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Editor's Note,

We used to have a statement at the bottom of this page outlining the purpose of the Nowletter. A number of recent questions indicate that it is time to remind myself and readers of what we are trying to do, by re-stating the aims:

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 send in your thoughts, experiences, discoveries and any responses to what you read here. There is no editorial direction apart from the foregoing and the wider the range of views we can embrace the better.

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

Greville Street Dialogue Meetings – Third Sunday of every month

For Melbourne and other Sydney Meetings, see page 12

Harding Meetings – usually first Saturday of every second month but: (Next meeting Saturday 21 October)

Verses from the Centre by Stephen Batchelor – from Shane Keher

I discovered a deeper understanding of the Buddhist notion of emptiness several years ago through Stephen Batchelor's book on Nagarjuna, "verses from the centre". At the time, Jacqui and I were in the process of extricating ourselves from a post-Nisargadatta Advaita group. There was a lot of talk about "everything is consciousness", "nothing exists" and so on. In this group, something called "the understanding" was supposed to eventually occur - where you softly proclaimed "there has never been an ego", "there is no doer here" or similar. Increasingly, it all felt horribly wrong - rather than discovery and inquiry, there was a crude philosophical package that you were supposed to imbibe.

Nagarjuna was the right medicine at the right time - and getting some small glimpse of what he meant by emptiness was akin to releasing a sort of choking tension. Nagarjuna points out that all phenomena (such as you and me) arise in and as part of a field of relationship. As such, phenomena are dependent on other phenomena for their existence - a great web of interdependence. Phenomena don't have some sort of irreducible essence in themselves, because that would mean they are not in relationship. It would also mean they can't change. For example, this "me" depends on qualities like memory, thought, sensation for existence - this "me" changes when these qualities change, but also these qualities depend on this "me" for their existence. Another simple example: space and solidity are two qualities that are meaningless without the other - they depend on each other. They are "empty" in themselves, by themselves. So how is this personally relevant to me? Instead of the advaita ego which doesn't exist at all, or that I have to get rid of - my ego has conventional, relative existence, but no absolute existence. So, in any moment there can be "me", and then seeing that this "me" is always elusive, shifting and unfindable. Someone once asked Bodhidharma (the Indian monk who founded a strand of Buddhism which later developed into Ch'an or Zen) who he was, and he said "I don't know". Sounds very silly and Zen - but wonderfully genuine.

Nagarjuna's emptiness is a description of how things-actually-are rather than something like "fullness", "capacity", "love", "nothing" and so on (although personally and experientially, a sense of love and spaciousness does arise through some understanding of it). There is no final fixity. This emptiness allows for ever fresh discovery, a stepping into mystery, the wonderment that I'll NEVER be able to pin it all down!! Although I still love Advaita, the sort that's become popularised seems to have degenerated into a simplistic absolutism. The central problem with the new Advaita is that a proclamation like "there's no ego" or "I am Witnessing Awareness" acts as a sort of dead stop to any further unfolding - its not understood that "ego", "awareness", "consciousness" are all empty, shifting interdependent notions.

Nagarjuna "discovered" various esoteric statements of the Buddha, and the following from the Prajnaparamita describes this empty universe beautifully:

"All those who clearly understand the fact that enlightenment is everywhere come to the perfect wisdom with a marvellous insight that all objects and structures, just as they are in the present moment, are themselves enlightenment, both the way and the goal, being perfectly transparent to the ineffable. Those who experience the ineffable, known as Suchness, recognise that all structures are radiantly empty of self-existence. Those who attain perfect wisdom are forever inspired by the conviction that the infinitely varied forms of this world, in all their relativity, far from being a hindrance and a dangerous distraction to the spiritual path, are really a healing medicine. Why? Because by the very fact that they are interdependent on each other and therefore have no separate self, they express the mystery and the energy of all-embracing love. Not just the illumined wise ones but every single being in the interconnected world is a dweller in the boundless infinity of love."

Shane Keher

I see, yet not I – from Doug Lloyd

(a) Science and Sight.

According to science images are formed on the retina of the eye. These images produce chemical change in particular cells and these in turn send a stream of electrical pulses to a few cubic centimetres of matter. Where is the sight of the ocean, the clouds, sky-scrappers etc. in all this? Science is silent on the subject.

A noted thinker, J.S. Mill has said, "That the eye is necessary to sight seems to me the notion of one immersed in matter."

