

Issue 153—March 2011

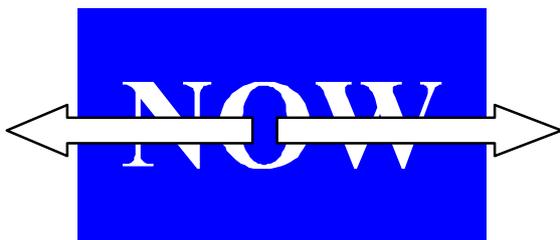
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Next Harding Meeting—Sunday 1 May 2011

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The NOWletter appears between 8 and 12 times every year and is a vehicle for news and views about awakening to what is really going on. The content is based primarily on contributions from readers, either their own writing or examples of what moves or interests them. Subscription is free. Index of articles and back numbers from 1993 at:

<http://www.capacity.org/now/archive.htm>

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Editor's note,

Thanks to this month's contributors, both for their articles, notices, etc., and for participating in dialogue with me about my misunderstandings and requests for clarification. We had three interesting surprises from visitors to the website. Mal Mitchell found the Wren-Lewis page and introduced me to his book which I have written about in this issue. Miriam Louisa Simons who, as a former teacher of art at Brockwood, knew both David Bohm and Krishnamurti was able to introduce us to a beautifully presented and comprehensive website she has assembled. See: <http://www.theawakenedeye.com/> *The Awakened Eye and encounters with non-dual awareness*. David Lee Preston found an old school yearbook which reminded us of a former friend and contributor Gladney Oakley.

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When a book is more than a book from Trisha English

My friends tell me I am a lousy book reviewer. I am either too critical, too enthusiastic, not dispassionate enough - you've got the picture. I often purchase a book in a burst of enthusiasm, only to get home and find that it fails miserably to meet my expectations. In short, it wasn't what I thought it would be.

Every now and again something wonderful comes my way, something so unexpected that it leaves me breathless. I find a book that changes my brain, rearranges my brain cells and challenges me to think more deeply about the human condition. Such a book is David Finkel's *"The Good Soldiers"*, published by Scribe, Melbourne (2009, reprinted 2010). David Finkel is a Pulitzer Prize winning author who is a Washington Post Reporter and this is the story he wrote while being embedded with a platoon in the Iraq War from April, 2007 to April, 2008. Geraldine Brooks wrote of this book "An incandescent and profoundly moving book: powerful, intense, enraging. This may be the best book on war since the *Iliad*."

Well, I haven't read the *Iliad*, but I certainly have read a few hundred books about war and, without reservation, this is the most outstanding and in many ways the most terrifying. Finkel is a genius and his writing is glorious. It is raw, compelling, and always confronting. It is also poetic, factual and without recourse to any tricks of the trade. Sentimentality has no place in this account. Neither does it beat the political drum or genuflect to any political agenda. He simply tells it "as it was" and he tells "all of it". David Maraniss rightly says of this book: "The most unforgettable book of the Iraq war, a masterpiece that will far outlast the fighting".

This book, *The Good Soldiers*, was uniformly praised by reviewers from all the major newspapers throughout Australia, but perhaps Rick Atkinson, author of *In the Company of Soldiers* sums it up. He wrote that this book "offers the most intimate view of life and death in a 21st-century combat unit I have ever read.

Unsparring, unflinching, and, at times, unbearable". So there it is. If you haven't read this book, don't miss it. You will never be the same, you will have lived inside the heads of all the young men everywhere, who have ever gone to war believing the unbelievable.

Trisha English

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Krishnamurti and Doctor Doidge from Carien McGuin

When the young Don Ingram (author, *The Transparent Mind*) went to Indian philosopher-guru Jiddu Krishnamurti, asking seriously for life's answers, he was asked "Are you prepared for psychological surgery?" Perhaps Krishnamurti was one of the first to coin this phrase.

Twenty-five years after Krishnamurti's death, science is backing up what K asked of Don Ingram: the possibility of a radical change in the brain....a change of mind, not just a change of thought. Science, both through quantum physics, maths etc, and biology and the neurophysical sciences, seems to me to be catching up on the latter titles of Krishnamurti's books listed below*.

K wanted to know if and how this radical brain change could be done. I think it happened to him, but wondered if others could then actually do it...consciously? For instance is it possible to completely let go of the past. Again a question that had to come from his own experience.

In his search for understanding just this question, Dr Norman Doidge, who makes no reference to Krishnamurti anywhere at all, follows a number of studies of the mind and its biological effects, in a 'new science' now named neuroplasticity. His research forms the book "The Brain that Changes Itself" first published in 2007 and in Australia in 2008. This book comes long after biochemist Darryl Reaney's book "The Death of Forever: New Future for Human Consciousness" published in 1996 discussing the life and death of a single cell; and biology professor James E Zull's book "The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning", published in 2002, discussing his title.

Doidge is himself an M.D., a psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and researcher on the faculty at Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research in New York, and in the University of Toronto's Department of Psychiatry.

