychiatry, Kath Thorburn, responding to a research proposal of mine into 'recovery':

"First of all – I have, over the past few years, had to completely rethink my own understanding of goals (which as an occupational therapist have been a major focus of my training and my work in the past) and what they mean if we are truly talking recovery. I have definitely been challenged to think about this differently...and have started to work with students in some of my training to 'unpack' the meaning and purpose of goals in current MH practice...

Re the concept of 'strategic withdrawal' that you talk about...Pat Deegan also talks about this (as do many people's stories of lived experience) ... she calls her period of 'inertia' (which she describes as sitting on the couch, smoking cigarettes day in & day out, marking the hours until she can fall back into bed and escape through sleep) 'woodshedding' (a term which I understand comes from Jazz musicians who take themselves away from the influence of other musicians etc and practice in solitude, then emerge even more 'at one' with their music and instrument). Pat certainly sees this as instrumental in her own journey of recovery...the thing we are asking workers is if this is so important, what does it mean for our interpretations of people's experiences and what we understand to be important...also, what is the role of workers in this phase? When we misinterpret this 'strategic withdrawal' as 'lack of motivation' or 'resistance' or 'lack of insight' what is the (significant) negative impact we have on the person?

With regard to your research proposal generally I would be very interested to hear of your progress...what the person does for themselves (as opposed to what workers do) and how we create environments that support and don't hinder this process..."

Finally, I agree with your comments about the overuse and misuse of the term 'recovery' in policy docs etc...and what does this mean for the Institute in terms of our training...are we not just as guilty of colonising? Ahh self-examination...why is it that the stuff that's good for you is never the easy stuff?!!?"

A number of issues arise from Ms. Thorburn's views concerning the blurring of the lines between the therapist/client relationship, and the notion of downtime in which, in emptiness, the well springs of creativity and wholeness are filled.

Instead of presenting an overarching sketch of those strategies that make for wellness, rebuilding a weakened will that includes: medication, various therapeutic relationships and 12 step programs that involve personal testimony and valued sharing, contact with nature etc., I want to rather articulate and focus on a non-developmental perspective. It involves the whole person and particularly de-emphasising goals being attained in a distant future in favour of what I would refer to as 'active meditation', derived from practices associated with Krishnamurti's teachings.

The focus is what is taking place in an 'active present' with a view to silencing the overburdened mind. This 'active' process involves an enquiry into thought and the nature of the self, and an associated direct experience of embodiment, leading ultimately to a sense of assuredness and greater personal relatedness, seeing the 'me' as the product of my own conclusions, and the content of my personal history as being less important than the fear, aggression or self justifying that sustains the knowledge I might have about myself. The observational practice Krishnamurti articulates, that many have found/employed, breaks down the authority of the person who is so called 'in the know', i.e. in this context the mental health professional or other perceived authority figure. As well as the authority of the knowledge I have about myself, my opinions about life, etc. Krishnamurti points out and enables one to watch how the entity we can refer to as the thinker or the controller, i.e. the 'me', by its existence brings about and sustains a divisive quality of mind or outlook. Watching the operation of this divisive quality is achieved simply by innocently being aware of distraction, and at one and the same time, without an effort of will, giving attention to what is actually taking place in the now, present time, where 'you' are. And you start to really

notice things; the bark of a tree, breathing, textures, say of an item of clothing on the skin, the piercing screeches of a flock of cockatoos overhead and their flight paths, then a car backs out of a garage. You might notice the design or be struck by its colour; some association that colour sets off in you. At times experiential silence and feelings of connectedness can and do descend, though not moving away from the reality of responses in daily life, but rather coming into personal quiet, unity. This capacity or quality of mind, namely to inhabit an active present, eclipses one's sense of all that is associated with the 'me', letting go of the sense of a personal history and further bids for the 'me' to attain successes in a future because it is as if the future is subsumed in the immediacy of being; a quality of 'hereness'. The distraction and activity of restless thoughts is gone. However, this feeling cannot be held on to.

This 'hereness' fluctuates. The 'me', with its personal history and its striving in an imagined future can dissipate but the 'me' returns with its "memories, ambitions for the future, day dreams, fantasies, (and) fanaticisms" to quote John Cooper. John Cooper doesn't think that you can use a mantra or a meditation technique to go beyond the mind. Rather, you are locked in your history, your background, your memories and you can't go beyond them.... Many of us tend to live there, in the 'what is not'.