(b) Mind the Seer?

So it seems logical to infer there is that which sees. Is it a non-material-entity called "Mind" that is the seer? This is what Raynor Johnson, in his book, "The Imprisoned Splendour" suggests.

(c) 1st Person Singular the Seer.

Could it be that the 1st Person Singular is the seer? This is what Douglas Harding, in his book "The Science of the 1st Person" suggests: "When I say 'I see Jack' and 'Jack sees Jill' I naturally assume that the word "see" carries the same meaning in both sentences. So I twist the facts to fit the language. I "observe" Jill to be distinct and distant from Jack, and face-to-face with him in symmetrical relationship; and go on to "imagine" myself to be in a similar situation - distinct and distant from Jill, face-to-face with her, in symmetrical relationship. But in fact it's not like that at all. There is no observer given here distinct and distant from Jill; she and I are face-to-no-face, and the set-up is not symmetrical. No wonder I'm tricked, when the same word is used in two contrasting sentences. No wonder I think I must, here, be like Jack and Jill over there - must be that sort of "seer" doing that sort of "seeing".

(d) Conclusion.

I look into the mirror as I shave. A face is there. Mine I suppose, for it seems the same as some photos of me. But I am startled, flabbergasted, bewildered. Lost for words. There's nothing looking at that face in the mirror. The faceless is looking at the face. The invisible is seeing the visible.

Amidst the bewilderment and fear there is peace. The peace of the invisible that passeth all understanding.

Doug Lloyd.

Meaning Theory from Michael Potts

(Michael Potts is an old friend, now living in England where he has just successfully completed a BA(Hons) degree in Sociology and International Relations at Reading University. This was his final essay before handing in his dissertation. An earlier contribution from Michael, Experts and Uncertainty, can be found in the Now Archive in Nowletter 93 dated October 2003. Ed.)

How useful is the theoretical approach known as meaning theory in helping us to understand sectarianism and religious pluralism?

The definition of religion is a troublesome issue, as it relates to fundamental aspects of human existence. The arguments presented in this essay on behalf of Meaning Theory rely on a Durkheimian functionalist definition of religion in order to chart and apply a coherent approach. Religion, sectarianism and religious pluralism will first be defined, before laying out the foundations of Meaning Theory in relation to the social construction of reality, where humans are the authors and the product of a collectively created reality. From this basis, the ongoing process of socialisation will be described, locating the individual within society and society within a cosmos. Requirements of legitimation will then be investigated, followed by the problem of theodicy, regarding the effects of social change on a religious monopoly and the subsequent development of sectarianism and religious pluralism. Meaning Theory will be applied regarding the nature of this pluralism and modern society in relation to individualism and the need for community, identity and meaning.

In its broad sense, the function of religion is to provide social solidarity, necessary as humans are social animals. It relates existence to something beyond physical life, providing a context that locates humanity within an ultimate meaning or order. Sectarianism can be

defined as the fragmentation of religious institutions, where groups have broken away from a monopoly or established church. This forms part of a situation described as religious pluralism whereby a diverse range of religions, whether breakaway sects, new movements such as cults, or imported movements, compete for members in what can be described as a market situation. Traditionally it was assumed the decline of religious monopoly would lead to secularisation, in that, pluralism would undermine religious authority and consequently religious belief and participation. Rather, it seems this is not the case, instead, religious belief persists but in different forms for which the religious market caters. Meaning Theory can account for this through reference to the inherent human need to find and apply meaning to experiences. Religious pluralism encompasses different strategies of survival through creating a meaningful location in a modern pluralist society where different legitimating systems compete to attract consumers in the religious marketplace.

Meaning Theory is premised on the social construction of reality, whereby human activity and consciousness creates society and, at the same time, humans are a product of their creation. This occurs through three dialectic processes: externalisation, where humans create their world through the products of their activity; objectification, where the products of activity are seen as a pre-existing reality rather than being created; and internalisation, where humans accept this created reality and react to it as an external thing, which, subsequently defines human relationships (Berger, 1990: 4). Thus, humans create society and the individual is a product of that society. This is an ongoing process in which a location is created through mental and physical activity. The result is culture, a frame within which experiences are related to a meaning, which does not just exist but needs to be maintained. Its inherent unstable nature, because it is a human creation and a function of human relationships rather than being an external fact, runs counter to the human need for stability, certainty and order. Society is the sum of these human relations. Humans are social animals, located in a reality of their own creation and society is a product and a source of culture, constructed from meanings created by humans but treated as independent. This reality exists because it is collectively recognised as such. (Berger, 1990).

