

Next Meeting  
21 April 96



Issue No. 29  
March 96

**Meetings are held at 10am on the third Sunday of every month at 81, Greville Street, Chatswood and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out whether, through the process of DIALOGUE, transformation of consciousness, awakening to what we really are, or whatever we want to call it, can come about.**

#### **Leigh Haren**

Our friend Leigh died on Saturday February 24th after a long illness which she bore very bravely. She was starting to come to both the Now meetings and the Omega group but found it increasingly difficult to get around. Our sympathy to Heinz who gave her great support, and to her family.

#### **March Meeting**

First a note about this issue and the next. The USA Newsletter made its appearance at last and contains some interesting material so it forms the bulk of this month's offering. There were two pages of extracts from the NOW letter which I have taken out to save on copying costs and because you may have already read them. This means that the responses to my February article "Dialogue - Why doesn't it work?" are deferred until May. In the meantime, my thanks to Elsa, Erik & Gladney for their responses and Terry's was in last month. I would welcome any extra contributions before the end of April.

We covered some of the ground at the last meeting and I will try to recover some of it. Erik made the point that we leave a lot of issues hanging in the air. Interesting topics that are raised at the meetings or in the Nowletter often disappear without trace. We thought it might be a good idea to open our meetings by asking if there are any loose ends of this sort to trim. In a similar vein Gladney wonders whether it is really necessary to go through the 'preliminaries' at every meeting. Why don't we start at the 'end' for a change? This is the subject of Gladney's contribution to the next issue. We again agreed that it is probably best not to appoint a facilitator. Nevertheless, there is a need to remind ourselves of essentials from time to time. Margaret suggested we reinstate the blackboard summary.

I have enrolled on the Dialogue email conference referred to in DQN which is run by William van den Heuvel who sent me some of the back messages to give me a feel for it. I have quite a lot of the exchanges in printed form if anyone is interested. Also available on disc.

#### **Shadow**

Mishka and John are back and Mishka sent me a long quotation from 'A Path with Heart' by Jack Cornfield. Knowing Mishka, readers will not be surprised to find it is about 'shadow' and, I think, very relevant to this

newsletter, our group activities and to a comparison of Krishnamurti and Ramana Maharshi, by Douglas Harding, which some of us are looking into at this moment.

#### *MEDITATION REFLECTING ON YOUR FORM OF PRACTICE*

*by Jack Cornfield.*

Just as every community has a shadow, every set of teachings will also have areas of shadow, aspects of life they do not illuminate wisely. Every style of teaching will also produce its near enemy, the way that particular teaching can be most easily misused or misunderstood. It can be useful to take some time to reflect on the strengths and limitations of the practice you have chosen to follow. You can then consider to what extent these are issues in your own spiritual life. The following examples hint at the possible shadows you may encounter.

Insight Meditation and similar Buddhist practices can lead to quietude, to withdrawal from and fear of the world. The emptiness taught in Zen and nondualist Vedanta can lead to a related problem, to being disconnected and ungrounded. Any form of idealistic, otherworldly teaching that sees life on earth as a dream or focuses on higher realms can lead one to live with complacency, amorality and indifference. Physical practices such as hatha yoga can lead to bodily perfection instead of awakening of the heart. Kundalini yoga can lead students to become experience junkies in search of exciting sensations of body and mind rather than liberation. Those such as Krishnamurti and others who teach against any discipline or method of practice can lead people to remain intellectual about spiritual life without providing any deep inner experience. Practices that involve a great deal of study can do the same. Moralistic practices with strong rules about what is pure and what is not can reinforce low self-esteem or, lead to rigidity and self-righteousness. Practices of tantra can become an excuse to act out desires as a pseudo form of spiritual practice. Devotional practices can leave clarity and discriminating wisdom undeveloped. Powerful gurus can make us think we can't do it ourselves. Practices of joy and celebration such as Sufi dancing may leave students lacking an understanding of the inevitable loss and sorrows of life. Practices that emphasise suffering can miss the joy of life.

As you reflect on these shadows, consider your

own spiritual path and tradition. Let yourself sense its strengths and weaknesses, its gifts and the ways it can be misused. Notice where you may be caught and what more you might need. Remember that there is nothing wrong with any of these practices per se. They are simply tools for opening and awakening. Each can be used skilfully or unknowingly misused. As you mature in your own spiritual life, you can take responsibility for your own practice and reflect wisely on where you are entangled and what can awake you to freedom in every realm.