For the mental health sufferer the sustained problematic relationships and general "I can't" self talk can begin to dissipate and the 'I can' strategies begin to flower, as well as the easy accentuation of embodiment and more positive affirmation or self talk. Recasting one's life story in a positive way can accompany such gains. Writing can be effective in locating persistent, unhelpful, and self justifying thinking, also fostering a burgeoning sense of otherness. For example, at certain intervals one might review how one's past actions have significantly affected others. Or consider how those significant others in my life might have experienced me at certain times.

The process of being exposed to and taking on Krishnamurti's teachings begins to end the over-riding centre in one's life being oneself. Instead of following goals endlessly for the results of an improvement in an indeterminate future, one often finds oneself living with immediacy and with a heightened sense of relationship with others socially, and with animals and nature, with the depth of being and not a lop-sided chattering mind. So there is therefore a compelling necessity to hearken to 'what is', thereby lessening the propulsion of 'the what is not'. Krishnamurti's teachings have vital relevance to foster relatedness, a renewed capacity for intelligent choice-making for psychiatric consumers, leading ultimately to active on-going recovery.

*Andrew Hilton*

## **Inspired by the article on the Dalai Lama trip by Berry Dunston from Mark Beardmore**

What is often forgotten when ogling the spiritual side of his office, is that he is also by default the exiled political leader of Tibet. There was always going to be direct conflict between a secular communist state that sees (by default) religion as an opiate for the masses. Coupled with its expansionist policy<sup>1</sup> and resource grab<sup>2</sup> as well as its cultural ties and the fact that China is itself comprised of a 'united states' of older provinces all add to the inevitable

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<sup>1</sup> At one point it looked as if China was going to invade India - until a 1954 peace accord. See: [http://web.mit.edu/cascon/cases/case\\_icb.html](http://web.mit.edu/cascon/cases/case_icb.html)

<sup>2</sup> At the time of its Tibetan invasion oil was thought to be abundant on the plateau, but it was to take years to actually find: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/1502117.stm>

outcome. Further, Tibet had been a British 'pawn' in the 'Great Game' with Russia, and while not a 'colony' was definitely under British influence. The dissolution of the British Empire together with the partitioning of the previous heterogeneous India gave China all the licence it needed to march right on in. This geopolitical play and the subsequent western guilt and inability to act on the 'ethnic' cleansing and exiling of the Dalai Lama's party<sup>3</sup> in 1959, set the Dalai Lama up to be recognised by the Western authorities as the representative of Tibet in exile.

While people often focus on "Chinese Government's power-play tactics", they conveniently forget both past and present Western government tactics, especially those of the British government alluded to above. As regards behaviour, and ironically if they understood anything about Chinese philosophy - especially Daoism, they would realise that to push against an opponent who is stronger than you is futile. Better to get out of their way lest you be crushed – which is exactly what the Dalai Lama has been trying to do in order to save what remains of Tibetan Buddhism and culture. Western political activists, however well meaning, can often hinder this process and to some extent could be blamed for the increasing refusal of 'western' political leaders to meet with the Dalai Lama in their attempts to appease a currently resurgent China when in the past this was not an issue. This is why the Dalai Lama has wanted to cease to be seen as a political agent in any way what so ever and instead to take the role of a religious and cultural standard bearer. This would automatically neutralise the Chinese opposition which so far has been mainly political in its nature – as a 'communist' based enterprise they are as already mentioned not religious or for that matter very concerned about cultural diversity. In fact to improve their image in the eyes of the west they have opted for a Tibetan cultural renaissance, albeit stage managed, and it is on this activity that the Tibetan region could regain or retain some pieces of its former identity.

A final point is that the Dalai Lama suffers for better or worse, the projection of westerner idealism, both religious and spiritual. He represents in our eyes the very essence of a lost spiritual Shangri-La<sup>4</sup>, something that as a historical fact never existed. In this ideal the harsh political practicalities are often never addressed. Add to this the Chinese reaction to any 'western' questioning of their sovereignty over this territory and the poor guy has his work cut out for him. These days he has assumed the role of a Buddhist monk first and foremost and his quoting of 'non-Tibetan' scripture is probably more of an ecclesiastical move designed to forge greater ties with the larger Buddhist Diasporas. Do not forget that Buddhism in India had been effectively dead for centuries, if not millennia: the presence of 'Tibetan' Buddhism on Indian soil could be seen in the greater context of an Indian Buddhist revival – witness the conversion en-mass of the Dalit 'untouchables' to Buddhism to escape the Hindu caste system<sup>5</sup>. As well as any psychological analysis, the Dalai Lama's actions must be seen in the light of this *Realpolitik*.