These meanings are adopted and the created reality becomes perceived as an external fact. The creation becomes the master of the creator through the process of socialisation where socially assigned identities locate the individual in the world. The individual becomes the meanings, representing and expressing them, which are passed down to the next generation, for example, defining such concepts as a family, a woman or a nation. Continuity is maintained as individuals participate in their identities and roles, creating normality, whereby, experiences and their meanings are located in a context, a meaningful order, or nomos, which acts as a “shield against [the] terror” of meaninglessness and chaos from which it is constructed (Berger, 1990: 22). The social world needs to be taken for granted, as natural, this is helped by placing it, the nomos, in a cosmos, where a more powerful reality is assumed to exist outside, or beyond, human society. Meaning is a human need which religion fulfils, in that it creates a sacred cosmos, a power outside, but related to, the human, that is, the human is conceived of as having significance. (Berger, 1990).

Human society requires legitimation and, according to Durkheim, social solidarity usually has a religious character, whereby, specific world-views form the basis of social groups (Knudsen, 1996: 48). Traditionally, societies have formed around one world-view that legitimises the social order, providing explanations and justifications, which gives a sense of security and permanence, locating the individual and the society in an historical context, in other words, “society is a memory” (Berger, 1990: 40). Societies create a consensus of what is ‘truth’, where unquestioned assumptions define the world in terms of their society and humanity’s place in it, that is, a plausibility structure. But because socialisation is never complete, legitimation of the universe, as a coherent meaning, needs to be constantly reasserted, as “knowledge...is socially derived and must be socially sustained.” (Berger & Luckman, 1969: 66).

The tension between a religion’s world-view and reality, that is, between expectations and experiences, gives rise to what Weber described as the problem of theodicy

(Campbell, 2001: 73). A theodicy describes the cosmos and provides an explanation for its existence. It relates humans to the cosmos and explains why things are as they are and why things happen. In other words, it provides a meaning to the plausibility structure's order, justifying and legitimising how people should act, placing the individual as subservient to the social order, that is, socialisation, the alternative being meaninglessness and anomie, or utter aloneness. Externalisation, objectification and internalisation protects the individual from the threat of anomie. Religion mystifies the world as pre-existing human history, thus humans become alienated from their own creation. But the process is never complete because consciousness precedes socialisation, leaving a part of consciousness unsocialised (Berger, 1990: 83). This creates a potential tension between the individual and society, thus, the need to constantly reaffirm the theodicy. A society under a monopoly religion is better able to sustain its plausibility structure. The definition and legitimisation of the world can be maintained even if contact occurs with societies that hold a different world-view as this opposing world-view is explained in terms consistent with the dominant religious outlook. Collective recognition creates and sustains an objective reality and society's coercive power "directs, sanctions, controls and punishes individual conduct." (Berger, 1990: 11). Thus, socialisation is constantly reinforced and solidarity is imposed. The plausibility structure is engaged to provide legitimations in its own terms, relying upon unquestioned assumptions.

The authority of a religious monopoly can be undermined by rapid social change, as occurred around the time of the industrial revolution in Europe and America. As the social structure changes, the taken for granted social locations within a society are challenged and opportunities arise where assumptions can be questioned as the facade of permanence and security is undermined. The process of modernisation, where agriculture is commercialised and migration to urban areas occurs, disrupts the social structure, creating insecurity and uncertainty. Religious plausibility is strained as it adjusts to cope with dramatically changed social relations and as new social divisions arise each group adapts religious forms to fit its own circumstances. For example, the marginalised need meanings that explain their new situation and provide hope while the rising middle classes require legitimisation for their individualist ethos. The monopoly faith cannot adequately cater for all sections of society without adaptation which threatens to further undermine its plausibility, therefore it is forced to sacrifice one segment for the interests of another, usually aligning with the ruling classes (Finke & Stark, 1988: 42). Its legitimisation is based upon the divine order being reflected in the social order.

