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Editor's Note,

There is now so much good quality material on the web that I sometimes wonder whether it is time to wind up the Nowletter. On these occasions I remind myself of our original aim which is to provide a forum for the news and views of the readership rather than a vehicle for expert papers. If this remains a worthwhile objective I need your occasional input. So, please consider a contribution from time to time and thanks to those who sent contributions this month and to the regulars who keep me busy throughout the year. One of the websites I find particularly interesting and down to earth is the TAT Forum which appears monthly and offers an assortment of articles which slot in nicely with our interests. Another handy site is Poetry Chaikhana which offers a daily poem by email. (<http://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/>)

I am working on a new batch of letters from George Schloss which I will add to the Harding section of the website this month and a new article to the Traherne page.

Dialogue Meetings – Third Sunday of the month

Harding Meeting – Saturday 4th June at 10am. First Saturday of every second month.

The Nowletter appears between 10 and 12 times every year and is a vehicle for news and views about awakening to what is really going on. Contributions from readers are considered the most valuable content so please think about letting me have your thoughts, experiences, discoveries and any responses to what you read here.

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The Inner Alchemy from Donald Ingram Smith

I have noticed that all shifts in consciousness are sudden. As when one sees the point of a joke, the reaction is immediate. Ah yes! An instant release. There is no gradual alteration in consciousness but a series of step by step perceptions each one a new revelation, an instantaneous, unexpected understanding.

And again with regard to Reality. In our temporal daily life our sequential thinking may be likened to seeing the distinction between the shadow of a tree on the ground and the light on the ground – the distinct line which separates the direct sunlight from the area of shadow: and the visual difference has no more real existence than has that demarcation line. Either I see the situation and things wholly and accurately, as they are, or I see them as different. There is no time – space during which I am seeing, little by little, the facts of the world, the reality of existence.

Living is not progressive but successive.¹ The gradual changes we notice are merely modalities, snap shots of our non-awareness of motion of successive change.

I have found it intriguing to probe deeply into the gradual - but not progressive evolution, revolution. To the degree in which my comprehension deepens and clarifies, so does spontaneous inner reality awaken and the distinctive differences, the subtle mutations come alive: that is, by listening, watching, feeling.by waiting.

Such distillation of perception purifies by presenting, as it does, a new clear appreciation of what is going on. And so clarifies original human subtlety².

My personal, visible comprehension of what is 'out there' and what is 'in here' in me, is my consciousness of the universe in which I live. As an adolescent I came to my understanding of creation and myself as a creation of that Creation and an integral expression of that essence. So this - my perception - is simply a personal revelation, as it is for each one of us.

And now I notice that this writing, these sentences you are reading, are thoughts, feelings, sentiments: and that these, without a physical visible body (be it young, or old, male or female), are merely 'ideas', mental pictures about Being and, quite likely dream stuff itself.

Now, my perception of my established persona, my image of my 'self' is subtilising and even though my brain is still thinking, these thoughts are less and less self-induced, less reflections of remembered knowledge. I see that as mental images refine and subtilise, become thin, are seen to lack substance, to be (as they are) deceptive illusions, ever changing sensations, feelings, thoughts so simultaneously, does a vaster, far more vivid embracing of everything, and a non-exclusion of anything become apparent. This awareness enables a capability for distinguishing the wondrous wholeness of everything: firm in its separate manifestation; and distinguishing the ephemeral division between good and evil, right and wrong, night and day, male and female, breathing in and breathing out – all apparent opposites – all complementary compositions.

While I hold my mental image to be a true reality I am deceiving myself. My illusion with gentle penetration, can, of itself, subtilise into thin air, into emptiness - it can become void.

For me, it is a serious mistake to believe in an idea and to hold onto it as though the thought were the truth, an achievable personal reality, and therefore a future goal. The intuitive truth, on the contrary, is not what I have to do with 'my' life but a letting go, a releasing of the once active (now dead) useless accumulations (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual) acquisitions that I, along with humanity, have gathered.

