

Issue 111 –October 2005

81 Greville Street , Chatswood

Next Meeting –20 November 2005

(02) 9419 7394 or <awmann@optusnet.com.au>  
[www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org)

**OCTOBER GREVILLE STREET DIALOGUE MEETING CANCELLED**

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Editor's Note,

Gerry Lee's complaint about Alan Watts generated quite a lot of feedback, both for and against. In particular, a response from Jake Jaqua who supplied a critical commentary on Watts by Willem Roos. It is rather longer than I wanted to dedicate to this debate but I couldn't see how to prune without undermining the Roos argument. I also thought it best to recycle in full because it provides an interesting extension of the Sudden versus Gradual debate which pops up from time to time in the Nowletter.

Thanks to this month's contributors and the usual appeal for articles, notes and feedback. Margot and I will be away for a month so there may be delays in replying to correspondence in coming weeks. There will not be the usual monthly dialogue meeting in October.

**Dialogue Meetings – Third Sunday of every month (October meeting cancelled)**

**Harding Meetings – Usually first Saturday of every second month but...**

**NEXT HARDING MEETINGS – Saturday 1 October then Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November**

**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.**

**Subscriptions: Postal \$15 per annum, Email – Free**

### **The remembrance of the name of God**

(In the July issue I referred to a service provided by Poetry Chaikhana which offers a daily poem by email. (<http://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/>) The following is a recently delivered poem written by Bulleh Shah 1320 to 1387 together with a commentary by the the coordinator of the site and of the service Ivan Granger. Ed.)

*Repeating the name of the Beloved  
I have become the Beloved myself.  
Whom shall I call the Beloved now?*

Bulleh Shah.

"Repeating the name of the Beloved / I have become the Beloved myself." You'll find variations of this statement in sacred poetry and mystic writings throughout the world. What does it mean? How does repeating the name of the Beloved make you become the Beloved?

Many Sufi traditions practice zikr, or 'the remembrance of the name of God,' often through all-night prayer circles that involve devoutly repeating the names and attributes of God. You'll find similar practices in Hinduism and Buddhism with the recitations of divine names and word formulations through mantra and japa. In Catholicism, there is the repetition of the rosary. In Eastern Orthodox Christianity, there is the Jesus Prayer...

The purpose behind all of these practices is a gentle but persistent assault on the mind. By taking the name or words that most remind you of the Divine, and repeating it over and over again, with attention and devotion, a cleansing process starts to occur in the awareness. The mind, at first, likes the sense that it is 'doing something good,' focusing on sacred things; but it soon starts to get impatient, wanting to return to its old fixations, its comfortable patterns and habitual ways of viewing the world. Continuing the practice of sacred repetition allows the mind no quarter, bringing it back again and again to focus on the Divine. Do this long enough, and the mind starts to see empty spaces in itself – a terrifying experience for the mind that normally expends great energy to hide its essentially empty nature behind constant activity and attachment. But continue the practice further still, deeply, and an amazing thing happens: The mind not only sees its emptiness, it sees THROUGH its emptiness to the radiance within. It recognizes that that shining presence was what was being named all along. And, since the mind has finally admitted that it has no solidity or boundary, that it has no essential reality in itself, it recognizes that there is no separation from that living radiance. The identity is finally understood to have always resided There, within the Beloved all along – you have "become the Beloved" yourself!

But, for the devotee, this leaves a dilemma of language: Recognizing the Beloved as one's true self, the Self of all selves, who then shall you call the Beloved? This is a verse worth... repeating.

*Ivan Granger*

Readers are invited to visit Poetry Chaikhana at [www.Poetry-Chaikhana.com](http://www.Poetry-Chaikhana.com)

### **The Denial of Death Debate from Daniela Bota**

If life was as simple as Becker wants us to believe, we would have all figured out our life by now. But to think that the fear of death, or any other singular cause for that matter would be the source of all of humanity's actions, is a gross exaggeration at the most. Proposing that one singular condition fits and explains all human experiences doesn't add up to the vast variety of expressions. Since humans are more than one-dimensional beings, no single cause may be accurately appointed for all our activity.

Just imagine what Becker's theory implies. If this was the case, and all people would be afraid of death, we would be quite predictable. Maybe by now, mathematicians would have worked out a formula for us; predicting each person's individual future – through scientific applications. So far, the only reason science hasn't been able to calculate predictions, is because there are too many variables to be taken into account. But if the fear of death explains all of humanity's actions, our inner drive is no longer a variable – but a reliable, constant figure. Just add to this figure one's individual personality measurements (eg: Myer-Briggs personality type indicator) and any previous external influences (eg: parents, events, etc), and VOILA! One could accurately predict the way this individual will react in any given circumstance arising. Yet that seems rather far from what mathematics or psychology has been able to achieve, despite that humanity had over 10,000 years to figure it out.

Unfortunately people are not as predictable, and our innate drive is far more complex and has far more sides to it than the fear of death. Otherwise there would be more of us that were 'awake' and knew ourselves inside out. But it is exactly the complexity arising from the countless issues facing us that make wisdom a rare quality.