Finally as an anecdote, when the Dalai Lama visited Cockfosters in North London way back in '95, and he saw all the other Buddhist monks (Theravadin) in the audience who were sitting on the floor his face lit up, and instead of sitting on a chair on the podium he too insisted on sitting on the floor (of the podium). He was just another Buddhist monk happy to be with his fellow Buddhists – Tibetan or otherwise.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that there were three other 'schools' or 'parties' both political and religious, not including the older Bon tradition. See Waddell, L.A., 1895 *The Buddhism of Tibet*, W.H.Allen & Co., Limited, UK & the inevitable Wiki: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Tibet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Tibet)

<sup>4</sup> For a glimpse of what the term Shangri La might have meant, take a look at the Ladakh project at the ISEC (International Society for Ecology and Culture): <http://www.isec.org.uk/pages/ladakh.html>

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/untouchable-hindus-convert-to-buddhism-615722.html>

## A response to Colin Drake's On Finding Reality from Mark Beardmore.

This next bit was inspired by Colin's piece in the last newsletter (145). I am not in any way attempting to denigrate Colin's own path, that is his own affair and his alone. What I do attempt is to point out possible areas of confusion to fellow path beaters such as myself. In doing this and expanding my own thinking on this matter, I came across the website of Timothy Conway who puts his site's mission as:

"...gathering together the greatest spiritual teachings from this planet's most eminent spiritual Avatars, Buddhas, sages and saints; sharing these inspiring and liberating teachings on nondual devotion and wisdom to all interested parties; clarifying confusions and correcting misleading distortions of the Perennial Wisdom traditions (e.g., crazed cultic aberrations of egoic-self-inflation, stunted states of God-Self-denial, and delusionally dangerous, nihilist forms of neo-nonduality)."<sup>6</sup>

Firstly the claim of false lineage: Colin's comment "I then encountered a disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi, Gangaji" made me think that he is capable of time travel - assuming that it is the same Maharshi 1879 to 1950 we are talking about! 'Gangaji' is actually a 'disciple' of Papaji, who is more officially known as HWL Poonja<sup>7</sup>, and it is he who was a follower of the Maharshi (1879 to 1950)<sup>8</sup>. However, as Sarlo's site<sup>9</sup> points out there has been (and still is) a lot of controversy. For one Papaji himself did not name a single 'successor' disciple, and secondly he made it clear in his book "Nothing Ever Happened" that those he sent to teach were not enlightened - not even temporarily enlightened.

The following, taken from Timothy's website highlights the problems of lineages, not least their inherent corruption.

"Papaji himself made it clear, in his teachings included in the book "Nothing Ever Happened", edited by his students, that those he sent to teach not only are not enlightened, they are not even temporarily enlightened, in the fullest sense.

#1. When asked about those he sent to teach, Papaji said that the purpose was to have them point the way to Lucknow, not to pose as awakened teachers.

#2. Papaji said that many can fool others into thinking they are liberated but they are the false coin.

#3. When asked about the experiences that so many people had in Lucknow, he said they were false experiences.

#4. When asked, "Why did you give them false experiences?" he said to get the leeches off my back.

[Note from Timothy: this seems a bit duplicitous; this attitude, along with point #1, which appears rather self-serving, and some other aspects of Papaji

<sup>6</sup> From: [http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/Timothy\\_Conway.html](http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/Timothy_Conway.html)

<sup>7</sup> From: <http://www.avadhuta.com/>

<sup>8</sup> From: <http://www.satsangbhavan.net/biography.htm>

<sup>9</sup> See: <http://www.globalserve.net/~Sarlo/Ysatsang.htm>. While I am ambivalent towards 'grading teachers' I think there is a valid need to sort the wheat from the chaff, however crude the attempt. At the end of the day, the Teacher will take whatever form is needed, sometimes even that of a "teacher"! The only problem is that of attachment and wanting someone to enlighten you, when the only person who can do that is you... to a point, then its up to no one at all, or to give it a name, the 'Divine' God Head – see Bernadette below.

discussed below, are why some of us do not regard Papaji as having been the most "purely" realized among those who encountered Sri Ramana Mahârshi (1879-1950).]