As the social order and social relationships change dramatically the monopoly religion finds it cannot cater for both worldly and otherworldly aspects. Thus, sects form as groups break away from the established church in order to regain the 'true' faith that is seen to have been corrupted. New interests arise which require legitimisation within the social setting and sects provide theodicies that cater for these interests. Therefore, instead of religious plausibility being undermined it takes on diverse forms adapted to each group's changed position. The inherent need for a meaningful order, located in a cosmos, where the human experience exists with significance in relation to an external power, means that the religious impulse itself is not undermined, only the existing plausibility structure. Rather than social solidarity being universal within a society, it fragments as different group locations adopt religious forms suited to their own requirements. New groups form their own solidarity and different theodicies emerge to explain the changing circumstances.

Religious pluralism exists in what can be described as a market situation where specialisation caters for diverse needs. The market caters for preferences such as strict hierarchical authority and formal rituals or more democratic or relaxed communities. Communal gatherings provide opportunities to connect with meanings beyond the individual. Therefore, commitment is required but is not necessarily imposed, rather, it is chosen. In a modern society roles are not fixed by birth. This fluid nature of society is reflected in religious pluralism. Where the sense of a stable community and a stable belief has withered, to be replaced by anonymous bureaucratic structures and relationships, the individual seeks out communal solidarity in an environment of freedom of choice (Dorrien, 2001: 70). Niches develop for like minded beliefs. Theodicies are fragmented in a modern society but tolerance generally prevails in the search for understanding and truth due to the market environment

that dictates adaptation to competition as a survival strategy. Different legitimations exist but they each perform the same function, creating a meaningful order, interpreting social relationships and placing humans within a non-human context in which the human has significance. The nomos, within the cosmos, needs to be maintained in order to banish meaninglessness and chaos. Otherwise society cannot function as individuals become victims of anomie. The craving for certainty, order and, above all, meaning is not extinguished because competing theodicies exist. Rather than undermining each other, they reflect the nature of a pluralist society that has to cope with constant and rapid change. It may be that living with change brings out a need for mystification. As human knowledge of the universe develops, the danger of anomie requires an antidote that religion, in its broadest sense, provides through interpretation of understanding in terms of a theodicy and by alienating humans from their own creation, thus reinforcing the sense of a location within an order, that is, providing a context by establishing a relationship between all things, therefore, a significance or meaning to existence.

Rather than truth being imposed, the individual in western society is now the arbiter. The self holds authority rather than a dominant order (Dorrien, 2001: 62). Different lifestyles and the freedom to choose in an individualist society leads to a search for religiosity that fits the choices made. Power shifts from tradition to the individual in the marketplace. To use an economic term, religion, in a sense, becomes privatised rather than being a universal public good. But individualism exists within a social context and the need for community provides an incentive to seek out confirmation that one is not alone, and so join with others that share one's beliefs, or who hold beliefs that one finds suitable, within an environment of competing legitimating systems, the motive being a need for meaning. Thus, established churches, breakaway sects and cults, in all their forms, cater for the diverse needs of society's individuals. Symbols and rituals connect individuals to a community of believers, creating relationships that provide context to the ultimate conditions of existence, within and beyond this life.

The dynamics of identity require a definition of the 'other'. The truth is no longer universal but becomes exclusive while at the same time freedom of choice provides access. Boundaries are necessary, not only to demarcate the other within society, but also between acceptance of socially constructed reality as objective fact and the denial of meaningless chaos. As long as humans are alienated from their own creation, social change creates a space that can accommodate plural legitimations and theodicies. While tensions and uncertainty may be a side effect they result in what Campbell (1972) describes as seekership. Rather than domination of a coherent belief system relying upon doctrine and dogma, individuals can experiment with alternative beliefs, taking from them what they consider beneficial and moving on to the next offering. Emotion and intuition sit alongside reason as knowledge is questioned in a changing post-modern world in which experts no longer hold exclusive access to truth (Campbell, 1982: 240). What remains constant is the need for individuals to regard themselves as significant, if they did not then the search could give way to anomie and the possible evaporation of social order. Meaning, establishing a relationship between things, is the motive that drives the religious impulse regardless of the form it takes. Despite the fragmentation of societies within state boundaries, religion fulfils a function regarding the imperative need for identity, socialisation and some form of solidarity, within the context of the ultimate need for meaning, where existence is located within an objective order.