What about man's obsession with war? Given that men act in fear of death, how do you account for thousands of years spent in wars? Above all, how does this theory account for the alarming numbers of suicides? Or are we not all afraid of death, doing everything in life in order to avoid death? Do keep in mind that people suiciding do so of their own choice, with the intention of dying.

People are not as predictable as we may often wish. We are but far from being able to be categorised into a narrow-fitting glove. A theory assuming that all human action is limited to this one cause is just that: a theory; limited to only that, and incapable of being transferable into practice.

One must be cautious when making generalisations, especially narrow ones. Becker is underestimating human complexity and having addressed only one issue, there is a lot he has overlooked. Attempts at narrow generalisations have been initiated before, the best example of this being Freud. His preoccupation with sexuality saw that he attributed all of humanity's pain and frustration to sexual connotations. Such limited theories – no matter how relevant – are but singular aspects, and therefore incapable of encompassing all of humanity's every experience.

Another to consider is the fundamental concept of physics regarding thermodynamics. The 'law of conservation of energy' states that "energy can be converted from one form to another but can be neither created nor destroyed". If a person's death was to result in the total extinction of that being's spirit (energy) that would be incompatible with this fundamental law. This energy may therefore transform, but it may never dissipate to the smallest degree, as that would entail a partial loss of it.

Yet another aspect of our fear of death is that it stems from our innate fear of change. We fear change as it forces us out of our comfort zone, away from what we already know. So powerful can be this fear of change that we may resist it even when we are aware that our familiar territories don't serve our interests; we may even utterly dislike our place. Yet nevertheless, this has become our comfort zone; so we keep clinging to it. Death entails a change in its most comprehensive form: the death of all that we know. As life is a constant change – the only constant in life is change – being afraid of change is being afraid of life. This means that Becker is not only afraid of death, but is also afraid of life.

To me, Becker seems unwaveringly attached to his ego; I see his theory as an attempt to identify himself with the persona of this lifetime. Ego is the result of the adoption of the rational material world as the singular dimension of truth and reality. Maybe Becker would change his theory if he was to experience the transcendental quality of headlessness. Maybe we should send him an invitation to our next headless workshop. ☺

*Daniela Bota*

### **Alan Watts – Correspondence**

Dear Alan Mann: Say, I was wondering if you could forward this to Gerry Lee, who had the article "Alan Watts, et. al." in the most recent *Nowletter*? Someone forwarded me a copy, and synchronistically I had just finished archiving a critical article on Watts from a 1958 issue of Victor Endersby's *Theosophical Notes*. The coincidence was too much to ignore. Ha. Keep up the valuable work, and thanks!

*Jake Jaqua*

Hello Jake,

Thanks for that very interesting material which I will forward to Gerry by copy of this note to you. I have never been very comfortable with Alan Watts but, on the other hand, I have long admired Hui Neng who also gets the thumbs down from Roos. After listening to Krishnamurti at great length I began to think there was a good case to be made for putting him forward as a reincarnation of Hui Neng!

I have recently been exposed to some of the detailed work on the sutras as a result of reading aloud a doctoral thesis to a friend. Although I am full of admiration for the painstaking scholarship I feel it has little to do with our everyday lives, as Roos himself seems to acknowledge. Anyway, I'm drifting into what are for me uncharted waters so I will read with more care after passing on to Gerry. Thanks for taking the trouble to get in touch.

If, on careful, re-reading I think it would make a useful follow-up to Gerry's piece I'll get back to you. It is a bit too long in present form – but perhaps not. I also had the feeling that, in refuting Watts, Roos goes too far in the opposite direction.

Examples: "I sincerely hope that some day a competent scholar will arise to expose the false pretensions of modern Zen and restore to the world the genuine teachings of Bodhidharma."

and:

“In the East whole libraries are filled with books dealing with this search.” I think that is the point (Watts and Co are into finding and think searching a poor substitute.) - it's the sudden and gradual business. And Roos and Watts are on either side of that fence. Roos is rooting for poor old Shen-hsiu nearly two thousand years too late. I come down firmly on both sides of that particular fence and I think it is pretty pointless getting worked up on either account. Spontaneous awakenings do occur and I'm sure progressive steps to final realization can also be verified. Roos sounds like a Buddhist fundamentalist if there be such creatures. Thanks indeed!

Alan Mann

Alan,

Thanks for the response and forwarding. (The article has some obvious typos, loss of italicization, and the sanskrit spelling is from the xerox of the mimeographed newsletter.)

I'm not knowledgeable enough in Buddhism for debate on such subjects either, the really scholarly stuff is awfully removed from everyday life, as you say, but sometimes helps pin down an important point.

I tried to find some information on Dr. Roos, and seems mostly he was a Theosophist who ran a Blavatsky-oriented Theosophical group in Mexico City and also a sanskrit class, also secretary of the Mexican Astronomical Society. References span from 1928-57. He also published a mystical account of after-death states by a woman with commentary called "The Sleeping Spheres." ( I have a digital copy of this.)

Endersby also wrote a separate article on Watts which I haven't read yet. I read some of Watts' books about 30 years ago but didn't know enough to criticize them or not at the time, which is probably how he is usually read still unfortunately.

Krishnamurti is rather Zennish in a verbose way, although I hadn't thought of it before. Hui-neng is probably as likely as any.