#5. Papaji said he met only two Jñânis [truly realized sages] in his lifetime. One was Ramana Maharshi. The other was a man who appeared from out of the jungle into the town of Krishnagiri. [NOTE: In the book Papaji: Interviews, edited by David Godman, 1993 edition, pp. 48-9, two jñânis other than Ramana are mentioned by Papaji as having "attained full and complete Self-realisation": the jungle sadhu in Karnataka and a Muslim pîr. On page 64, in endnote 5, David Godman reports, "Sri Poonja told me that he thought his mother's Guru was also a jñâni." In the 3-volume Nothing Ever Happened biography-autobiography of Papaji compiled by David Godman and others, there is the implicit or explicit acknowledgment that a few others were completely Self-Realized: Nisargadatta Maharaj, Swami Gnanananda of Tirukoilur, Bhagavan Nityananda, and J. Krishnamurti (though J.K. is criticized by Papaji for not being a good teacher-transmitter of Realization). On page 50 of the Papaji: Interviews book, Papaji states: "Though many people have had a temporary direct experience of the Self, full and permanent realisation is a very rare event."]

#6. Ramana Maharshi said that there is a false sense of liberation that aspirants reach that very few ever go beyond. ”

And:

“One VERY important thing to note from the outset is that there was NO LINEAGE stemming from Ramana Mahârshi. Bhagavân Ramana appointed NO "successors" and, unlike Papaji, told no one to teach in his name or as his representative.”<sup>10</sup>

These points are extremely important. As is found in Buddhism and many other traditions, experiences are not to be taken seriously – all that arises does indeed cease. While very nice and sometimes mind boggling, they are also extremely dangerous. They can confuse and energise the mind into thinking that it has ‘attained’ something. Further, there is a clear order of progression of insight, roughly translated as stream enterer, once returner and non-returner. These are all stages on the path to Arahantship, that nameless realisation of the Tathagata, the thus-gone-one.

Critical thinking is always important in these issues, as pointed out on Timothy’s website.

“Critical thinking can 1) identify any faulty thinking, self-deception, blind spots, distortion, misinformation, propaganda, and prejudice on the cognitive level of our views, and 2) identify external attitudes and behaviors that don't serve our private and public welfare—the commonweal; i.e., attitudes and behaviors that don't truly free us and empower us and/or fail to accord with an ethics and value-system promoting authentic liberation, justice and fairness.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> From: <http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/neo-advaita.html>. These points are also raised on Sarlo’s website.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

Further, in this *Infinite Universe* with all its diversity and difference, it never fails to amaze me that when some unique individual following their own unique path finally ‘gets it’ that they somehow then think that all the other unique individuals following their unique paths should all of a sudden find a need to convert to theirs. Not only is it bizarre; it gets turned literally into a spiritual bazaar and the whole quest to *know thy self* along with it. And here I make a distinction between careful reflective sharing of insight, and the sort of ‘pulp fiction’ nondual drivel that one finds in so many books on ‘wisdom’ nowadays. But hey, that’s just my own unique and somewhat twisted take on it!

Again from Tim’s site:

"Let us here further consider how too many neo-advaitins in their anti-intellectual bent put down all book-reading as a waste of time being stuck at the mere "mental" level. (Would they like to return us to the medieval and/or totalitarian days of massive public book-burnings?) And yet, in a quite **unintended but hilarious stroke of irony**, we are encouraged by many of these same neo-advaitins or by their disciples and PR persons to buy all the books (and CDs and DVDs) of their Great Teacher's teachings. **We are to ignore classic gems of spiritual instruction like Shankara's *Upadesha Sâhasrî* and Jñânesvar's *Amritânuhava*, and the *Yoga Vasishtha*, but by all means we should hasten to buy the dumbed-down, distorted pile of deconstructivism from the latest "fully enlightened" neo-advaitin.**"<sup>12</sup>  
(Itals + Bold in original)

And further insight into Gangaji’s behaviour comes from a student of Papaji who posted the following on his blog:

“It is sad, that Toni [Papaji's supposed "enlightened" student Gangaji who kind of 'got it' [in 1990] declared herself enlightened and then has been tapping others as enlightened. There are many who got it more deeply than Toni, who never bothered to declare themselves enlightened let alone tap others as enlightened. They had no desire to do so. Beware those who desire to be teachers. Ramana never left his little mountain. Poonja worked as a government employee after his encounter with Ramana. He never gave a damn about numbers or foundations and he was so enthusiastic that he declared that everyone is enlightened, but not that they are equal. He told me again and again that there are indeed levels of realization.”<sup>13</sup>

This reminds me of the famous Chinese saying "Those who know do not speak, those who speak, do not know".<sup>14</sup> This lineage point is summed up thus:

“So, on this matter of all the "enlightened teachers" in the "lineage of Ramana Maharshi" via Papaji... there's **NO LINEAGE FROM MAHARSHI** and **most of these figures are NOT fully enlightened or liberated in any really meaningful sense of the term**. On the latter point, **Papaji, as we have seen, himself stated as much.**”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> A lot is lost in translation, but the original points to that which is beyond conception and hence cannot by default be talked about.