The significance of Meaning Theory is that religion mystifies existence and creates a cosmos within which humanity finds a location. This provides significance and therefore meaning. The transition from a settled and unquestioned order, legitimated by a religious monopoly, to a society that experiences constant change, challenges unquestioned assumptions. Changing social relations, resulting in competing social groups and marginalisation provides the impulse to construct or adapt competing religious world-views. The requirements of legitimation, underpinned by the quest for meaning, creates a market in which religious pluralism develops as the old plausibility structure struggles to retain legitimacy. Individualism and the ever changing and diverse nature of modern society is mirrored in the religious forms which cater for inherent needs. Meaning Theory provides a

coherent explanation for this pluralist environment, but, ultimately it relies upon its own assumptions. The definition of social solidarity as a religious phenomenon pivots upon how religion is defined, which remains an unresolved issue.

Michael Potts

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The 2006 Traherne Festival

Hereford, birthplace of Thomas Traherne is better known for the Mappa Mundi, a 13th century attempt to chart the world, and the chained library a working theological library since the 12th century. Both of these national treasures are housed in a recently built annexe to the cathedral and close to the library's original position in medieval times. A number of the Festival events take place in the cathedral. In contrast to these cultural riches there is not a single internet café in the city.

The Festival is held every year on Trinity Sunday at Credenhill, Herefordshire, the village where Traherne was vicar from 1661. Credenhill, now a suburb of Hereford, is the site of an iron-age fort about five miles north west of the city. Margot and I went to the 2001 Festival and again this year. The Festival doesn't seem to be very widely advertised and I'd estimate about 75 people attended the various sessions this year. We visited a number of local churches including a very fine Norman church at Kilpeck built around 1134 which has been renovated from time to time but hasn't been altered or extended. Mention of the festival drew blank looks from people we met at fetes and parish churches who I imagined would be keen to find out more about and celebrate their local hero. Not so, the Anglican church at large seemed to be very uncomfortable with Traherne until quite recently. A history of the diocese published by the cathedral authorities about five years ago made no mention of Traherne at all. However, on this visit we discovered that the Bishop of Hereford is the new president of the Traherne association and a Traherne triptych memorial window is soon to be installed in the Audley Chapel at the Cathedral. I get the feeling that most of those attending the festival look upon Traherne as a true blue Anglican divine whereas I see him as something of a true seer and, consequently, beyond the limitations of any tradition or belief system. His universal appeal was demonstrated to me by my discovery of his work through reading a book on Zen.

There was little opportunity to explore the various reasons which brought us all to the festival and I think a session dedicated to this sort of enquiry would be a very interesting item to include in future programmes. The keynote papers at the two conferences we have attended have been scholarly exploration of Traherne's life and times; very interesting and helpful but not, in my view, the main game. The really important papers are those delivered, not at the festival but the annual memorial lectures in honour of Jeremy Maule who discovered and identified many of the Traherne manuscripts. These are excellent works and capture the spirit of Traherne in a way that doesn't seem to be reflected to the same extent in the festival

papers. I am progressively adding these lecture papers to the Traherne page of the website with the help of Richard Birt and the agreement of the authors.

The keynote address at this festival was given by Julia Smith. She is writing what is likely to be the definitive biography of Traherne and explained that because there is virtually no source material outside Traherne's own, lately discovered writing, which contains next to nothing about himself, she has to draw on the environment in which he lived and what we know about was happening around him at the time. Thus Traherne appears as a gap around which all this is happening, an absence rather than a presence which, as those of us interested in Traherne's views on capacities will agree, is most appropriate. Julia Smith's talk included a number of digs at the Australian Gladys Wade's 1946 biography which is now considered to be far too speculative an approach to his life.

I was offered the chance to talk about our Traherne inspired website at the AGM and planned to show it 'live' on a computer screen which I'd spotted the previous day in the classroom where the meeting was held. Unfortunately, the password wasn't available so I had to rely on words and arm-waving which didn't do justice to the enterprise. In addition to showing present content of the site and the possibility of attracting more material from people at the Festival, I'd hoped to underline the connections between Traherne and the leading contemporary exemplar of 'capacity' Douglas Harding. One of our friends, with a direct involvement in church affairs, wondered aloud if the church was really interested in Traherne. I wonder how many of those who are interested in Traherne are really interested in his fundamental message.