This naturally and inevitably means the subtilisation of my imaged material. As my images lose their density, so does my imaginative-emotive succession lose its intensity, its energy-force. My inner personal dread disappears at the very moment of awakening. My inbred tendency is a desire to be free from the chains of cultural, social and financial prohibitions which keep me in bondage.

This realization includes not only freedom from my known, my past, but a realization that I cannot learn from anyone else, from any one. Any ultimate awakening is in my daily experiencing, as when I pass from daytime routine dreaming of what might be and working at making that phantasy real when ultimately that phantasy fades and, like all dreams, ends. On awakening, there comes an awareness which was absent while I slept. Then, an utterly changed consciousness free from the confines of knowledge exists. This innocent state of primordial being – in this unenclosed spirit – essence, I lack nothing.

Between profound sleep and alert wakefulness, I pass through a state of sleep with dreams. This appearance of imaginary reality (during sleep) is like day dreaming (thinking) which also ends as awareness reveals its egotistical identification, and thought vanishes. On awakening a new Universe appears, a true reflection comes into existence, mirrored in a clear mind.

¹ The word 'success' has come to mean an affirmative result and not the process of succession. This is a reminder of our ignorance, our misunderstanding of what is actually happening at any given moment.

² The verb 'to subtilise' means to cause to disappear, to spread the gross substance thinly, so that the essence is visible, a distillation.

Similarly my inner imaginary universe (centred in this 'my' body) no longer pretends – dreams – that it is the centre of the universe. While each individual self-conscious person fabricates his/her own separate version-comprehension of the universe, the world in which we all live, there will be division and so conflict and sorrow.

So, the more I feel the process of phenomenal Life in our world and social civilisation, the more I sense-feel the nostalgia of and the desire to become, wiser, freer, happier. And therefore, the more painful is the idea of Time, of duration that informs me of what I have to go through (have to do) in order to eventually become Joyous, released, whole, Free, whatever.

Are not all perceptive images produced in me?

The above insights, outshings, proposals and ramblings may be seen and set aside. What cannot be spoken, let alone communicated (*in consciousness*), has to be allowed to pass through in Silence.

Ingram Smith

The depth of a word

Nobody knows the depth of a word,
The decimal point which took over the third,
Thinking stopped short at the definitive ten,
And missed all the mystery in 12 to be heard.

The affirmative language initially scorned,
Though feminists "Patriarch!" continually warned,
The subtle power of the victor dynamic
Was not apparent until "he" became "her".

Now the victim's so obvious railing at fate,
Stifling the power she loves and she hates,
But in the dark of the soul, too many stop short:
Now conqueror, not friend, of what she once sought.

"Enemy thee love" 'twas said years ago,
But "love" and "enemy" are words we don't know,
"I am the enemy" brings new definition,
To the meaning of both in the present transition.

Carien McGuin.

Phenomenology II

A response to Dave's paper in Nowletter 106 – from Alan Mann

In the last Nowletter we published an article by Dave Knowles entitled *The Fascination and Frustrations of Phenomenology*. This followed a Greville Street meeting at which Dave presented the subject matter of his paper as the basis for the discussion. I recorded my impressions of the meeting and used my notes to open the following meeting we held here on 3rd April and as the basis for this report.

Ever since I met Dave I have been interested in the connection between Phenomenology and Headlessness and when he first described phenomenology to me I remarked that it sounded like 'pure Harding'. It was phenomenology's emphasis on experience as opposed to knowing about experience that impressed me. The acknowledgement of direct experiencing as a primary requirement is also at the heart of Krishnamurti's approach and, I suppose, that of Gurdjieff, not to mention Traherne and the seers of all ages.