He describes the work of V.S. Ramachandran, a specialist neurologist of Hindu background, now working in California who designed a mechanical way to relieve the imaginary pain that many amputees experience in absent limbs by bringing about a change in the brain with psychological surgery, not physical surgery. He interviews a number of neuroscientists, doctors of medicine, neurophysics, psychology as well as experiencing V.S. Ramachandran's medical

rehabilitation engineering to give a resounding “Yes” to Krishnamurti’s question, “Is it possible?”

One story tells of a woman afflicted dramatically with a malfunction termed “asymmetry of the brain”. Doidge allows her to tell her story—the difficulty of growing up with parts of her brain functioning brilliantly, and other parts making her appear retarded, all in the same body.

Her story is significant because, not being a medico of any sort, she found a way to heal herself into a functionally coordinated human being who married and set up the Arrowsmith School to develop brain exercises from her own experience, for people with learning disorders.

Barbara Arrowsmith’s experience showed it wasn’t only the exercises she devised after discovering that brain change is possible but that there was such a thing as neuroplasticity of the brain, it was her faith in the process, which I think Doidge might have confused by describing it as the belief she had.

I see an analogy in my very cursory view of Stephen Hawking—he was able to become the brilliant flowering of his mind, not just with the exercise of computer technology, but with his own faith and with the absolute love and faith of the woman who backed him and lived with him for twenty-six years.

Arrowsmith’s story also conjures up the Christian statement “faith without works is dead”, and Jesus’s reported statement “Your faith has made you whole”. It follows Krishnamurti’s exploration into the materialisation of thought. Thought materialises, through repetition, visualisation and mantra. Unconscious thought also materialises, often with unwanted present situations and futures. I am still seeing this in my own life now, where all thought seems to come out of fear, or culture. But faith, or trust, or just a general sense of well-being, a no care in the world, a sort of knowing that all’s right with the world, brings about a whole different life experience. And that’s of course saying the obvious.

So Barbara Arrowsmith’s story picked up for me the “mission statement” of 20th century living, becoming aware of WYSIWYG, What You See Is What You Get, the projected image: visualise where you’ll be in five years’ time (or what you want) as being here now, and that vision materialises. Now, in the 21st century, we are relearning that the corollary is just as true: what you get is what you see. WYGIWYS. It’s a radical brain shift and in V. S. Ramachandran’s view it is “psychological surgery”. His surgical tool is illusion. His magician’s box is a mirror box “which appears to cure pain by altering the patient’s perception of their body image”. He heals pain in damaged limbs and phantom limbs (in the case of amputees).

“As phantoms show,” Doidge writes, “we don’t need a body part or even pain receptors to feel pain. We need only a *body image*, produced by our brain maps. People with actual limbs don’t usually realize this because the body images of our limbs are *perfectly projected* onto our actual limbs, making it impossible to

distinguish our body image from our body. “Your own body is a phantom”, says Ramachandran, “one that your brain has constructed purely for convenience.” ...

Isn't that pure headlessness? Doidge continues: “Distorted body images are common....such people often seek plastic surgery but still feel misshapen after their operations. What they need instead is ‘neuroplastic surgery’ to change their body image...

“To better understand what he (Ramachandran) meant by body image, I asked him if he might demonstrate the difference between a mental construct and the material body...Then Ramachandran ...told me to put my right hand under the table, so my hand was hidden. Then he tapped the tabletop with one hand, while with his other he tapped mine under the table, where I couldn't see it, in an identical rhythm. When he moved the spot where he hit the tabletop, a bit to the left or right, he moved his hand under the table exactly the same way. After a few minutes I stopped experiencing him as tapping my hand under the table and instead—fantastic as it sounds—started to feel that the body image of my hand had merged with the tabletop, so that the sensation of being tapped seemed to come from the tabletop. He had created an illusion in which my sensory body image had now been expanded to include a piece of furniture!”

(While scrubbing the mould off an unpainted pine outdoor table on our Darwin verandah years ago, with rambling thoughts of God as the beginning of all things, or just some/or one core element, I became aware that if everything in nature was made of atoms, then in the sight of God I must be just as good as this table...just a different shape and energy configuration. And that if God was Love then god would love the table just as much as me!! And I'm not a scientist. So I'm excited by Doidge's stories of my experience coming as true in science as it did for me in 'religion'.)

Ramachandran shows his clients that pain is an illusion. In the healing of pain in an amputee's phantom hand for instance, he allows the client to experience his hand as whole and in place, to actually feel it there by Rama's tapping another body part with which the brain map has connected the phantom hand. This shows the client the illusory function of not only the body, but also of pain – how it arises; and how a change of the client's perception of his body will heal the perception of pain. Krishnamurti was continually asking his followers to see “how thought arises”. The perception that pain is at base a thought or belief that needs changing is probably one of the hardest to accept. Yet the story of ‘Rama's’ research and his successes is one that brings me home full circle to the understanding of our way of living as illusory, and an understanding of thought as time, measurement, the word. Even scientists are seeing the truth of Krishnamurti, the reality of headlessness, and the same God that the romantic poets found in nature and the saints and seers found in the power of love.