Apart from talks and services, the three days included some interesting visits to nearby churches and chapels and a Monday coach tour demonstration of contemporary stained glass by the artist Tom Denny who has been commissioned to create the memorial windows referred to above. I hadn't expected much from this part of the programme but Denny's window in Martley church is an amazing work. On an overcast day it seemed alive with fire and I could have sworn the sun had burst through the clouds for our benefit. Margot recorded the amateur theatricals at Leominster Priory Church in the last Newsletter. I represented a visiting cleric but owing to gaps in the narrative, I was mistaken for Traherne. The actor playing Traherne was tucked away in the pews, and as I finished my contribution, startled his neighbours by springing to his feet in support of infant baptism. I was interested in this scrap of Trahernesia as it provided me with the first instance of a subject on which I am in complete disagreement with Thomas.

The programme included ecumenical side-trips. On Saturday we walked to Kentchester for afternoon tea at the Methodists Lady Southampton Chapel. Sunday tea was held in the Quaker rooms in Hereford. Meeting our friendly hosts on their home ground in the wonderful simplicity of their old meeting rooms and chapel provided an interesting counterpoint to the splendours of cathedral and church. I find myself torn between the two – all my ancestors are nonconformists but I have a lifelong addiction to English parish churches.

Mark Beardmore, who wrote the article *A Primary View of Reality*, which appeared as Newsletter 108, travelled to Hereford to spend Sunday morning with us and joined the tramp up Credenhill, around the iron-age fort and back. Amongst other subjects covered, he enlightened me about the sycamore, an introduced species apparently, and a bit of a pest as it harbours relatively few useful species compared to native hardwoods. I had always thought it a native tree – the house I lived in as a child was surrounded by them.

Richard Birt, led the walk and halted us from time to time to read excerpts from Traherne also. He took us on the coach trip the next day to see the Tom Denny stained glass. He is the driving force behind the Festival. He rides a bicycle everywhere with a sign on the back which reads 'Green Auto Mobile'. Last year he fought a brave but unsuccessful battle in defence of trees in the heart of Hereford. They were eventually cut down at crack of dawn one morning. Judging by certain mischievous comments he seems to favour the Gladys

Wade intuitive interpretation of Traherne and is himself a most Traherne-like person. I conclude with his opening address – a taste of the Credenhill experience.

Alan Mann

Opening Address – Traherne Festival 2006 by the Revd. Richard Birt

Casting around a few weeks ago for a good summary of Traherne's thinking, I came across this:

"We have here a man who, possibly for the first time, was able to see and experience the world within a Christian concept and who could not separate faith and worldly knowledge, worship and life. A man for whom everything in the world was holy and nothing unholy, who refused to exclude any part of reality from his Christian sympathy, who saw in the world an object of the infinite love of God, whose joy was in the vitality of his creation." (Ladislaus Boros "Open Spirit 1974, p.42)

On reading that, I thought to myself 'Now there's a good description of Traherne.' Except that it was not of Traherne at all: it was a description of St Irenaeus of Lyons, that giant of theologians, the first major post Biblical theologian, separated from the life of Jesus by less than 85 years. Now the story of Thomas Traherne is peppered with coincidences and happy accidents, and tonight we have become embroiled in yet another one. For when I planned this weekend, I had no idea that our very first meeting and act of worship would be on the day in the year when the Christian Church keeps the feast of St Irenaeus of Lyons, June 28th.

Ladislaus Boros, who wrote the passage I quoted, sums up Irenaeus' message in, one sentence thus: *"The universe is a vessel and habitation of the divine being"*.

That is precisely Traherne's message. And these two Christians share in particular a common vision of the glory of being human. *If then you are God's workmanship," writes Irenaeus, "await the hand of your maker which created everything in due time. His hand fashioned your substance. He will cover you over too within and without with pure gold and silver, and he will adorn you to such a degree that even the King himself will have pleasure in your beauty"*. Traherne too believed that God's creation is not complete until we have enjoyed it. It would appear that God relies, even depends, on our enjoyment.

This world affirming message has been muted for too long in the Christian tradition. I suspect that its suppression has contributed to the disillusion that many feel about Christianity. For too many people have buried deep within them the notion that God does not really want them to live their lives too fully; that the claims of duty and the call to moral goodness always demand that we should rein in the life that is within us.

Jesus shakes us into a different world when he says : 'I am come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly.'" And Irenaeus builds on those words when he writes, *"The glory of God is man fully alive"*.