Dave didn't quite go along with my proposed marriage of Husserl and Harding. I remember him telling me as we stood outside the National library in Canberra, queuing to inspect an exhibition of rare manuscripts, "Douglas's only mistake was to claim that he is literally headless". Well, I took exception to that and although I was unable to convince Dave at the time I spent quite a lot of time pondering the question, wrote a summary of my position for the Nowletter. (*Headless or Not – Nowletter 99*) I recently found a much shorter and clearer expression of my case in one of Mike King's essays:

Harding's methodology is based on a relinquishing of memory and imagination in favour of observation, usually in the context of simple exercises or 'experiments'. He characterises this approach as prioritising percept over concept. His teachings pivot around a central observation: that one has no head, and that in its

place the whole universe rests. This is a first-person observation, and for most adults, when treated as a proposition, is fiercely resisted. However, Harding is making the point that as a first-person percept it is not merely true, but available to anyone willing to suspend memory and imagination. Mike King

I have found Douglas Harding's rejection of the either/or approach to the first and third person viewpoints to be particularly helpful so we started our meeting by listening to a section of the 'Melbourne Talk' video in which he explains how he make the necessary distinction and introduces the experiments as the step necessary to take his words beyond explanation and into experience.

" The experiments are in order that each one of us shall this evening be her or his own authority and not believe a word that Douglas says but test it.you are the sole authority on one thing and I am the sole authority on another thing and what is that thing is, is what you are in your own experience at first person singular present tense – if you like: where you are coming from, what you are looking out of, what is sitting in your seat at this time, who you are in your own direct unmediated experience of what it is like having happened into the world. You know, if you are like me, you spend lots of life taking other people's word for what they are in no position to tell you nobody has been where you are except you. All other people are too far off: six feet off, three feet Only you are in a position to say what it's like being you at this time. And I say much of my life I abrogated that authority, I let everybody out there tell me what it's like here. I'm not talking psychologically, metaphysically; religiously I'm talking in the most common or garden physical sense. I allowed everybody to tell me what it is like here and fifty years ago, for one reason or another, probably because I had some terrible problems with Douglas, and very helpful those problems were because they made me ask crucial questions, 'What am I here in my own experience when I doubt what all those people are telling m?. What am I like in my own experience at zero centimeters from this place?

And I made the discovery that I now confess to you.....in order to invite you to make perhaps a similar discovery, where you are, about yourself. I made a strange discovery, that I wasn't what they told me I was. I was the exact opposite, I wasn't just unlike what people told me, in all serious respects I was the exact opposite of what I'd been advertised to be.

I believe there are two worlds and they are vastly different. The first world is the world we live in a world of convention, a make believe world, a world which is determined by language and custom and convention. Language is party to the construction of the 'As-If' world. We know that when we are very little we don't live in that world of convention we live in the 'As-Is' world, the world as presented, the world as given. And as we grow up we trade in, that 'As-Is' world, the real world as presented, God's world if you wish, we trade that for the 'As-If' world. And nearly all of us live and die convinced that the 'As-If' world, mediated to us by parents and teachers – bless their hearts – and language, we live and die as if that is the real world.

Why should we distinguish between the 'As-If' world and the 'As-Is' world? Well, it is my experience, don't believe me, test it for yourself, that the 'As-Is' world the world as given before I start mucking about with it by wanting to control it, gaining power over others, etc – the world as given to me when I'm simple enough to dare to look at what's presented, I say in my experience, that world is woven of blessings, it's a world built to a fabulously beautiful design. Conversely, I find the conventional or 'As-If' world that we are asked to believe in – that world is a pretty awful place.

Some of you will remember a very fine prose writer called Thomas Traherne, a 17th century English cleric and Mystic. He said there are two worlds, man's world and God's world and the thing is to get out of the one into the other, and in my experience he got it right". (From Melbourne talk 1991)

I seem to be coming across numerous instances of philosophical, scientific and theological interpretations of what is going on that seem to be on the edge of understanding and ready, as it were, for the plunge into the direct perception Douglas is talking about. Phenomenology is an example and, with the exception of the transpersonal phenomenologists such as Dave Knowles and Fred Hanna, phenomenology doesn't seem to be interested in its own message. In his paper, Dave described the phenomenological method but not phenomenology itself. So, here is an extract from the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy which provides Husserl's definition.