The only exploration of being alive it seems to me is just seeing this all-one ness in every word, in every living cell, atom, stone and mountain rock, human being and planet.

As an old man, Don Ingram would say to me “Look at that bird (a kite or an albatross which he loved to watch soaring on the wind)...it IS the wind.”

*For a list of Krishnamurti books see:

<http://www.krishnamurtibookstore.com/category-s/1.htm>

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Mirror Neurons from Alan Mann

(The following is a reply to a question raised on the LookForYourself email conference by Jim Clatfelter following our viewing of a TED talk by Ramachandran.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7AWnfFRc7g>.)

As I listened to Ramachandran I had a strong feeling that he was offering something akin to Headlessness but I had difficulty working out exactly whether it was the same or similar, both or neither.

As a bit of background, I think I mentioned in a post some weeks back that I was reading a book called The Master and his Emissary by Ian McGilchrist in which the author sets about exploring why the brain is divided into two hemispheres rather than appearing as a single blob of brain matter. As I read the book I came across a number of cases where the headless perspective would have thrown additional light on the issues under consideration. I usually mark these points in my reading with a little pencilled icon representing the card with hole and mirror. There are quite a lot of these distributed throughout the book.

One of the consequences of my left brain/right brain enquiries is that I have started to talk about Headlessness in terms of re-integrating a more right brain apprehension of our world. This has been particularly fruitful in dealing with many of my friends who are either dedicated atheists or secular humanists and tend go very quiet, or into orbit, when there is any mention of anything they consider to be mystical, spiritual, etc.

So, back to Ramachandran. I have come across him before in books on the brain and its workings and some of his experiments are fascinating. I suppose his emphasis on experiment is the first connection with Headlessness. Secondly, he talks openly and without apology about boundlessness and the wholeness of life. Again, something fundamental to Headlessness. I imagine that is the consequence of this understanding of Indian philosophy and a refusal to let his scientific knowledge relegate that department of wisdom to the dustbin of history. I have to take him at his word about the mirror neuron effect. I don't really care whether mirror neurons are physical actualities or a process but, if the effects he reports are true, it seems that they are pointing to an actuality

which can be experienced. The closed eye experiment demonstrates that the proprioceptive body plan I carry around with me is a secondary aspect and that, as in the case of sounds, my notion that the birdsong, etc., is generated by external transmitters and heard by an internal receiver is not the primary actuality. So, with my left arm anaesthetized and hidden from view and whilst watching Ramachandran sticking a needle into your left arm which I can see him doing across the room, generates a sensation here, where I imagine my own arm to be. His explanation is that the anaesthetic has de-activated the sensitivity pathways and neurons which would identify the presence or absence of sensation in my own arm. Ramachandran answers your question about empathic pain in the phantom arm when he says that pain can be relieved by squeezing the hand of the arm of the person who is getting the needle.

This leads me to the third aspect of correspondence with Headlessness. I wondered if the Harding experiments desensitize the neurons (or the brain activity) which are normally maintaining my strong sense of separate identity and trying to hold me in third person mode.

I can hear objections about this being all to do with third person explanations. Why not just stick with what the experiments reveal? That is a valid position, but I have always been deeply interested in the consequences of Headlessness, not content with the experience alone. I see, in some of the current brain enquiry activities, signs of convergence between first person and third person science and an approach to headlessness that makes it more acceptable to many people who otherwise find it meaningless?

Alan Mann

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Letters to Carl by George Schloss

Letter 3 – March 15, 2004

Though I began this follow-up to my first letter about a week ago I was almost immediately forced to put it aside in deference to another stay in the hospital—a “repair” job, as they euphemistically referred to it, from which I’ve just been, if not spared, at least released. No picnic but not as bad as the first go-round. “The worst is not/ So long as we can say, “This is the worst. “

At any rate, picking up where we left off (significantly enough on this the Ides of March), it might not be a bad idea before we move on to examine the relation between 1st Person Science and 1st Person History, especially with emphasis on the latter which is our particular concern, the first having been definitively, indeed exhaustively, explored by Douglas once and for all. And, like the songs say, I do mean once and for all. Because if— again, following his scheme as outlined on page 224 of THE HIERARCHY and which I referred to in my first letter—if our thesis is correct, then the experiments both present as 1st Person