During the past few weeks I have been talking to the junior members of our churches about what makes them happy. And the answers I received were I suppose fairly standard ones cricket, football, parties, harmony at home, and so on. But in one church a young boy put up his hands and said "being alive". Since then that remark has stayed with me. And it seems to me that a great many of the accepted creeds of our society are going to have to be rethought.

Now Traherne has an intriguing phrase for the opposite of being alive, which he calls "living by accident", and for which he reserves some of his most severe censure. Could this be the heart of his idea of sin?

"To live by accident, and never to pursue any felicity at all, is worse than anything in some respect in the world. It is to act against our very selves. They that place

their ease in such a carelessness are of all others the greatest enemies, and disturbers of themselves".

If Traherne is right, then the problem with human life is not that we love it too much but that we do not love it enough. And the consequences of not loving it enough are dangerous and destructive both for ourselves and for other people. The Psychologist Reich Fromm expressed the dangers perfectly when he wrote:

'It would seem that people are destructive in proportion to the amount to which the expansiveness of their life is curtailed. By this we do not refer to the individual frustrations of this or that instinctive desire, but to the thwarting of the whole of life, the blockage of spontaneity of the growth of man's sensuous, emotional and intellectual capacities. Life has an inner dynamism of its own; it tends to grow, to be expressed, to be lived. It seems that if this tendency is thwarted the energy directed towards life undergoes a process of decomposition and changes into energies directed towards destruction. In other words, the drive for life and the drive for destruction are not mutually independent factors but are in a reversed interdependence. The more the drive towards life is thwarted, the stronger is the drive towards destruction; the more life is realized, the less is the strength of destructiveness.'

Destructiveness is the outcome of un-lived life.

Traherne gives us a double glass of blessings to help our wounded world and our wounded lives: the vision of a world given to us to love and to make us happy, and the vision of a life which is intended to be bursting with infinite creative energy.

Is God the God of un-lived life, or of lived life? The church has often given the wrong signals. As Helen Thomas wrote in an article in the Guardian's Face to Faith series

"Perhaps the Church mistrusts people. It seems afraid to encourage them to enjoy the world, assuming they will opt to wallow in the fleshpots rather than wander through the water meadows. My experience is that if people feel loved, trusted and valued, they blossom in all sorts of generous ways.' That is how the Church wants us to be, but by treating us like wayward children it stunts our growth and refuses to recognize that in the lost resort we are all answerable to ourselves. As I totter into old age, somebody else may well have to put a belt around me and take me where I would rather not go, but I shall go with Praise be to God" and "Deo gratias", not 'Mea Culpa' and 'Lord I am not worthy.' And I shall smile into the darkness, knowing there is nothing to fear'. Amen.

Richard Birt

Awakening is present here and now at the very heart of ordinary experience.

The awakened mind of a buddha is nothing other than the pristine awareness animating one's own ordinary mind at every moment. To recognize this pristine awareness requires that it be "pointed out" by a teacher. Shabkar captures this intimate, oral process:

Now come up close and listen. When you look carefully, you do not find the merest speck of real mind you can put your finger on and say "this is it." Not finding anything is an incredible find.

Friends! Mind does not emerge from anything. It is primordially empty; there is nothing there to hold on to. It is not anywhere; it has no shape or color. And in the end nowhere to go. There is no trace of its having been by. Its motions are empty motions and that emptiness is obvious.

... Mind's nature is vivid as a flawless piece of crystal: intrinsically empty, naturally radiant, unimpededly responsive. Stripped bare of repetitive error, mind itself is surely and always buddha.

Such instructions undermine habitual perceptions by pointing out the essentially empty, radiant and responsive nature of awareness.Page 41 of Verses from the Centre by Stephen Batchelor

Democratic Superiority ... of Democratic Weapons – from David Allan

Here is a short note in response to A. Broinowski's article, "A Fascist Australia" (Now 115, April 06)

I suggest that Broinowski's article "A Fascist Australia" (Now 115, April 06) which in turn is based on Britt's fourteen characteristics of a fascist regime is really quite misleading and could be legitimately criticized on a number of grounds. This sort of approach, giving us a harangue against something and then a formula (it is usually ten things to do, we get four extra here) for alleviation of the problem is as old, or older than writing itself. To what degree have fascist type outbreak's really ever been dealt with effectively in the total history of mankind by such repetitive behaviour? A second point is that we seem to have fascist or quasi-fascist governments in the U.S.A. and Australia, but no fascist people and this is of course something they had in Germany in the 1930's, isn't it? A third point is that the dominant ideology in Australia is neither democracy nor fascism but consumerism and surely it is an ideology which has been most enthusiastically embraced, of, for, and by the people ... and their servant-masters. Consumerism is quite unique as an ideology as it is very fashionable to pretend in many circles that it is not there. Thus it may be a distortion to focus on the fascist/democratic see-saw which in turn may not be the problem.