I'll have to get some back issue of your *Nowletter* to peruse as you seem to stimulate some valuable and eclectic viewpoints. I'm not a fan of Harding and think his method is mostly a "head-trip" without real substance, but he generates a lot of intelligent discussion and seems a pretty good guy. Reading the description of his experience in his first book, I suspect it was an Acid-trip.

I paste below a couple of reference-paragraphs on Dr. Roos.

Kind regards,

Jake Jaqua

Thanks for your further note Jake, I was amused by your comments on Douglas. Many of my friends and acquaintances would agree with you but I have found him to be the most direct and convincing of the contemporary seers. Perhaps that is because I came upon him via Thomas Traherne – both rely on direct apprehension as opposed to intellectual understanding. Returning to the metaphor of the Sixth Patriarch and the sudden and gradual debate, I think Shen Hsiu would have given Harding a flogging whereas Hui Neng would have embraced him, said nothing and poured two cups of sake. With best wishes

Alan

(Article pasted below - no copyright on *Theosophical Notes* or the article. *Notes* was published in Watts' hometown (?) of Berkeley, California, USA)

The internationalism of Theosophy was indicated at the lectures held on the weekend of September 26th in Toronto Lodge. Among the visitors from foreign lands were Professor and Mrs. Wilhelm Roos of Mexico City. Professor Roos has carried on Theosophical study classes and a class in Sanskrit for the past twenty years. Another visitor was Miss Boulbois from South Africa who will be staying in Canada for a few months. Dr. A. Chakravarty from India lectured on the 27th and his lecture was attended by the Indian Trade Commissioner, Mr. Ahuja with his wife and daughters, as well as by several Indian students from the University. The United States visitors included Mrs. Schraeder from Illinois and Mrs. Milton from Kansas. - Canadian Theosophist - Oct 15, 1948

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We were delighted to have a visit from Mr. Willem B. Roos, a Theosophical student whose home is in Mexico City. Mr. Roos is the moving spirit in a group of independent students there who work along the lines laid down by H.P.B. We hope to publish soon an article left with us by Mr. Roos; it was written by Mrs. Archibald Keightley (the 'Jasper Niemand' of *Letters That Have Helped Me*) who worked closely with Mr. Judge in getting out the magazine *The Path*. Many excellent articles from her pen appeared in that magazine under the name 'Jasper Niemand' and other pseudonyms. One of these was the first installment only of an article *The Sleeping Spheres*; this instalment was marked 'To be continued', but the second instalment never appeared. Mr. Roos some time ago started a hunt for this; he finally found it in an old copy of a German magazine, but there was no hint to indicate where it had been originally published in the English language. Mr. Roos searched persistently for the original but without success; finally with the help of a friend, he retranslated the German version into English. Mr. Roos is Secretary of the Astronomical Society in Mexico and contributes articles to the magazine of the Society, *EL Universo*. He left a copy of the magazine containing a very interesting article by him on the effects of the planets on trans-oceanic radio reception. The Society paid him the compliment of departing from its usual practice and published the article in both the Spanish and English languages. It was very pleasant to meet Mr. Roos and to note how quickly there is established an easy flow of intimate conversation between persons of like approach even though they are ordinarily separated by thousands of miles. - Canadian Theosophist, Oct. 15, 1951

## Analysis of some writings and radio talks of Allan W. Watts - by Willem B. Roos

(Editor's Note: (Editor of *Theosophical Notes*) The following article, which has also been printed in the Golden Lotus, was submitted to us some months ago, and has been regrettably delayed by various circumstances. The subject is the advocacy of Tantra Yoga by Mr. Watts, which considerably startled students of Oriental philosophy, of whom Mr. Roos is one of the most able known to us. Mr. Roos deals with the subject mainly from the scholarly and philosophical point of view. Following his article, we plan to extend the subject to what may be called the spontaneous and endemic tantricism, tendencies to which are found in all countries, usually under a more frank guise than the tantricism which is peddled in this country as from the Orient, by various wily characters.)

Mr. Alan W. Watts is the author of a number of books dealing with Zen and related subjects. He also conducts the series of radio talks over the Berkeley FM stations KPFA and KPFB, under the general title "Philosophy East and West." His latest book, which has just been published, is called *The Way of Zen*, and is intended as stated by the author in the Preface "both for the general reader and for the more serious student..." (#1, p. xv)

When in the following discussion I use the word "Zen" unqualified, it shall always be with reference to the pseudo Zen of the so-called "Sixth Patriarch," Hui-neng, and more especially to the Western version, represented so typically by Watts. For the sake of the real Zen of Bodhidharma and Shen-hsiu I sincerely hope that some day a competent scholar will arise to expose the false pretensions of modern Zen and restore to the world the genuine teachings of Bodhidharma.

The purpose of the present analysis is to show the falsity of a number of statements on Western philosophy, made by Watts over the radio as well as in his book *The Way of Zen*. He has made it a point to put the whole of eastern Philosophy into his own "Zen straight jacket," using every means at his disposal to achieve this object. While this was bad enough for the good name of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, he outdid himself in his radio talk over KPFA and KPFB, last Easter Sunday at 8 PM, [1957] when he approvingly spoke on certain, highly demoralizing, left hand tantric practices. A friend of mine has taken down verbatim this talk, and made mimeograph copies, to which I shall refer hereafter as #2.