Science, and re-present as 1st Person History, not merely variations on a theme but the theme itself, the Open Sesame we've been looking for since the beginning of time and which, because everything under heaven and earth necessarily conforms to it, everything under heaven and earth necessarily confirms it. In this regard, it should come as no surprise that, as with all original perception whether animal or infant, the visibly articulate if silent science offered up instantly on contact to every sentient being takes precedence over conception, the consciousness and commentary that, passing for "human," literally takes time, at the very least the time it takes to talk and so make history. Which is no doubt why, coming too soon, even an Aristotle, one of the first to consider the question (as distinct from its answer, which, due to the unholy and child-like babble it stirred up, has had to await its turn to be seen and not merely heard), understandably missed the boat on this one when he awarded poetry the palm over what he judged simple narrative, however exact. And this on the ground that the possible, provided it was probable, was more "philosophical and elevated" and so, presumably, more highfalutin and symbolic than what actually and factually "is." What he could not know, of course, because, among other things, time takes time, was that over and beyond or, if you prefer, under and beneath all phenomena lay not only the possible because probable, but the philosophic cum universal, what, thanks to the experiments, we can now ascribe with absolute assurance to the certain and necessary and this without in any way falling into the trap of the progressivist, the so-called historicist fallacy. Because we all know where invoking the present rather than Presence as the last rather than merely the latest word has gotten us "now" people—as if the Omega were no more than a repetition, an echo of the Alpha rather than comprised and inclusive of it and then some.

As I never tire of pointing out, Nishitani frames it as well as anybody: "The task of the 'ought' is already determined by the other-directedness of the 'is.' Since a concrete demonstration of this and how we arrived at it represents the heart of what we're up to, we can go into it in more detail as we go along. Enough for the moment to state categorically that it's no more (nor less) than to join, along with so many others, in that universal chorus that proclaims that it's love, love, love that makes the world go round—the only difference being that for the first time ever we're finally in a position, *the* position, to prove it.

George Schloss

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February Meeting from Alan Mann

These are my notes on our last Harding meeting. I would be interested in any alternative or contrary views and suggestions for future topics. There are many opportunities to listen to the words of the wise and I am open to including new or old teachers and sources providing there is an experiential or experimental

component in the offering. If it is not for tasting oneself then this is not the right forum. As always, connections to the Harding story are particularly welcome but not mandatory.

Sunday 6 February 2010

I have listened to a number of people, over many years, all of them pointing to a dimension of being which is normally overlooked. Most of them claim that this aspect of oneself is fundamental but most add that it is accessible only as a result of some spontaneous realisation or an extensive and prolonged discipline. Two people, J. Krishnamurti and John Wren Lewis, both of whom had a significant impact on my understanding, claimed that there is nothing one can do to arrive at the awakening they describe.

They are saying that anything the ego does to 'get free of itself' is just more ego action and consequently likely to strengthen rather than weaken its grip. However, whilst I can accept that I can do nothing to resolve the apparent problem I think it is possible to *BE* in a way that does resolve it. The meeting was designed to explore this possibility.

We listened to the 1994 interview of John Wren-Lewis by Caroline Jones in which John describes the circumstances of his poisoning which resulted in a near-death experience from which he awakened to an appreciation of being which he described as eternity consciousness and which he had formerly dismissed as the result of the overactive imagination of mystics through the ages. He pointed out the paradoxical ordinariness of his transformation from a sceptical observer- scientist into a participatory expression of the All, he says "... *The main point I want to make however is that perhaps the most extraordinary feature of eternity consciousness is that it doesn't feel extraordinary at all*".

He explained his new sense of self as 'the universe John Wren-Lewis' and his conviction that we are all in the same boat but overlook our birthright. We are denied a more comprehensive engagement with *what is*, not through any fundamental disability but because we are distracted from the main game by our over-zealous ego. He shares Krishnamurti's view that giving the hyper active ego yet another job to do, 'to go forth and seek enlightenment', will inevitably end in tears.

After listening to the interview we tried the *Card with Hole and Mirror* experiment as one way of distinguishing between what normally passes for self-consciousness and what we might find to be a window to eternity-consciousness. If it is successful, this experiment is a '*seeing*', rather than a '*doing*', consequently it does not fall within the exclusion zone of the proscribed ego-building activities. (Not that I agree with the nothing you can do prescription myself).

We then turned to Krishnamurti. I recently found a 1989 journal entry from J. Krishnamurti: A Biography a book by Pupul Jayakar. Chapter 15 is entitled *The Mind Operating As Part of the Whole Is Endless*. There is some very interesting stuff relating to the centre and the field, which is relevant to Headlessness, as I

later discovered when Douglas Harding turned up in my life. On page 169 she reports that Krishnamurti says. *"So far you have been facing north, and I say to you turn round and face south. You want to face south without leaving the north"*.

There is a Harding experiment in which four people form four sides of a square at about 2 metre distance from each other facing inwards. The four positions represent the points of the compass. Each person considers him/herself to be South. Thus, every individual looking out sees East and West at his/her right and left with North straight ahead. The question is asked " Whether, in your present position as South and going only on present evidence, are East and West face to face?" The answer is invariably 'Yes'.

The second question is, "In your present position as South and relying strictly on present evidence are you and North in the same relationship as East and West?"

Final question: "If your answer to the second question is no, and again relying only on present evidence, how would you describe your relationship with North?"