However, my main concern with the Broinowski/Britt formulation is a much more serious point, a characteristic of democracy, not mentioned by these authors and thus by-passed. This is the matter of democratic militarism which in turn is most readily revealed by a consideration of *democratic weapons*.

From about 1943 democracies started to take the lead in this field which includes absolutely massive production; very considerable, at times almost casual use wherever it was felt to be appropriate; a devotion to research and production ingenuity quite unsurpassed anywhere anytime; and a justification for all of this based on the righteousness of democracy. Obviously all this continues to this day - switch on the news tonight for the latest segment on this obvious and obviously hidden aspect of democracy. As this is a short note I will leave you to fill out most of the details of democratic "weaponology" yourself but meantime we may think of such things as massive bombing of civilians in World War 11, the atomic bombs (the second one on Nagasaki a mere three days after the first); mines, napalm, helicopter gun ships, massive and indiscriminate shelling in Vietnam, depleted uranium shells in Iraq, and so on.

A detailed analysis of democratic weapons may reveal that democracies favour weapons which can be "sprayed on" from a safe distance in a "clean" clinical manner, as far as the democrats are concerned.

Thus it can be seen that as long as Broinowski and Britt are careful in their selection of characteristics in their venture into the good and evil of ideologies they can serve up something which has the appearance of the bright shining truth, but which may be on closer consideration, a not so bright shining lie.

David Allan

Greetings NOW readers from Al Boag - I am enrolled at the University of Sydney in a post-grad capacity and researching on J Krishnamurti. I have been allowed to continue my work at distance, off-campus and also must attend the uni 3 or 4 weeks every few months for consultation with my supervisors.

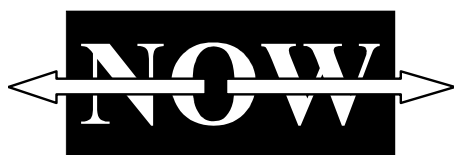
I am looking for the use of a spare room/garret/shed for these few weeks. I am over 60 and am on Centrelink student income, so I can only afford about \$50 per week. However, we might be able to reach a mutually agreeable arrangement.

I also 'have' 50 hectares of beautiful land on Kangaroo Island which is a haven for the local flora and fauna.

The property has ocean views and a lovely beach 4 km down the hill. I have built 2 cottages to lock-up stage and although still somewhat spartan the visitors' cottage has electricity, fridge, hot and cold water, shower and toilet. For every 3 or 4 weeks I stay in your spare room/garrett/shed, you can holiday in the visitors' cottage for an equal amount of time.

I can be contacted at: Al Boag, Post Office, PARNDANA, Kangaroo Island SA 5220
Phone (08) 8559 3296 Email: prismatic.sue@gmail.com

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	0431605374
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
Melbourne	Third Saturday	Bells Hotel, 157 Moray Street Sth Melbourne	11am-1pm Gary Hipworth	0416 121 142
Melbourne	First Saturday	Room 205, 2nd floor 253, Flinders Lane, Melbourne	2pm – Joan Deerson	(03) 93862237



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**If unable to deliver please return to:
81 Greville Street, Chatswood 2067**

Academy of the Word Seminar Programme Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504 – 2nd & 4th 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 – <http://www.matra.com.au/~hpb/index.html>

Mountain Heart Retreat – Meditation retreats of two or four days offered in a peaceful bush valley in the southern tablelands close to Braidwood, NSW. Phone Maria Bakas on 02 4842 8122 or 0421 5476 65

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

Krishnamurti Fellowship – Every Monday 6.30pm at Blavatsky Lodge see address above.

Andrew Cohen Discussion groups – **Sydney 1st Tuesday in the month - 3rd Tuesday in the month** - the teachings of Andrew Cohen. Discussion of a short text. Upstairs at Home Dot Cafe, 91 Glebe Point Road, Glebe 7 to 9pm **Enquiries to Graeme Burn 0416 177 012 or Christopher Liddle 0406 755 758**