In his Logical Investigations (1900-01) Husserl outlined a complex system of philosophy, moving from logic to philosophy of language, to ontology (theory of universals and parts of wholes), to a phenomenological theory of intentionality, and finally to a phenomenological theory of knowledge. Then in Ideas I (1913) he focused squarely on phenomenology itself. Husserl defined phenomenology as "the science of the essence of consciousness", centered on the defining trait of intentionality, approached explicitly "in the first person". (See Husserl, Ideas I, ¶¶33ff.) In this spirit, we may say phenomenology is the study of consciousness — that is, conscious experience of various types — as experienced from the first-person point of view. Lifted from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>*

*I have to keep reminding myself what intentionality is so here is a definition (When we are aware, we are aware of something, when we see, we see *something*, when we believe, we believe *something*, a neural registration is always a registration of something. Therefore, when we talk of consciousness, we are talking about the relation *being conscious of* – which makes it clear that it involves both a subject and an object. *Agnes Petocz – see Newsletter 87*)

Several years ago, as part of our ongoing exchange, Dave persuaded me to read Gebser's *Ever Present Origin* which offers one of the best examples of an approach that teeters on the edge of making the shift from knowing into seeing/being. Don Factor is reading Gebser at the moment and I've pinched a quote from him which provides the most eloquent summary of Gebser's thought and, not surprisingly, of the essence of Dialogue.

I have never been a great fan of Wilber but he does have a lot of sound knowledge of 'spirituality' as a domain. He used to be the spokesman for a brand of the perennial wisdom based on Huxley's approach with a bit of vedanta thrown in. Now it seems he has picked up on Jean Gebser too. As it happens I too have gotten into Gebser. The Integral state of conscious is what Gebser says is the emerging state of consciousness but that it hasn't arrived as yet. It's still in its infancy. These things take a while. But as I understand it, all four of Gebser's stages are involved: archaic, magic, mythical, mental and now, integral which means that we begin to see/understand/know the world through all of these other states simultaneously. That is, they are transparent to one another. This doesn't mean that we make a synthesis of them because that just leads to another thesis/antithesis situation, but rather that we learn to understand the world through multiple perspectives or what he calls aperspectival - without or beyond any single perspective - way of knowing-being. The buddhist approach seems to be an interesting model for this - up to a point. It is when buddhism becomes a religion rather than a way of seeing or being that it runs into problems and reverts to the magical/mythical synthesis with a touch of the mental/rational thrown in. However it seems to be a good starting point.

Don Factor (from the dialogue email conference)

It seems to me, on reading, hearing and experiencing these near misses that we either continue to skirt the issue, relying on ever improving explanations of what these investigations are pointing to, or find a way of coming to grips through experiencing whatever it is that gives rise to the explanations. Dave pointed out in his paper that Husserl himself was never satisfied with his explanations and quotes his student Fink:

Every exposition of the phenomenological reduction is in a unique way false.

This, presumably, simply because it is an exposition as opposed to a demonstration/experience. Is it possible to bracket out my third person grasp of reality and enter the first person transparency? I think so, and whilst aids to transparency are not really necessary once they've made the entry possible, they are invaluable tools in breaking the lifetime habit of belief in knowing as the ultimate if not only tool.

Examples of contemporary thought which strike me as teetering on this edge: Gebserian Aperspectivalism, Batesonian Holism, Bohmian Dialogue plus Bohm's Implicate-Explicate, and Phenomenology. In a recent talk by Alex Reichel on Girardian mimesis he quoted Jean Baudrillard:

Psychological actuality is located, not in the tranquil opacity of any 'body' in the strict sense or in the reassuring wholeness of any self, but rather in the mysterious transparency of the interdividual relation.

So it seems some of the post modernists are also tottering towards transparency though most seem to be content with the black hole of nihilism as a destination. (Since our meeting I have been preparing another series of letters by George Schloss for the website and they provide examples of several contemporary theologians who can be added to the category of those on the edge of transformation).