The connection with the Krishnamurti quote and the experiment might not be immediately clear and they are not exactly the same but the Harding experiment demonstrates that our failure to open the door to eternity consciousness is a case of looking North and insisting the relationship is face to face (the same as for the East-West relationship) rather than Face to No-face. Krishnamurti is saying that my usual mindset, locked as it is into 'the man-in-the-mirror' perspective, attempts to incorporate eternity consciousness in my customary self-consciousness. This I see as an aspect of the distraction John Wren-Lewis describes.

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Gladney Oakley from David Lee Preston

On the 9th February I received the following email:

Dear Mr. Mann: Within the last hour, I picked up off the street here in Philadelphia an old book that someone had dropped at the curb as trash. It is the 1953 edition of *Greystones*, the yearbook of Haverford Township Senior High School in Havertown, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia.

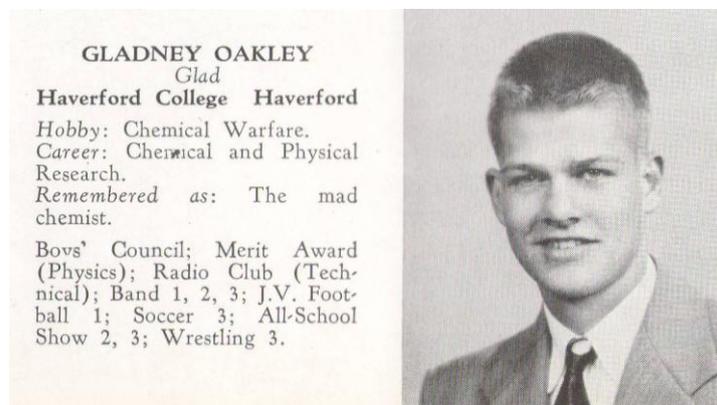
Just out of curiosity, I began to Google some of the names, including that of Gladney Oakley, whose photo and short bio appear on Page 42. I just found his name and the extremely interesting tribute and photo that you included in your February 2006 issue of NOW. It would seem to be the same person.

Please let me know if you are interested, and I will be glad to scan in the material and e-mail it to you. David

Well, of course, I was interested. Although I'd known Gladney for many years his early history was a closed book. I got a lot out of my friendship with him but

most of it had to be prised loose with a deal of effort. Following this initial contact from David Lee Preston I received a series of photos from the yearbook showing Gladney as a teenage chemist, musician, footballer, wrestler and prefect—an all-rounder and renaissance man in the making. What really tickled me was his entry under 'hobbies', he had listed it as chemical warfare. Hopefully, tongue in cheek but maybe not!

David Lee Preston describes himself as a longtime Philadelphia journalist, currently assistant city editor at the *Philadelphia Daily News*. He said we can read more about him in the epilogue of James McBride's international bestseller, "The Color of Water", which I plan to do when this NOWletter is completed. In the meantime, I discovered, courtesy Google, that he was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 1986, for his account of how, by means of a trip through Germany and Eastern Europe, he managed to come to terms with his father's experiences in the Holocaust.



One possible explanation of Gladney's skills and abilities might be found in an obituary of Gladney's father David sent me, which states that: Cletus Odia Oakley, a retired professor of mathematics at Haverford College who wrote several textbooks,

died Monday at a retirement home in Chelsea, Mich. He was 91 years old. Dr. Oakley joined the staff at Haverford in 1934 and was chairman of the mathematics department from 1942 until his retirement in 1964. He wrote eight textbooks, including "Principles of Mathematics" and "Fundamentals of Freshman Mathematics," which he wrote with Dr. Carl B. Allendoerfer, also of Haverford. The works introduced "new math" into college freshman texts. He wrote extensively for professional publications and was an editor from 1956 to 1961 of the *American Mathematical Monthly*. A Ph.D. graduate of the University of Illinois, he taught at Brown University from 1929 to 1934. He is survived by two sons, Bruce of Chelsea, Mich., and Gladney of New South Wales, Australia.

Thanks to David Lee Preston, these photographs have now been passed on to Gladney's daughter Rilka and son Raj. The readers of the NOWletter who knew Gladney now know him a little better. I include one of the photos here but the others are available on request.

Alan Mann

IS FREEDOM FROM CONDITIONING REALLY POSSIBLE?

A Talk delivered to the Krishnamurti Foundation of America By Prof. Hillary Rodrigues Ojai, California on August 28, 2010 This extract was sent in by Andrew Hilton referring us to the complete article at the address below.

An unconditioned mind is essential to discover truth, because only such a mind is free. But conditioning is an inevitable and ongoing process in our lives, everybody's lives. The thinking mind is a conditioned mind, because it is conditioned by experience, impressions, and so on, which it imprints through images, words, and so on. But what-is, that is, the reality of what is occurring at this moment, here and now, is the fountainhead of truth. No thoughts can do it justice, anymore that the word "this" can adequately convey the fullness of what is being pointed to. Uncontrived awareness of this is available to everyone, everywhere, at anytime. It is available here and now. Awareness can be coloured by our thinking minds, but it need not be. Too often we look with our thoughts instead of with our eyes. We listen with our thoughts rather than with our ears. Sensitive listening, and plain seeing, without thinking, are already manifestations of unconditioned mind.