I let now follow a summary of the characteristics of the "Zen straight jacket" which I shall discuss in this paper:

1. The "sudden enlightenment" (satori) of Zen, which Watts equates with the Hindu and Buddhist conception of "liberation" (Moksa, nirvana, etc.), insisting that this is realized without any preparation or means, and is not the result of a specific search.

(Note: The key to the reference numbers is given at the end of the paper.)

2. A subtle hostility towards asceticism and even towards general moral laws. This manifests in some of his distorted interpretations of Eastern teachings and mistranslations of Sanskrit words.

3. The taking of rebirth merely in a figurative way, as a process occurring each moment, and not requiring acceptance of a special theory of survival.

4. Rejection of, and animosity towards scholarship, a characteristic which can be traced back to the unlearned rustic Hui-neng, the self-proclaimed successor of Hung-jen. How Watts attempts to fit Hinduism and Buddhism into the above enumerated characteristics will now be shown by quoting his own words:

### Point 1

"...SAHAJA is the natural state. It lies at the very height of spirituality - at the terminal point past the practice of all types of discipline, ascetic and otherwise; where a person has achieved the final liberation - the state of moksha,... But he realizes it without means - without any special devices - without anything in particular that he has to remember to do, he has it absolutely naturally..." (#2, p. 3)

"...mystical union is never something which we can experience as the result of a specific search..." (#2, p. 6)

But as Watts is well aware of the existence of an enormous Eastern literature advocating not only this search - but indicating and teaching the very means to reach Moksa, the declared object of the six principal systems of Hindu philosophy (the six darsanas), he very ingeniously continues:

"The only reason why, in the various mystical systems of the world, an attitude of searching is sometimes advocated, is that we may in a very concrete way experience the futility of searching..." (#2, p. 6)

(Of course all underlining [italicizing] in #2 is mine, while the punctuation is mainly that of my friend.) Note his grossly biased statements, underlined by me, which are clearly calculated to give his listeners a completely false view on this matter. In the East whole libraries are filled with books dealing with this search. The Tibetan Kanjur of 108 volumes and the Tanjur of 225 volumes deal with this, to most of the Northern Buddhists, all important subject of how to obtain liberation.

His description of how Gautama attained to enlightenment under the Bodhi tree is typical of his constant belittlement of the achievement itself and of suggesting it to be the same as satori:

"...The evening before his awakening he simply 'gave up,' relaxed his ascetic diet, and ate some nourishing food.

"Thereupon he felt at once that a profound change was coming over him. He sat beneath the tree, vowing never to rise until he had attained the supreme awakening, and - according to tradition - sat all through the night until the

first glimpse of the morning star suddenly (sic: WER) provoked a state of perfect clarity and understanding. This was... liberation from Maya and from the everlasting round of birth-and-death (samsara)... " (#1, p. 45)

Note the words "he simply 'gave up,'" and "suddenly provoked" and the total omission of his struggle with Mara.

But Watts also informs us in his talk over KPFA, entitled "The Head of a Dead Cat" (March 3, 1957), that he himself, has attained this supreme state:

"When this first happened to me I expected all kinds of results from it, which is why it went away; I expected it to change my character, to make me better, stronger, wiser and happier. (But, apparently, it did not - WER) ...what I have found so marvellous is that I can not get rid of this Unity, this Tao, even by seeking for it..."

Compare this with the following by D.T. Suzuki, quoted by E. Steinilber-Oberlin:

"When satori is real (for there are many shams), its effects on moral spiritual life provoke in us a complete revolution capable of elevating our soul, and of purifying us, as well as exacting much of us morally." (The Buddhist Sects of Japan, pp. 153-54)

Of course, Watt's perpetual satori is in line with his definition of the state of samadhi as:

"... a state of profound peace. This is not the stillness of total inactivity, for, once the mind returns to its natural state, samadhi persists at all times, in walking, standing, sitting, and lying..." (#1, p. 53)

Well, I suppose this is news, and good news, for all the Raja-Yogis and Jivanmuktas of the past and present, and also for Patanjali, the celebrated author of the Yoga Sutras. Of course, no use asking Watts to furnish us with references, after he writes: "...Zen is simply inaccessible to the purely literary and scholarly approach..." (#1, p. xii)

And for once I agree with him, but would propose to add that it is also inaccessible to the logical mind.

## Point 2:

His hostility towards asceticism and moral laws is at the basis of most of his talks and writings. It will suffice to discuss some of the passages from his book *The Way of Zen*.

"...Far Eastern Buddhism is more palatable and 'according to nature' than its Indian and Tibetan counterparts, with ideals of life which seem times to be superhuman, more suited to angels than to men. Even so, all forms of Buddhist subscribe to the Middle Way between the extremes of angel (deva) and demon (preta), ascetic and sensualist, and claim that supreme "awakening" or Buddhahood can be attained only from the human state. (#1, p. 30)

This is a typical mixture of truth and falsehood, intended to condemn asceticism. Now, in the *Samyutta-nikaya* the Buddha declares the two extremes to be:

"...That conjoined with passions, low, vulgar, common, ignoble and useless, and that conjoined with self-torture, painful, ignoble, and useless. Avoiding these two extremes the Tathagata has gained the knowledge of the Middle Way, which gives sight and knowledge, and tends to calm, to insight, enlightenment, nirvana.