<sup>15</sup> From: <http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/neo-advaita.html>. (Caps, italics and bold in Original)

There is also the myriad confusion so delicately observed by Bernadette Roberts<sup>16</sup>, which is the confusion between loss of the ego and the loss of the self, sometimes equated as ego being the little self and big Self being the 'Fat Controller' of awareness.<sup>17</sup> However, the two are not the same, and are entirely different experiences at opposite ends of the 'path'. This quote while a bit long puts it eloquently:

"Bernadette: We can only see a path in retrospect. Once we come to the state of oneness, we can go no further with the inward journey. The divine center is the innermost "point", beyond which we cannot go at this time. Having reached this point, the movement of our journey turns around and begins to move outward - the center is expanding outward. To see how this works, imagine self, or consciousness, as a circular piece of paper. The initial center is the ego, the particular energy we call "will" or volitional faculty, which can either be turned outward, toward itself, or inward, toward the divine ground, which underlies the center of the paper. When, from our side of consciousness, we can do no more to reach this ground, the divine takes the initiative and breaks through the center, shattering the ego like an arrow shot through the center of being. The result is a dark hole in ourselves and the feeling of terrible void and emptiness. This breakthrough demands a restructuring or change of consciousness, and this change is the true nature of the transforming process. Although this transformation culminates in true human maturity, it is not man's final state. The whole purpose of oneness is to move us on to a more final state.

To understand what happens next, we have to keep cutting larger holes in the paper, expanding the center until only the barest rim or circumference remains. One more expansion of the divine center, and the boundaries of consciousness or self fall away. From this illustration we can see how the ultimate fulfillment of consciousness, or self, is no-consciousness, or no-self. The path from oneness to no-oneness is an egoless one and is therefore devoid of ego-satisfaction. Despite the unchanging center of peace and joy, the events of life may not be peaceful or joyful at all. With no ego-gratification at the center and no divine joy on the surface, this part of the journey is not easy. Heroic acts of selflessness are required to come to the end of self, acts comparable to cutting ever-larger holes in the paper - acts, that is, that bring no return to the self whatsoever. **The major temptation to be overcome in this period is the temptation to fall for one of the subtle but powerful archetypes of the collective consciousness.** As I see it, in the transforming process we only come to terms with the archetypes of the personal unconscious; the archetypes of the collective consciousness are reserved for individuals in the state of oneness, because those archetypes are powers or energies of that state. Jung felt that these archetypes were

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16 Who in my own mind is one of the few alive today who has understood Reality as humans have found it, and can explain it in a western context..

17 This conceptualisation of awareness is prevalent everywhere these days. Yet it is a profound misunderstanding of the original meaning found especially in older eastern traditions. The idea that you are not the body but awareness or more often the Divine/Sacred/Raised-up-on-high-Special-Awareness is actually just that; an idea, another concept. Something profound has again been lost in translation. The reality that it is supposed to point to has already been lost. Awareness, or more correctly discernment as termed in Buddhist parlance, is the discernment of whatever is the focus of the mind at that particular moment. That which is 'aware', is beyond conception. Timothy's site has a lot of this unfortunately, one my beefs with his approach.

unlimited; but in fact, there is only one true archetype, and that archetype is self. What is unlimited are the various masks or roles self is tempted to play in the state of oneness - savior, prophet, healer, martyr, Mother Earth, you name it. They are all temptations to seize power for ourselves, to think ourselves to be whatever the mask or role may be. In the state of oneness, both Christ and Buddha were tempted in this manner, but they held to the "ground" that they knew to be devoid of all such energies. This ground is a "stillpoint", not a moving energy-point. Unmasking these energies, seeing them as ruses of the self, is the particular task to be accomplished or hurdle to be overcome in the state of oneness. We cannot come to the ending of self until we have finally seen through these archetypes and can no longer be moved by any of them. So the path from oneness to no-oneness is a life that is choicelessly devoid of ego-satisfaction; a life of unmasking the energies of self and all the divine roles it is tempted to play. It is hard to call this life a "path", yet it is the only way to get to the end of our journey." (sic) (bold = my emphasis)

And:

"Initially, I gave up looking for this experience in the Buddhist literature. Four years later, however, I came across two lines attributed to Buddha describing his enlightenment experience. Referring to self as a house, he said, "All thy rafters are broken now, the ridgepole is destroyed." And there it was - the disappearance of the center, the ridgepole; without it, there can be no house, no self. When I read these lines, it was as if an arrow launched at the beginning of time had suddenly hit a bulls-eye. It was a remarkable find. These lines are not a piece of philosophy, but an experiential account, and without the experiential account we really have nothing to go on. In the same verse he says, "Again a house thou shall not build," clearly distinguishing this experience from the falling away of the ego-center, after which a new, transformed self is built around a "true center," a sturdy, balanced ridgepole."<sup>18</sup>

And it is the roles that they become tempted to play that makes all the charlatans stand out. And I mean that in the most compassionate of ways – while its dictionary meaning refers to a person falsely claiming a special knowledge or skill, its original Latin meaning is derived from the word to babble. And don't we just have a whole load of books that babble on about what exactly? Having wonderful and divine experiences does not make one divine! This is one of the first rules embedded in the novice monk of the less corrupted lineages of Buddhism, and is one of the 227 precepts: Don't discuss your 'spiritual' experiences, or use them to gain favour from the laity or unenlightened. Again Bernadette seems to put this very thing into perspective:

"If we want to be totally honest, all we immediately know in our experiences is the experience itself, our self in other words. We ARE our own experience. Everything else we experience is "mediated" knowledge or awareness OF: awareness of the divine, the rock, or anything else. By the very nature of the reflective mechanism of the mind, consciousness' first knowledge or

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<sup>18</sup> From: [http://www.spiritualteachers.org/b\\_roberts\\_interview.htm](http://www.spiritualteachers.org/b_roberts_interview.htm)

experience is itself; only secondarily is it a knowledge or experience of something other than itself. Thus while the self-experience defines consciousness, it cannot define the true nature of anything else or the true nature of what it experiences.

Consciousness cannot know the “thing in itself” because consciousness cannot be other than itself; it is limited to its own field of knowing and experiencing. In doing so consciousness becomes the mediator for everything known apart from itself. Thus in the act of mediating, consciousness imposes its own limitations on the thing known, thereby making it comprehensible in terms of itself – in terms of its own image and likeness so to speak. This means that in order to know anything other than itself, consciousness has no choice but to impose its own limitations on everything NOT itself. So although the direct, immediate object of consciousness is always itself, at the same time, consciousness also mediates knowledge (indirect knowledge) of what is other than itself: things, people, the divine, the universe and so on.”<sup>19</sup>

She goes on to point out that we can only know these ‘other’ things and people; that we “cannot get inside our neighbor’s skin”<sup>20</sup> (sic) otherwise we would be our neighbour. The same goes for “the immediate experience of a bird, tree or rock” otherwise we would be that. The same with our experience of the Divine. It is our experience mediated by our own mind and senses and awareness that we know, and that consciousness limits what we know; it defines the parameters of what we know about the Reality that we exist in. “Consciousness virtually locks man into the human experience or human dimension of existence.”<sup>21</sup> Infinite Reality lies beyond this consciousness, and this is where humans make a mistake if they ever do, and that is to assume that their knowledge is in some way *complete*. “The whole point is that despite our divine experiences, the divine essence or true nature is beyond the experiential potential of consciousness.”<sup>22</sup>

And this again points to the problems that Bernadette alludes to above. An absence of ego is all well and good, but an absence of self seems to be the eventual goal. Realising the 'self' is just that, realising the reflexive consciousness that lies hidden behind the ego, itself a mental thought construct. Going beyond self is an entirely different matter. While all manner of experiences come and go, and with them the awareness that arises alongside them, ultimately the path can only be seen at its end. Until then we must continue to live as fully as we can, for ultimately we are not so much alive as Being Lived. Bernadette sums this up nicely:

" Bernadette: First of all, I think there are more people in the state of oneness than we realize. For everyone we hear about there are thousands we will never hear about. Believing this state to be a rare achievement can be an impediment in itself. Unfortunately, those who write about it have a way of making it sound more extraordinary and blissful than it commonly is, and so false expectations are another impediment - we keep waiting and looking for an experience or state that never comes. But if I had to put my finger on the primary obstacle, I would say it is having wrong views of the journey.