<http://www.kfa.org/cmsdocuments/Freedom from Conditioning-Hillary Rodrigues.pdf>

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Restless Mind ... No Problem, from Colin Drake

Many people complain of a 'restless mind' when they sit down to meditate, contemplate or just relax into pure awareness. Their thoughts almost seem to speed up and a host of worldly worries crowd in that seem to make meditation, contemplation, or relaxation appear impossible. If one attempts to suppress these thoughts, or replace them with other thoughts, this often exacerbates the problem turning the river into a veritable torrent! Now this may be a problem if one is attempting one-pointed concentration on a mantra, the breath or a symbol as in meditation. It may also seem to make contemplation, or investigation, impossible as it disturbs the flow of thoughts, dedicated to one subject, that this requires.

However, for just relaxing into pure awareness the torrent of thoughts of the 'monkey mind' or 'worry wart' is no problem at all; for in this relaxation there truly is nothing to find, achieve or acquire as awareness is already (and always) present. All that is required is to recognize this fact, which 'isn't exactly rocket science' as one would not even know that there was a 'problem' without being aware of it, which proves that awareness is already present. One just needs to see (recognize) that there is awareness of this stream of thoughts/worries. This 'seeing' (recognition) has the potential to break the habit of the mind to follow these thoughts, and then they just come and go in awareness, leaving it unaffected in the same way that clouds scud across the sky, or waves appear in

the ocean. Once this occurs one can then revert to contemplation/investigation if one wishes, or just remain relaxing into awareness itself.

Even if this does not occur, and the restless mind continues with its incessant chatter, this is no problem for awareness itself which just witnesses this, whilst remaining totally unconcerned. The seeing of this in turn leads to the mind letting go of all its expectations of what is required for the relaxation to deepen (i.e. that the mind should become quiet), resulting in this deepening naturally occurring. Paradoxically this can then result in the flow of discursive thoughts lessening, leading to even deeper relaxation ... But if this does not happen it's no problem!

This is where the technique of recognizing the presence of awareness, and relaxing into that, differs from other techniques that require concentration. For this seeing (recognition) has the power to diffuse thoughts (and sensations) as their ephemeral nature becomes apparent, thus making the mind less likely to scamper after them. The mind is a far more amenable servant when it can truly understand what is required of it and can see the point of this. The recognition of pure awareness leads to perfect peace, for awareness itself is always absolutely still and totally silent (being the witness to movement and thoughts/sounds) ... and this is perfect peace.

Whereas, meditation on an object which requires one-pointed concentration is a somewhat artificial activity, with which the mind struggles as it fails to truly 'see' the point. It is true that if this is perfected it can lead to the same state of perfect peace, but this is not the beginner's experience. Because the mind finds it difficult to truly engage with this practice, this lack of engagement leaves the mind as restless as it was before the activity was embarked upon. In fact any attempt to artificially yoke the mind to an activity which it is unused to, and does not enjoy, often leads to the restlessness becoming more intense.

Therefore this style of meditation can become counter-productive leading to frustration and a feeling of failure. Which is a great shame for the peace of pure awareness is always present behind this intense activity and this can be readily recognized with the relevant shifting of attention. The attempt to stifle the mind to reveal this peace is often a long and arduous process which many 'meditators' fail to achieve. Even those that do 'succeed' often fail to see that this peace is ever-present and think that it can only be achieved by prolonged 'sitting'. In which case this does not lead to true freedom as this peace is not recognized as being present when one is not 'meditating'.

The other problem with 'sitting' meditation is that, for most westerners, it is not a truly comfortable occupation unaccustomed as we are to sitting cross-legged. It is true that most traditions allow beginners to sit in a chair but the implication tends to be that this is a concession and that to do the thing properly we need to learn to sit, with a straight spine, on the floor. This discomfort makes concentration even more difficult to achieve, as if the activity was not tricky

enough already! Whereas relaxing into pure awareness can be done in any position and is best done where there is no discomfort whatsoever.

In my case I spent over 20 years involved in this style of meditation performed in twice daily sittings of 30-60 minutes. Whilst this led to many beautiful experiences, trance states (and sore knees!) it never led to total freedom. For it always left me feeling that there was more to achieve which would occur through even greater effort. It was only when I was told to 'STOP', give up all effort, and simply ask 'Who am I?' that the penny dropped and I realized that I, as a separate entity, do not exist (Anatta)! All that was there was the ever-present awareness of the thoughts/sensations.

Some amazing experiences also followed but this discovery that 'I' do not exist is the key and is repeated every time I look to see 'Who am I?' Further than this is the recognition of pure awareness itself in which thoughts/sensations arise, exist, are seen and subside. This has left me completely free from all existential angst, with a feeling of being totally 'at home in the universe' and experiencing a simple 'ease of being'. None of this was true during all my years of rigorous rigid mantra/breath/visualization meditations. I now know that in fact there is nothing to achieve, find or get, for awareness is always present. All that is required is just 'being' moment to moment identified as this awareness of thoughts and sensations. Then if deeper experiences come, beautiful, and if not... no problem. Truly each moment is enough!