At this point at our meeting we tried the 'Card with Hole and Mirror' experiment to demonstrate the existence of and the difference between the 'As Is' and the 'As If' worlds. The Card is about A4 size with an oval 'head-size' hole in the middle and a small mirror glued to the bottom right-hand corner. Participants are asked to rely solely on present evidence and look at the mirror and describe what they see. And what I see there, in the mirror, is what I have come to identify with. That is, my self as an object, as if at a distance and dependent on shiny surfaces for realization. It provides an idea of how others see me, never how I actually experience myself.

Then, turning attention to the hole in the card and continuing to rely on present experience only, bracketing out what I know about what is going on and relying on what I directly apprehend, I hold it at arm's length. I observe what is revealed in the hole and how, as the card is moved around the content, what appears in the hole, changes and as it comes closer the content increases, and how the content and the space offered by the hole are interdependent. Slowly bringing it closer and closer to where fellow participants in the experiment see my head until the card disappears from view. At that point of disappearance does the hole become blocked by a meatball or does the space of the hole melt seamlessly into a space that awaited it? The words are no good, it has to be done and even doing it

is often not enough to dispel the preference we have developed for what we know over what we see. And even if it does get us there is no guarantee that it will hang on to us. We are free to come and go. As Douglas points out:

Now the "hard" part begins, which is the repetition of this headless seeing-into Nothingness till the seeing becomes quite natural and nothing special at all; till, whatever one is doing, it's clear that nobody's here doing it. In other words, till one's whole life is structured round the double-barbed arrow of attention, simultaneously pointing in at the Void and out at what fills it. Such is the essential meditation of this Way. It is meditation for the market-place, in fact for every circumstance and mood, but it may usefully be supplemented by regular periods of more formal meditation for example, a daily sitting in a quiet place enjoying exactly the same seeing, either alone or (better) with friends. Douglas Harding

To what extent does the clear wide-awake transparency revealed by the experiment satisfy the requirements of Gebser and Husserl in demonstrating *Origin* and the *Phenomenological Reduction* respectively?

The irony of our situation, where we were talking about something that demands direct experiencing, was demonstrated by the fact that our deliberations were overseen by the image of a Wandjina Spirit which hangs on our lounge room wall. A major characteristic of these aboriginal symbols is they are drawn without a mouth. At a recent workshop on storytelling, an aboriginal elder when asked to comment on the Aboriginal perspective on storytelling said: "If you go into country and listen, you will hear a story without words". Although it is something we seem to be forgetting, this notion is, or was familiar in our own culture "sermons in stone, books in the running brooks, etc." and Traherne's poem 'Dumnesse', from which I've clipped the following, deals with this at some length:

*This, my Dear friends, this was my Blessed Case;
For nothing spoke to me but the fair Face
Of Heav'n and Earth, before my self could speak,
I then my Bliss did, when my Silence, break.*

And here is David Bohm:

I have seen that dialogue cannot be separated from the very essence of the thought process. Even further I have recently seen that we can regard dialogue from an even broader point of view as something going on between ourselves and nature and in fact between every part of the universe and every other part. So dialogue has not only a socio-cultural significance but also a significance in natural philosophy and in our relationship to the cosmos. Therefore it also has a spiritual significance as well as an individual psychological significance.

What I considered to be the important aspects of Dave's paper were his emphasis on embodiment which I took to be a warning about the danger of drifting into a 'mind only' take on the subject. Also, the unusually intense experiences he described which reflected some of my own and which we both recognized as wake up calls. Phenomenological bracketing of the commonsense view seems directly comparable to what in headless terms is dealt with under the term 'third personhood' thus creating a distinction between the As if and As Is and thereby making the As-Is transparency apparent. And, finally, with his cryptic reference to the Dylan lyrics about Mr. Jones the significance of not-knowing it but being it.