Paradoxical though it may seem, the passage through consciousness or self moves contrary to self, rubs it the wrong way - and in the end, will even rub it

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<sup>19</sup> Roberts, Bernadette, 2005, “What is Self?: A Study of the Spiritual Journey in Terms of Consciousness”, Pubs. First Sentient Publications, p.57-8

<sup>20</sup> Ibid: p.58.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p.59

out. Because this passage goes against the grain of self, it is, therefore, a path of suffering. Both Christ and Buddha saw the passage as one of suffering, and basically found identical ways out. What they discovered and revealed to us was that each of us has within himself or herself a "stillpoint" - comparable, perhaps to the eye of a cyclone, a spot or center of calm, imperturbability, and non-movement. Buddha articulated this central eye in negative terms as "emptiness" or "void", a refuge from the swirling cyclone of endless suffering. Christ articulated the eye in more positive terms as the "Kingdom of God" or the "Spirit within", a place of refuge and salvation from a suffering self.

For both of them, the easy out was first to find that stillpoint and then, by attaching ourselves to it, by becoming one with it, to find a stabilizing, balanced anchor in our lives. After that, the cyclone is gradually drawn into the eye, and the suffering self comes to an end. And when there is no longer a cyclone, there is also no longer an eye. So the storms, crises, and sufferings of life are a way of finding the eye. When everything is going our way, we do not see the eye, and we feel no need to find it. But when everything is going against us, then we find the eye. So the avoidance of suffering and the desire to have everything go our own way runs contrary to the whole movement of our journey; it is all a wrong view. With the right view, however, one should be able to come to the state of oneness in six or seven years - years not merely of suffering, but years of enlightenment, for right suffering is the essence of enlightenment. Because self is everyone's experience underlying all culture. I do not regard cultural wrong views as an excuse for not searching out right views. After all, each person's passage is his or her own; there is no such thing as a collective passage."<sup>23</sup>

The confirmation bias point of needing authentication is also a giveaway – when the ‘ridgepole’ is broken, you won’t need anyone to confirm anything! She also points out the three differing views of the ego as she sees them in Hindu, Jungian and her own Christian perspective, which she sees as having only a similarity with one other tradition, that of Buddhism. In her distinction she makes a point about the very experiences being different,<sup>24</sup> and how this has profound consequences for the path itself. She further highlights inconsistencies in the Hindu ideas of consciousness, but there is not space here to discuss this now.

On a more personal perspective, I think that we in the industrialised world are, when we attain 'oneness' or 'awareness', actually only recovering what is the natural state of humans, especially as found in traditional and indigenous cultures<sup>25</sup>. It is only when this 'little' death occurs that we can begin the infinitely greater task of living life from that newly gained perspective. The process that originally robbed us of our ‘child like’ innocence or “Dumbing Us Down” as John Taylor Gatto<sup>26</sup> calls it, is that thing we call schooling; in which we are robbed of our imaginations and ability to *Be* in the world - our humanity in other words. And this process starts today at a younger and younger age. Given the problems we now face as a race of beings, such as Peak Oil<sup>27</sup> and resource depletion, and given our tenacious clinging to

<sup>23</sup> From: [http://www.spiritualteachers.org/b\\_roberts\\_interview.htm](http://www.spiritualteachers.org/b_roberts_interview.htm)

<sup>24</sup> See Roberts, Bernadette, 2005

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Conway mentions this in an interview: [http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/Interview\\_with\\_Timothy\\_Conway\\_in\\_Sun\\_Magazine.html](http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/Interview_with_Timothy_Conway_in_Sun_Magazine.html)

<sup>26</sup> See: [www.johntaylorgatto.com](http://www.johntaylorgatto.com)

<sup>27</sup> See: <http://www.theoil drum.com/>

bad conditioning, we will all face a huge struggle to come to that stillpoint. Yet it is only from there will we be able to go forward.

Finally, another description of the path and a last caveat:

“We would like to clarify, for the sake of general knowledge, that there are actually several levels of expansion beyond the mind. There are three basic types of Inner Expansion:

- 1) Awakening to Pure Awareness (the State of Presence behind the mind).
- 2) Awakening to the Absolute State (unity with the unmanifested).
- 3) Awakening of the Heart (expansion into the Divine).

In each of these levels there are three stages: Shift into a state, Stabilisation and Integration. For instance, many satsang-teachers do not experience the same state outside of teaching. This is because they are not established permanently in the state they have attained. For that reason, they can have a deep state during satsang, but when they leave the satsang room, they return back to ordinary consciousness. In such a case only conscious cultivation of the particular state can allow one to establish it permanently. However, if one does not believe in the actual process of awakening, how can one consciously cultivate anything? One does not even know that one is in a State. Here we see the importance of correct understanding. If one just follows in a dogmatic and unimaginative way the Advaita idea that "I am already That," how can one cultivate anything?