It is interesting to note that, after all I have said about mantra, I sometimes use mantra to aid me relaxing into this pure awareness; which I do for the joy of it, rather than to achieve, find, or get anything. The mantra I use is 'Om Namah Shivaya' which means 'salutations to pure awareness (or consciousness) which is the Absolute Totality of Being'. As this is repeated it points directly to this pure awareness by its meaning and the experiential fact of awareness of the repetition. It is this attention on the awareness itself that is the key, for this awareness is always absolutely still and totally silent, which is perfect peace. This meaning and the noticing of awareness has the power to diffuse the restless mind, especially after some practice where the value of relaxing into awareness itself has been experienced. Mantra repetition also reveals the 'nothingness' relative to which all 'things' can be recognized. For the thought is known (there is awareness of it) relative to the no-thought in which it appears.

This is the 'nothingness' which can be revealed by repeating the mantra with intense concentration, thus blocking out all other 'things' from the mind. However this nothingness may be immediately realized by seeing that every 'thing' appears in nothingness, exists in nothingness, is known relative to this nothingness and disappears back into nothingness. Without this background of nothingness there would not be awareness of any 'thing'. As the only things in our direct experience are thoughts (including all mental images) and sensations, awareness of which is only possible due to contrast with the 'nothingness' in which they appear, then this 'nothingness' is absolutely vital for awareness of

any 'thing'; and is in fact a property of awareness itself. 'Consciousness at rest' (awareness) implies the 'subjective field' which is conscious (aware) and still, that is 'nothingness' as all 'things' are forms of cosmic energy, and thus in motion.

So if one repeats the mantra (or any mantra) noticing the awareness of the repetition and the nothingness (no thought) in which it arises, exists and subsides, then the mantra has done its job in revealing the nature of reality. In fact every single thing in manifestation points directly to this 'aware nothingness', or 'formless awareness', in exactly the same way. For it is in contrast to the nothingness that any thing is perceived, and awareness is that which underlies perception, in that one is effortlessly and choicelessly aware of sense (and mind) perceptions. However, mantra repetition has the added advantage of pointing to this directly by its form and meaning, for every mantra extols different aspects of this Absolute Reality. This 'aware nothingness', or 'formless awareness', is: Jehovah, God the Father, Allah, Brahman, Siva, The Void (Theravadan Buddhism), Rigpa (Tibetan Buddhism), Big Mind (Zen), and The Tao. Mystics of all persuasions who follow the 'negative path' have come to this same realization of the Absolute Reality, although they give it different names.

Colin Drake

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Dalai Lama in Australia from Berry Dunston

Join us in conversation with His Holiness the Dalai Lama about Happiness, Life & Living

Canberra—Tuesday 14th June Royal Theatre, National Convention Centre

Perth—Sunday June 19th The Dome, Burswood

Tickets for the Canberra & Perth Conversations are now available, details from

www.dalailamainaustralia.org

Hui Hai from Beryl Starke

On reading your notes on last meeting I found a reference in The Zen Teaching of Hui Hai by John Blofeld that you showed me you had your own copy. (p50)

Q: Please define right thinking (more positively)

A: It means solely thinking of Bodhi (enlightenment)

Q: Is Bodhi something tangible?

A: It is not.

Q: But how can we think solely of Bodhi if it is intangible?

A: It is as though Bodhi were a mere name applied to something which, in fact, is intangible, something which never has been nor ever will be attained. Being intangible, it cannot be thought about, and it is just this not thinking about it

which is called rightly thinking of Bodhi as something not to be thought about—for this implies that your mind dwells upon nothing whatsoever. The term 'not to be thought about' is like the various kinds of not-thinking mentioned earlier, all of which are but names convenient for use in certain circumstances---

all are of the one substance in which no differences or diversities exist. Simply to be conscious of mind resting upon nothing whatsoever is to be without thought; and whoever reaches this state is naturally delivered. End of quote.

Beryl Starke

How Can We Flood The World With Love ?

There Are What Could Be Called:

“The Four Difficult Truths”

If We

Whole-Heartedly

Accepted These Truths

Our Lives Would Almost Magically
Become sacredly simple!!!

*All of us grow old here -
without exception each one of us gradually changes
and eventually completely disappears.*

*During this life here
the affairs of life do not always go
as we hoped or planned or
been told they should go.
Our lives may even go in
an opposite direction to what we wish.*

*The events in our Life can be quite unfair
and sometimes even extreme pain
is unavoidably part of our present existence.*

*During our time here
some people we have contact with
are probably not always going to be
loving and loyal.
Indeed, we may have to deal with people who are
extremely difficult and/or deeply unconscious.*

In any case, a strange secret is behind being able to whole-heartedly accept these difficult truths:

It is learning how to live in Broken Heartedness.