*Because something is happening here
But you don't know what it is
Do you, Mister Jones?*

As far as the correspondence I find between Phenomenology and Dialogue it is Bohm's approach to meaning that I think makes the connection. This is defined in Don Factor's summary of the Bohm paper (*Nowletter 106, for example*):

Meaning, then, is seen as a constantly extending and actualizing structure – it is never complete or fixed. The implication is that meaning is a dynamic principle capable of an indefinite extension to ever-greater levels of subtlety, as well as comprehensiveness. But this can only take place, in human experience, when new meanings are being perceived freshly from moment to moment. Memory, being some kind of a recording, has a kind of stable quality which cannot transform the structure in any fundamental way, and which only has a limited capacity to adapt to new situations. It can only reorganise existing meanings.

Seeing that these reminiscences of a meeting have drifted into the meaning of meaning and, as Chris McLean was with us on the day, I'll end with something he said in an interview reported in a Dharma News interview some months ago.

Q. Can you say a bit more about how existentialism can be harmful to Buddhism?

Chris McLean: In general, the existentialists say that because there's a sense of nothingness to the universe, human beings are heroic in creating meaning out of nothing. Whereas for us as Buddhists, we have to go through that door of nothingness into the sense of there being a profound meaning that's a lived meaning, which is past nothingness, or, is the true dimension of the nothingness. Existentialism usually stops short of that, and then we end up creating meaning, which is what we've always done, anyway, but not the kind of meanings that lead to the door. So, we don't enter true, vast Emptiness. So how does that translate into practice for ordinary people? It means that they'll treat Buddhism as a way of being very positive and creating positive meanings and doing positive actions, and so on. Which is all good, but if that's all they do they won't get the Buddha's message which is the cessation of any fabrications, any creation of reality, and entry into the Inconceivable.

As usual some matters were left hanging on the day and the most important was the possibility – danger – consequences, etc., of reifying or trying to make a ‘thing’ or believe I can make a thing of the nothingness. And does Phenomenology go through Chris’s door of nothingness as I believe Headlessness does? Chris has agreed to lead through these issues and, perhaps, the ‘door’ itself at the next ‘Harding’ meeting which will be at Greville Street on Saturday 4 June.

Alan Mann

Given to God,

the worn sandals of thought
left at a distant threshold,
one's care is for Him alone
that His care may be for all.

Before Him, in His mystery,
the unclenching
of the fists of knowing --
the unhanding of all things to Him,
being in oneself nothing
and no-one,
the fool with open palms --
before Him, that one
might happily contain Him.

Being empty and light,
one is God, His all and His love,
held within the light --
and one sinks as the light
to God, through God and,
for His sake, beyond God.

One is
a pebble turned between God's fingers
to be tossed
into the pool of His everlasting clearness
that His hand might be free.

From Stepping Into Brilliant Air, by Colin Oliver

Dr Ravi Ravindra – Two talks at Blavatsky Lodge – March 2005

Professor Emeritus at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada. He has degrees in Physics, Philosophy and held post-doctoral fellowships in Physics (Univ. of Toronto), History and Philosophy of Science (Princeton) and Religion (Columbia). He was appointed to the nine-member Board of Judges for the Templeton Prize in 1999-2001.

Dr. Ravindra gave two excellent talks at The Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society on 23rd March. The following is the result of my very rough jottings. I imagine tapes of the talks are available through The Blavatsky Lodge.

"Inner Dimensions of Christianity"

I am the way the truth and the life of St John's Gospel. You have eyes but you do not see, you have ears but do not hear. Blake the seer sees everything as it is – infinite. The sole purpose of spirit is to see (the cleansing of the doors of perception) All the commandments include word love – this is unique to Christianity and it involves and/or implies suffering in the sense of bearing one's cross. The etymological root of sacrifice is to make sacred.

I have come to baptise you – baptism means immersion in suffering – not as an agent but an instrument of God. The lamb of God that was slain since the foundations of the world – in order to make our life sacred we must sacrifice it (Sacer facere). And the relevance to the Harding story is clearly demonstrated in this interpretation.