"What, O monks, is the Middle Way, which gives sight...? It is the noble Eightfold Path, namely right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration..." (#3, p. 274)

It will be seen that Watts interprets one of the "extremes" as asceticism, instead of self-mortification or self-torture, as stated by the Buddha. Watt's interpretation would make all ascetic rules superfluous, as is indeed his aim. But Buddha teaches the need of a true asceticism, of a real preference for a life of detachment from worldly enjoyments:

"Right resolves are the resolve to renounce the world and to do no hurt or harm." (#3, p. 277)

"Thus perceiving, monks, the learned noble disciple feels loathing for the body, for feeling, for perception, for the aggregates, for consciousness (i.e. for the five skandhas - WER). Feeling disgust he becomes free from passion, through freedom from passion he is emancipated." (#3, p. 281)

The whole Mahayana literature is dedicated to the ideal of the Bodhisattva, who... "must practice the six or ten paramitas (Perfections)... (#4, p. 194) The very important part Paramita is: "Cila (virtuous conduct, morality, righteousness)." (#4, p. 168) Mr. Watts should know that: "...A Buddhist without cila is an impostor, and he can be neither a layman nor a monk." (#4, p. 194)

About the "Noble eightfold Path" Watts has his own opinion:

"...the Eightfold Path of the Buddha's Dharma... Each section of the path has a name preceded by the word *samyak* (Pali: *samma*), which has the meaning of 'perfect' or 'complete'..... We therefore have:

"1. *Samyak-drishta*, or complete view

- "2. Samyak-samkalpa, or complete understanding
- "3. Samyak-vak, or complete (i.e. truthful) speech
- "4. Samyak-karmanta, or complete action
- "5. Samyagajiva, or complete vocation
- "6. Samyag-vyayama, or complete application
- "7. Samyak-smriti, or complete recollectedness
- "8. Samyak-samadhi, or complete contemplation....." (#1, p. 51)

Sanskrit words generally have more than one meaning, depending upon a number of factors, e.g., the epoch, the school to which the writing belongs, the subject treated, etc. Samyak or samyag has rarely the meaning of "perfect" or "complete." Only in combination with sambodhi is it rendered as "perfect" (enlightenment) by Franklin Edgerton in his Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary (p. 582), while he gives as general meaning "right, proper" (ibid.) Monier Williams gives the general meaning as "right" (Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 1181) and so does Nyanatiloka in his Buddhist Dictionary. (p. 81) Going through my own library I find the following authors using the word "right" to precede the name of the Path: Sir Edwin Arnold, Dwight Goddard, T.W. Rhys Davids, L.D. Barnett, Kurt F. Leidecker, Narada Thera, Paul Carus, Wm. M. McGovern, Edward J. Thomas, Lord Chalmers, Nyanaponika, L. Austine Waddell, Ling-tsit Chan [?], H.S. Olcott, F.L. Woodward [?], W.Y. Evans-Wentz. I have not found authors using any other expression than "right," except Chu Cha'n, who translates it as "correct."

The difference between "complete" and "right" is very great and obvious. The first word does not give to the Path a moral value, while the second clearly makes a moral issue of it. Watts leaves us no doubt as to what he is driving at. On the next page (#1, p. 52) he writes:

"The sections dealing with action (he refers to karma, of course. - WER) are often misunderstood because they have a deceptive similarity to a "system of morals." Buddhism does not share the Western view that there is a moral law, enjoined by God or by nature, which it is man's duty to obey. The Buddha's precepts are voluntarily assumed rules of expediency (sic!)...."

We know already that Zen does not encourage the use of logic, but any serious student of Buddhism, not intoxicated by Zen, would agree that Buddha's precepts are not arbitrary rules, but are precisely expressions of moral laws inherent in Nature, known collectively as KARMA.

### Point 3:

Watt's opinion on rebirth is not his own invention, but is, unfortunately, that held by some later Mahayana sects, as a result of the misunderstood anatman doctrine. Of course, the taking of rebirth in "a more figurative way, as that process of rebirth is from moment to moment, so that one is being reborn so long as one identifies himself with a continuing ego which reincarnates itself afresh at each moment of time" (#1, p. 49) is very convenient for those who claim to have experienced "sudden enlightenment" without having passed through the long and arduous stages of discipline which a Bodhisattva has to pass through and which require a great many successive lives. However only the literal taking of rebirth, as meaning a continuation of the same stream (santana) of causes and effects, associated with the same alaya-vijnana in a new incarnation, is consistent with the other teachings of Buddha, more especially those related to Karma and to the Bodhisattva path. It is also consistent with the Hindu viewpoint and with Hindu teachings on liberation (moksa) and on the "means" (upaya.) It is even held by Hui-neng, who speaking to a large gathering, said:

"...Today I have had the honor of meeting Your Highness, and you, officials, monks and nuns, Taoists and laymen, in this great assembly. I must ascribe this good fortune to our happy connection in previous kalpas, as well as to our common accumulated merits in making offerings to various Buddhas in our past incarnations. Otherwise we would have had no chance of hearing the teachings of the "sudden" School of Cha'an and thereby laying the foundation of our present success in understanding the Dharma." (Sutra spoken by the Sixth Patriarch, #5, p. 507)

### Point 4:

While it is true that certain metaphysical truths can only be expressed in paradoxes, this method has been misapplied to the extreme in Zen. However, I must limit my analysis to the statements made by Watts, which follow faithfully the irrational pattern set by the Zen masters. The following is typical of his extravagant and unscholarly methods:

"....I cannot represent myself as a Zenist, or even as a Buddhist, for this seems to me to be like trying to wrap up and label the sky. I cannot represent myself as a scientifically objective academician, for with respect to Zen - this seems to me to be like studying birdsong in a collection of stuffed nightingales. I claim no right to speak of Zen...." (#1, p. xiv)

Next he manifests a strange and unexpected animosity towards precision in transliteration from the Devangari script:

"Scholarly readers will have to excuse me for not writing absurd diacritical marks in romanized Sanskrit words, since these are merely confusing to the general reader and unnecessary to the Sanskritist..." (#1, p. xvi)

But he does not call absurd the diacritical marks he uses to romanticize Chinese. (#1, p. xvii) Why this partiality?

He does other strange things with Sanskrit. On p. 34 (#1) he translates "Neti" by "No" when neti is a euphonic combination of na plus iti, meaning "not this," or "not in this manner." Furthermore he derives incorrectly the noun Manas (mind) from "...the same root as maya..." (#1, p. 42) and the latter he derives, correctly this time, from "...matr-, 'to measure, form, build..." (#1, p.39) Watts seems to reject the common opinion of scholars that manas is derived from the Sanskrit root man = to think. In Apte's Sanskrit-English Dictionary one can find:

"manas n. (manyate 'nena...) 1. The mind..." (p. 739) The sentence in parenthesis says "with this (anena) one thinks (manyate).

As a final example of Watt's unsupported statements with which few, if any, scholars will agree, I quote the following:

"Zen Buddhism is a way and a view of life... It is not religion or philosophy; it is not a psychology or a type of science. It is an example of what is known in India and China as a 'way of liberation,' and is similar in this respect to Taoism, Vedanta and Yoga..." (#1, p. 3)

"Taoism is, then, the original Chinese way of liberation which combined with Indian Mahayana Buddhism to produce Zen. It is a liberation from convention (sic!) and of the creative power of te." (#1, p. 28)

The last sentence seems to express more subtly the left-hand Tantric position, discussed by Watts in his radio talk on sex. (#2, which I shall now discuss.)

Tantra as Conceived by Alan W. Watts:

My attention was first drawn when Watts said:

"...it prompts me to introduce some insights from Eastern philosophy about the very nature of sexuality, regarded as itself a process of growth..." (#2, p. 2)

The general expression "Eastern Philosophy" is typical of the "straight jacket" method by which Watts misleads his audience. The most important "Eastern philosophies" preach celibacy before marriage and continence during married life. The expression "process of growth" he repeats, slightly modified as follows:

"...in both the Tantric and Taoist conceptions of the relationship between man and woman, both love at the emotional and spiritual level, and sexuality at the physical level... are looked upon emphatically as activities of growth, if they are to be genuine and real..." (#2, p.5)

Well, if this is true, it is too bad for both Tantricism and Taoism, and to call this "natural" (#2, p. 3) is perverting the true meaning of the word. The Tantric rituals are wholly unnatural, and their effects upon the deluded devotees are so pernicious, as to lead gradually to idiocy if persisted in for a long time. Compare Watts' enthusiasm for this Tantric business with Ananda's answer to Buddha, when he was asked by the latter "...what was it that... most influenced you to forsake all worldly pleasures and enabled you to cut asunder your youthful sexual cravings?"

Ananda replied "...when anyone becomes inflamed by sexual passion, his mind becomes disturbed and confused, he loses self-control and becomes reckless and crude. Besides, in sexual intercourse, the blood becomes inflamed and impure and adulterated with impure secretions. Naturally from such a source, there can never originate an aureole of such transcendently pure and golden brightness as I have seen emanating from the person of my Lord. It was because of this that I admired my Lord and it was this that influenced me to become one of thy true followers." (The Surangama Sutra, pp. 111-112)

Watts has still more to say about sexual activity:

"The Tantra is a movement in Indian philosophy which was very greatly concerned with sexuality, which, in fact, used sexual activity as a form of Yoga, as a form of spiritual development, Tantra towards liberation." (#2, p. 3)

This is not only contrary to the Surangama Sutra, but is even inconsistent with Watts' claim that a person realizes liberation "...without means - without any special devices - without anything particular..." (#2, p. 3)

Now let us examine what is known about the Tantras. In the Encyclopedia of Religions (Edited by Fermi, Philosophical Library) it says under Tantras:

"Relatively late sacred writings of Hinduism... They are used particularly by the Shivaite sects, especially the Shaktas who worship the female principle of the universe... The practices of the left-hand saktis are abhorrent to the moral sense of most Hindus today..." (p. 761)

"... The worship of the left-hand shaktas is held in secret and is orgiastic in character." (p. 707)

And the Encyclopedia Britannica (11th Edition) says:

"...the Saktas divide themselves into two distinct groups, according to whether they attach the greater importance to the male or female principle; viz. the Dakshinacharis, or 'right-hand-observers' (also called Dakshina-marvis, or followers 'of the right-hand path') and the Vamacharis, or 'of the left path')..."