*Only that Kind of Broken Heart
can flood the world with love...*

Greg Campbell

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The Hog's Wholey Wash a book by Malcolm Mitchell

In much the same way that the best of spiritual writing might appear to a scientific mind as hogwash, the The Hog's Wholey Wash might well appear to such a reader in the same light, or rather, lack of light. To anyone locked into that gloomy darkness I can only say 'find your inner pig'.

As an aid to finding this elusive creature The Hog's Wholey Wash will prove a useful guide. In reading the book I alternated between hoping for a revelatory conclusion and just enjoying the journey. I imagine that was the deliberate intention of the author although it is not expressly stated. Some of us have wallowed in the 'search' for many years, most often motivated by the notion that we are eventually going to be rewarded for our labours by ultimately arriving at some blessed state. Thus, we rarely peep over the edge of our personal troughs and, consequently, tend to miss the wonder of what is actually going on.

This is underlined in the book by the choice of a hog as our mentor or guide. Pigs might fly, as indeed this particular pig does as he leads us into the necessary turnaround, into a world which cannot be captured in words, certainly not in words which are limited to the everyday assumed reality in which we spend our days. However, most of us have some experience (either as a result of intensive meditation, the ingestion of psychedelic drugs, exploring the gap between waking and dreaming or through mere accident) of dimensions of our being from which we are excluded by our overactive egos, that deep identification with self which keeps us totally separate from one another and the world at large. The Hog is an accomplished explorer, guide and interpreter of the unfathomable fields of Unibeing. It is made clear, however, that these apparently otherworldly experiences are not so much new as newly perceived—as the Hog's disciple observes "*...they were in reality there before, and had always been there, as it were 'underneath' the old earthly body, 'behind' the old earthly world, I have lived in, deep in subtlety, as the fine eclipsed by the crude*".

Here's someone else on the same track:

The thing hath been from the Creation of the World, but hath not so been explained as that the interior Beauty should be understood. It is my design therefore in such a plain manner to unfold it that my friendship may appear in making you possessor of the whole world....There are invisible ways of conveyance by which some great thing doth touch our souls, and by which we tend to it. Do you not feel yourself drawn by the expectation and desire of some Great Thing?

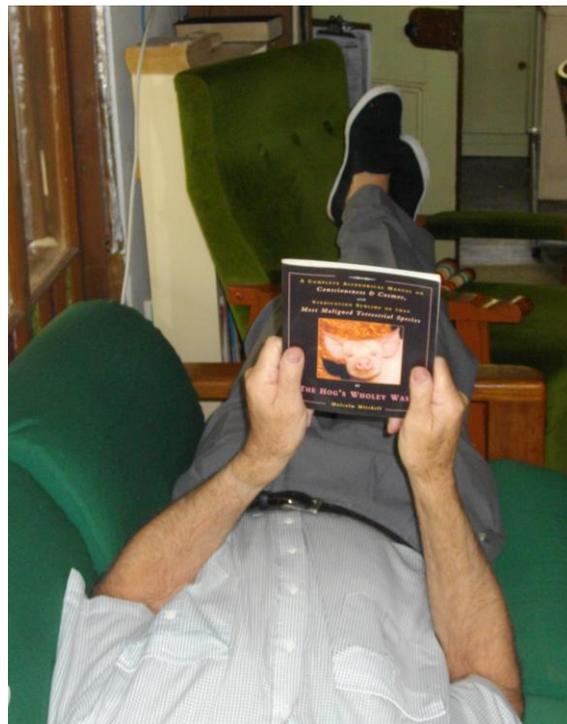
The second speaker was Traherne but it could have been the Hog itself. The Hog's Wholey Wash paints a brilliant word picture, which I can only think of describing by comparing it with those wonderful paintings which set out to capture the 'realm of setting suns'. It also reminded me of Heidegger's "*...we are too late for God and too early for Being, Being's poem just begun is man*". It is as though the human species might know many things, even to the extent that it has become limited by its overflowing knowing, but the hog knows one big thing and

that big 'thing', whatever it is, is communicable only by direct apprehension and not by words. I read the book as a poetic expression of what our being might really involve if we could participate more fully in the unfolding. An adventure in imagination told with great humour, with no conclusion but with an offer of endless beginnings in a state of wonder—a condition normally suppressed by the everyday concerns of our species.

Alan Mann

(The illustration here shows a headless approach to the reading. Recommended. Ed).

Mal Mitchell is the Education and Fundraising Coordinator, UK of Azafady an organization which describes its aims as follows ... to eradicate poverty, suffering and environmental damage in Madagascar. 'Our mission is to alleviate extreme poverty and protect unique, biologically rich but greatly endangered forest environments in Madagascar by empowering some of the poorest people to establish for themselves sustainable livelihoods and improve their health and wellbeing'. There is a good picture of Mal and detailed information about Azafady at:



<http://www.madagascar.co.uk/aboutazafady/londonstaff.htm>

His book is available for \$9.71 delivered worldwide from
<http://www.bookdepository.co.uk/book/9781853981463/The-Hogs-Wholey-Wash>

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