We recommend to all students and teachers of Advaita to be more critical. Follow Advaita if you wish but know that Reality is simply much more rich than any linear philosophy, Advaita included. The Practical Advaita and the Theoretical Advaita are very different. In the Theoretical Advaita, the Self is the only reality, there is no Path and we are all already awakened. But Practical Advaita knows that there is a long way to go before the truth of these statements can become our living truth.

We would like also to create a few practical anti-pseudo-advaita statements: "You are not awakened unless you awaken!" "You are not That, unless you reach unity with Universal I AM!" "There is no Path but only for those who Completed it!" "There is nobody here, but only when somebody has dissolved!" Until that time you are simply a suffering somebody who only tries to believe in being no one or entertains oneself by giving "satsang."

We have a request to all those who experience any type of awakening: PLEASE, THINK TWICE BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO GIVE SATSANG and HONESTLY COMTEMPLA TE YOUR TRUE MOTIVES BEHIND THE DESIRE TO TEACH. Perhaps giving Satsang is not really necessary?

Blessings to Seekers of Truth and Clarity who have the courage to renounce the False.<sup>28</sup>

While this again points to some sort of a ‘system’, it does closely match Bernadette’s revelations, and it does seem to hold sway from the view over here so to speak. And this bears relevance to the often discussed Harding No Head techniques and where they actually might lead.

*Mark Beardmore*

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<sup>28</sup> From: From: <http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/neo-advaita.html>

## Postscript to my Letter in NOWletter 145 from Robert Penny

I have one thought to add to my last letter. –

Seeing into Nothingness is the ‘full story’ in the sense that the Nothing here is aware of Itself as the Being, the IAM the Awareness which is now arising from the Abyss of unconsciousness for no reason and with no outside help and the Nothing here is aware of Itself as at once empty of Itself and as seamlessly united with the world on show now and beyond this with the Whole...

because the Whole is the given world’s completion when I account for the fact that the given world is so closely knit with all structures and processes and problems and responses past and future that what ultimately exists in the Nothing here is the Whole System the One and in the One nothing that has ever existed or will ever exist is missing.

*Regards, Robert*

## Fairfield etc., from Joan Relke

As a postscript to her report of the Fairfield Satsang in NOWletter 134 entitled “*Waking Up*” Joan Relke drew my attention to a series of interviews with "enlightened/awakened" people, either posted or to be posted on Buddha at the gas pump site, <http://batgap.com/>. I also draw your attention to some very interesting work by Dr Relke. First an article in two parts THE ARCHETYPAL FEMALE IN MYTHOLOGY and RELIGION: THE ANIMA AND THE MOTHER online at:

[http://www.ejop.org/archives/2007/02/the\\_archetypal.html](http://www.ejop.org/archives/2007/02/the_archetypal.html)

and her remarkable sculpture which can be seen at:

<http://sculptors.net.au> (sculpture)

## Meetings

Academy of the Word Seminar Programme Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504 – 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays – Polding Centre, Level UB, 133 Liverpool St., SYDNEY. 00 - The New Phone Number is (02) 9268 0635. Second Tuesday 6.15pm - *Healing & Well-being* - Fourth Tuesday 6pm - *State of the World*

Blavatsky Lodge of The Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., Sydney (near Town Hall Station) Talks Programme Every Wednesday at 2.30pm and 7pm – Printed programme available 02 9267 6955 and at – [www.TSsydney.org.au](http://www.TSsydney.org.au) Email: [contact@TSsydney.org.au](mailto:contact@TSsydney.org.au)

LookforYourself (Harding) Meetings - Approximately bi-monthly, by email notification of date and programme. See upcoming dates at top of page 1.

Krishnamurti DVD Screenings followed by Dialogue – First Friday of the Month at 6.30pm for a 7pm screening at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts 280 Pitt Street, near corner of Bathurst St and close to Town Hall in the City. (contact Terry O'Brien 0431605374). Also on the first Saturday at 2pm at Blavatsky Lodge, address above (for details - contact Stephen McDonald 0417283951). Melbourne. 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday, 2 to 5pm, Room MR B311 Level 3, CAE Bldg. 253 Flinders Lane, Joan Deerson (03) 93862237

Andrew Cohen Discussion groups – Sydney 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in the month-3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday in the month - Andrew Cohen teachings. Enquiries: Graeme Burn 0416 177 012 or Christopher Liddle 0406 755 758 Eckhart Tolle Group – Enquiries: Marion Northcott 9967 8067