Sanskrit Gagyā refers to an exchange of energies between different levels. The cosmological order is sustained by Gagyā. What can convert suffering to sacrifice is an intention, a willingness. Belief, scripturally speaking, means to see or recognise, Satan means obstructor or obstacle. Comparative studies free you from the one-perspective-only view.

Beloved and belief come from the same root. Asmita is regarded as the root of ignorance: the idea that I am this or that. There is an urge for whatever we feel to be true or important to be demonstrated objectively, scientifically. Einstein said that to do this is reprehensible. It replaces something experienced with something to be observed. The virtue of philosophy is that it weans us from the belief that sense impressions are all. What the mystics experience is concreteness but not our concreteness. Philosophy and Theology dislodge me from my fixed view. We honour the great teachers Buddha, Christ, etc., not for what they said but what they saw. All good poetry is a repeated raid on the inexpressible.

"Daily Life as Spiritual Practice"

How can our ordinary activities become the means of transformation? The necessary freedom is a freedom from the forces usually dominating our daily life, namely self-occupation and pervasive apprehension.

Everything is pervaded by subtle energies. If we feel uncomfortable with this claim consider that if we had suitable equipment we could tap the electro-magnetic waves in this room and listen to Ravi Shankra performing in New Delhi or the Berlin Philharmonic in Frankfurt. So what is the problem with the proposal of the sages that it is possible to become aligned with the sacred? It is happening here, now – this moment is as sacred as any other that we could become attuned to in some other place or time.

Various practices are adopted – prayer, meditation, posture, attitude but most of all we need an emotional alignment so that our mind is more likely to become attuned. Ordinary lives make too many demands, too much distraction sometimes physical but mostly psychological. We are tempted to seek what we regard as optimum conditions those which offer peace and quiet. We feel that a retreat or joining a monastic order would offer the best approach but all religions insist that whatever the benefit gained through such practice it must be brought back into ordinary life.

Some of Indian scriptures ask how does a person of steady insight reflect this? how does she walk, sit, stand, talk, etc. You don't get there through practice but that is the way the subtle energies are revealed, not what the person thinks of the nature of Atman and suchlike philosophical subjects. The energies will find the appropriate vessel. We provide the vessel, the energy comes from the other, if it did not it wouldn't be the real thing. If the subtle energies don't connect with us we are not providing the right form.

First Christ's listeners became disciples then Christ taught – not the other way around. Peter's understanding of his own nothingness enables Christ to give him a new name; replacing Simon meaning 'herd' (wandering aimlessly) with Peter the 'rock'. Mara's temptation of Buddha after his enlightenment " Don't teach, look how long it took you to get it, why not remain blissed out, nobody will understand what you are on about anyway. To which the Buddha replies "If one person gets it in all the ages that is worth it".

When he meets his old companions they say "Look at Gautama he has found the truth". They saw first and then became disciples.

Proper attunement enables us to see what is always there. Ravi asked the cook who had been hired to prepare the food at some Krishnamurti gathering why he was so excited seeing as K always spoke in English which the cook did not understand. "What Sir", replied the cook " language has nothing to do with this".

We can attune if we stop interfering. It is in doing quite ordinary things that we can become more readily attuned. What usually stands in our way are ideas that we need to set time aside, go to a monastery. The Abbot, if he knows his job, will get you to muck out the cows or wash the dishes. So, go to a monastery to get it out of your system . Krishnamurti told him "Sir, you don't see that the house is on fire". What is at issue is the lack of passion. Everybody has time for a love affair but when no love affair is in the air all is dull.

What we have to aspire to is selfless or desireless action. But what we have is actionless desires. What would make our daily life a spiritual practice? It is the very thing in which we have some skill and ability which is the best ground of practice, in becoming less and less self-occupied, less of the me, me, me. No room for God in him who is full of himself. Service is one way but not the only way. We lack passion and intensity because we are full of self-occupation. ' I think therefore I am ' is more frequently ' I worry therefore I am '.