"The principal seat of Sakta worship is the north-eastern part of India - Bengal, Assam and Behar. The great majority of its adherents profess to follow the right-hand practice... amongst the adherents of the left-hand mode of worship... only an extreme section - the so-called Kaulas or Kulinas, persist in carrying on the mystic and licentious rites taught in many of the Tantras. But strict secrecy being enjoined in the performance of these rites, it is not easy to check any statement made on this point..." (Vol. XIII, p. 511)

But Watts knows and approves of these rites, and adduces the most absurd arguments to sustain his point:

"...People who followed tantric practices were anything but promiscuous. Their relationship was, if not with their legal wives, with a special partner with whom they had an essentially monogamous (sic!) spiritual relationship..." (#2, p. 3)

"...the sexual relationship... in Tantra... refers to a style... which we would say is natural... In contradistinction to artificial or contrived..." (#2, p. 3)

"Well now, in both the Tantric and Taoist conceptions of the relationship between man and woman, both love at the emotional and spiritual level, and sexuality at the physical level... are looked upon emphatically as activities of growth, if they are to be genuine and real."

In other words, one would not and could not go out with the specific intention of seeking a love partner in this type of relationship - one would simply have to come to you - as a matter of surprise... (#2, p. 5)

Notice that Watts does not explain how the "love partner" can come to one without having "the specific intention of seeking"! Or is the blessed "naturalness" only limited to one of the partners? Nor does he explain in what consists the special virtue of not seeking for something - but letting it happen and thereby regress to the level of animal consciousness:

"... the sexual process, the sexual rhythm.... shall not be something forced, shall not be sought after, but shall simply happen in its own way..." (#2, p. 5)

This whole idea is an obsession which makes Watts look at everything in one single monochromatic color. For sexual activity to moksa, everything must yield to his single formula: Not to seek for it - not to make any effort.

Watts' reference to the "Yab-Yum" statues in support of his arguments, induces me to quote from the Tibetan Book of the Dead, by Dr. W.Y. Evans-Wentz:

"...The Tantrics - like the ancient Egyptians - exalt right knowledge of the reproductive processes, as no doubt it should be exalted, to the level of a religious science; and in this science... the union of the male and female principles of nature, in what is called in Tibetan the yab (Skt. deva) - yum (Skt. Shakti) attitude, symbolizes completeness, or at-one-ment. Power, symbolized by the male... and Wisdom, symbolized by the female... are said, esoterically, to be ever in union.

"It is much to be regretted that actual abuse of Tantric doctrines due either to wilful perversion or, as is commonly the case, to misunderstanding, resulting in practices (like those of certain decadent sects of individuals in India) improperly called Tantric, by non-initiates in America and Europe, in some instances under the aegis of organized societies, have brought upon Tantricism undeserved odium..." (footnote p. 218)

What is most surprising in Watts' talk is that he starts out with a point well taken, viz., the fact that in the West the idea of sin is connected with the sexual act - which idea he rightly condemns. But then, he immediately proceeds advocating a sexual activity, which in the eyes of the East - at least - is considered unnatural and unlawful - namely its performance not for the purpose of procreation of offsprings, as intended by NATURE, but for the mere gratification of delights and pleasures by methods "...where the sexual relationship between man and woman was raised to heights which have rarely been found elsewhere, except perhaps among the Taoists in China..." (#2, p. 3)

It is my opinion that it is exactly the abuse of the sexual act, its mere use for enjoyment, which is responsible for the stigma it carries - a stigma dating at least as far back as Sodom and Gomorra. The Hindus have always regulated in a wise manner the sexual relations between husband and wife, advocating a continence unacceptable in the West. The well-known authority on the Tantras, Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon) writes:

"...Brahmacharya, or continency, is not as is sometimes supposed, a requisite of the student ashrama only, but is a rule which governs the married householder (grihasta) also. According to Vaidika injunctions, union of man and wife must take place once a month on the fifth day after the cessation of the menses, and then only..." (#6, p. 115)

The above must suffice to show how Alan W. Watts has misled his readers and his audience with nearly everything he has stated with respect to "Eastern Philosophy" in general, and how he is obsessed by an irrational and unnatural "naturalness," a formula which he applies to all and everything.

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Berkeley, Calif., May 1957 , Editor's Note: (Editor of *Theosophical Notes*)

Mr. Roos has not missed much, but there are a few points that we will add in a future article.

A thing that amazes us is this: although no student of Oriental literature in Mr. Roos' sense, we have read enough to be confronted with the enormous masses of writing, little of it quoted by Mr. Roos, inculcating: (a) the intense effort necessary to attain real spiritual liberation, (b) the necessity of the complete abnegation of sex in pursuit of the same object. These themes occur so often that one gets tired of them. How does it happen that Mr. Watts bases his whole case on a tiny section of that teaching going in the opposite direction? Did he work through this mass - and there is so much of it that a man will be old and gray before he could adequately study all of it - casting all else aside until he uncovered this golden nugget of attainment by doing nothing - except as to sex, and doing that to extremes. It hardly seems likely. It would also cast reflections on Mr. Watts' personal tastes that we would hardly like to make. It seems more likely that he found a "guru" who revealed this interesting "inwardness" of the Orient for his benefit. And that Mr. Watts, whose upbringing and former professional career were puritanical, being in a state of reaction therefrom, found the novelty and "unconventionality" of the doctrines a "natural." They certainly are a "natural" for intriguing a radio audience.

The extreme asceticism inculcated by the real Oriental teachings is likely to frighten Westerns, who know that they cannot live up to it. But it was never intended to the "normal" man. If one lives as cleanly and unselfishly as he can, looking forward to the day when matter will be outgrown, not trying to make the leap all at once, but moving ahead a little every day, he will be climbing the same mountain by a longer path; and the time of crucial struggle which all will meet in some life, will find him better prepared than some mad effort at prematurely becoming a yogi-ascetic. Such efforts are more likely to lead him to tantra of one kind or another in later lives, by reaction, than to liberation. [ - Victor Endersby] - *Theosophical Notes*, Feb., 1958

*(Nowletter editor's note: Ann Faraday has pointed out that Alan Watts referred to himself as a fake to emphasize the illusory nature of self as entity. His biography by Monica Furlong was entitled Genuine Fake a title which acknowledges the role-playing aspect of his life as well as his understanding of what he was doing. I'm hoping Ann herself might add to this in a future issue. Irrespective of the case made against Watts, on the grounds of misinterpretation or misunderstanding of Eastern teachings, his opponents seem to be relying heavily on the highly questionable assumption of personal reincarnation in a literal rebirth; very interesting in view of our current dialogue on the fear of death and its consequences. Alan)*

## Insisting on Alan—An Experiment

*Till we see our Nothing we cannot understand the value of our being.*

*Traherne*

We had a recent visit from three Western Australians, Pete and Pearl Sumner and Sam Blight who came over to run an intensive weekend course based on the work of Eckhart Tolle at the Dougherty centre in Chatswood. I couldn't attend the weekend myself as we were committed to other matters but I was free on the Friday night and went to the introductory session which they held that evening. It included the opening thirty minutes of a video tape in which Tolle, author of the Power of Now and other works, introduced his teaching.

There is an obvious correspondence with Headlessness here and, as far as this short session was concerned, it struck me as a variation of the closed eye experiment. However, it alerted me to an angle I hadn't considered seriously enough in doing the Harding experiments and that was the sense and feelings of aliveness.

I have been experimenting with this and jotting down how I've been going about these variations on the theme. Like all the experiments, they are relatively meaningless unless you actually do them rather than think about what it might be like if you did actually try them out.

Close your eyes,  
Become aware of bodily sensation.  
For example, in your hand.  
Acknowledge and feel this 'inner' aliveness

It can be described as inner  
But can it be *experienced* as inner?

Isn't it simply aliveness?

It can be described as in the hand,  
or in leg, chest, arm, etc.  
But how is it *experienced*?  
Is it 'in' anything at all?  
Or is everything in it?

Is it not present wherever attention is?  
Wring your hands in front of a mirror,  
Observe the movement for five minutes.

Where is the feeling?\*

Has aliveness any limits  
Is it really confined to leg, arm or body –  
Or is that just how I describe it?

Could it be unlimited?

Now consider what is aware of all this,  
aware of the feelings of aliveness –  
Note the assumption of an experiencer.  
Is there really an experiencer?

(That is not an assumption  
to be let go of lightly!)  
Or is there simply no-thing  
Experienced as aliveness.

Am I still insisting I'm Alan?

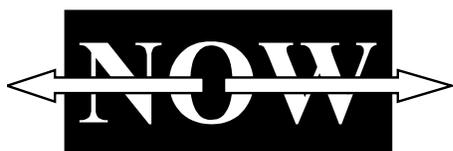
The notion of primary no-thingness may seem very fanciful to anyone locked into a strictly objective view of their world but I believe it to be the case. It is our so called everyday world of the consensus reality that is fanciful, in that it is largely imagined into being with my self thought up to play the starring role. When this drama is seen through, a wider picture emerges, one in which the everyday world is revealed as an aspect; an expression of the aliveness which is our context and true nature.

I think it is easier to see this if, instead of adopting an either-or attitude, which invariably results in a battle of the perspectives, we think of it in terms of levels and see whether it is possible to access a level where what I am saying – the perspective I am trying to explain – is experienced.

*Alan Mann*

\*It is important to hold the hands low so they are seen only as reflection. I'd be interested to hear if anyone else has the uncanny experience of enjoying 'the feeling of reflections'.

Regular Dialogue Meetings				
<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>DAY</i>	<i>MEETING PLACE</i>	<i>TIME &amp; CONTACT</i>	<i>Phone Nos.</i>
Sydney City	Third Saturday	Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society - Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	92676955
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Nowra	First Saturday	Bridge Tavern	4-6pm –Riche du Plessis	4423 4774



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