Underlying anxiety is the norm. It is possible for this life to have meaning despite the philosophers of despair. Even though I don't know what purpose, there might well be good reason - meaningful. I couldn't be here contrary to these forces and laws nor could I stay contrary to these forces.

Mother earth is both fecund womb and a destructive jaw – 1400,00 people will die during this talk. Spiritual practice involves arousing conscience. This is my world and responsibility attaches to that realization. Lack of passion makes our lives ordinary. For this is what is happening now.

What is necessary is an increasing alignment and no escape from our everyday doings. We have no choice between struggle and lack of struggle only between struggle at one level or another. We can struggle with the mosquitoes or the angels. We are too preoccupied to see what is under our nose

All we need to do is realize our nothingness said Kierkegaard. We don't see the terror of our inability to see, nor the wonder of what is at hand. In a conversation with Krishnamurti, Krishnamurti said to him, "...but sir, it's all there – the air for example – you don't have to open the window.

The ultimate is, in principle, unknowable. Therefore it requires total response from body, mind and heart . Even, science, when this is realized, becomes a spiritual path. In every culture every great poet, scientist, artist is trying to contact, reveal this mystery. They become a window on a larger reality.

(Tapes of Dr. Ravindra's talks are available from Blavatsky Lodge, Level 2, 484 Kent St., Sydney 02 9267 6955 at \$8.80 each plus postage.)

Positioning

The attention of the Dialogue email Conference was recently drawn to a paper on Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves by Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harre. It can be accessed at:

<http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/position/position.htm>

With positioning, the focus is on the way in which the discursive practices constitute the speakers and hearers in certain ways and yet at the same time is a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions. A subject position is a possibility in known forms of talk; position is what is created in and through talk as the speakers and hearers take themselves up as persons. This way of thinking explains discontinuities in the production of self with reference to the fact of multiple and contradictory discursive practices and the interpretations of those practices that can be brought into being by speakers and hearers as they engage in conversations. (My emphasis)

What I find interesting in all this is the recognition of absence in contemporary thought. That is, the realization that there is no continuous entity in action but a sense of self constantly in formation and 'taken up' as the subject position. My feeling is that this is only possible because of the (usually unacknowledged) ground of 'no position'. I think this is what lies at the heart of all so-called religious enquiry, the spiritual imperative, probably best expressed in Zen and Sufism by such sayings as:

"In the lump of red flesh there is a True Man of No Position. He constantly goes in and comes out by the gate of your face. Those who have not seen him should try to do so." Lin Chi

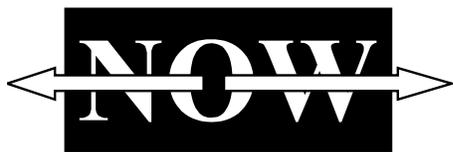
The Christian mystics, who are dismissed as air-heads by the newly appointed Pope, also knew about it. 'Till we see our nothing we cannot understand the value of our being' said Traherne.

Academy of the Word Seminar Programme Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504 – 2nd & 4th Tuesdays– Polding Centre, Level UB, 133 Liverpool St., SYDNEY. 2000 - 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 – <http://www.matra.com.au/~hpb/index.html>

Melbourne – Evening Satsang/Dialogue with Penny Fenner 23a Britten Street Glen Iris - Monday evenings 7.30-9.30pm - To confirm attendance and for further information please call 03 - 9885 0119 T: + 61 3 9885 0119// 0411 554 007 - E: penny@fenner.org - www.skilfulaction.org

Look for Yourself Meetings - Approximately bi-monthly, by email notification of date and programme.



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**If unable to deliver please return to:
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Regular Dialogue Meetings				
LOCATION	DAY	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
Sydney City	Third Saturday	Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society - Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 8218 5900 M.Box770184
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Nowra	First Saturday	The Tea Club, Berry Street, Opposite Roxy Cinema	4-6pm –Riche du Plessis	4423 4774
Nowra	Third Sunday	3/117 Berry Street, Nowra	10.30 am Riche du Plessis	4423 4774