*Jack Cornfield*

### **Seeing and Psychotherapy**

From: Richard Lang <headexchange>

*I lifted this, with Richard's permission, from the NOHead conference. I find great correspondence in what he is saying with what I believe Dialogue to be about. Ed.*

Dear Conference, Here are some preliminary thoughts on the value of Headlessness in my work as a psychotherapist.

I am finding these days that this work is a very good reminder to me to see who I am. I sit down with my client and I find myself being capacity for him. There he is, here I am room for him, and for the whole situation. I am empty for the process that emerges.

One aspect of this is that it takes the heat off me trying to heal that person, or solve their problems. Obviously I don't have all the answers. But I am sitting in the open space which I can trust, and from which the right way forward emerges. Sometimes in such situations it is important not to rush in and fill in the gaps, but to tolerate silence and emptiness and the feelings that go with this. Seeing the space here helps me stay with this emptiness and recognise its value.

Sometimes it becomes apparent how creative the process of relationship is. The exchanges that are happening emerge out of this plain yet wondrous nothingness. The sounds of our voices, the meaning that emerges - moment by moment out of nowhere.

I also lead groups, and the same is true here as well. Sometimes groups can be tense places, and Seeing is a valuable resource to contain and hold this tension. I am room for what is happening. Sometimes it is valuable to be able to be in a totally free and empty place within myself whilst being in a group. I don't have that deep internal pressure to do or say anything as I listen to what is going on in this endless silence.

Being a group leader means from time to time dealing with the group's reactions to 'the leader'. Seeing plays its part here as well. I recognise that I am the group leader, yet at the same time I am nothing of the sort! I am room for them. One aspect of leading psychotherapy groups is that you work with the way others see you - what you are for them. This involves putting aside one's own feelings/reactions to a degree - for the time being anyway. It is helpful to see that I am totally different here from what they see - it helps take the heat off my identification with what they see.

Another aspect of psychotherapy is empathy. Part of the work involves feeling your way into another person's life, into their shoes, and being able to look out through their eyes, and sense what it is like being them. Seeing who I am helps

this process. For a start, I am room for them - there is nothing separating me from them. I am open to them and open to their being. I have their face, not my own! But this goes beyond just being open to them from where I am. Being nothing in myself enables me to somehow be right there at their centre, to be them, and to have room for them as a living sensing growing being.

At the same time I am aware that I perceive them from a specific point of view, not an absolute one. I see them from over here, and sometimes make that quite clear if I am reflecting back my perception. "From where I am sitting..."

Seeing whilst leading groups is also helpful in that when I am Seeing my awareness is panoramic instead of tunnel, and I see a wide spread of the world - and of the group. I actually see more of the people in the group, and sense the situation more fully. This enables me to be more in touch with what is going on.

One final reflection is the reality of being the client or the group right here where I am. Here we are indivisible. This is simply true, and wonderful. This must have an effect on the way I am with clients, though it is underground and subtle and impossible to quantify.

This is another email gem from Brian Mayne

The recent discussion subject (Thomas, David F., Andrew and Alan with his writeup for Dialogue) of whether the objective world is real had already been a focus for me. I noticed this response by Trunga Rinpoche, in his book "Transcending Madness", when he was asked about projections vs the existence of other people:

"...that is a very interesting point. And actually, to tell you the truth, nobody is quite certain whether it is one hundred percent projection or whether it is only partially a projection... Things do exist as they are, but we tend to see our version of them as they are, rather than things as they really are. That makes everything that we see projections. But one doesn't have to make a definite and absolute reassurance of that necessarily at all. You just go along with situations, go along with dealing with them. If you are going too far, they'll shake you. They'll beat you to death if you're going too far. If you're going well, if you are balanced, they will present hospitality and openness luxuriously to you. I mean, that much of a situation is there anyway; some kind of rapport between this and that goes on all the time. As long as a person is sensitive enough to experience it, that rapport goes on. That's the important point. One doesn't have to make it definite and clear cut as to which is not projection and which is projection. It is sort of a gradual understanding. Until the attainment of buddhahood, this experience goes on -- and nobody is able to answer it because they themselves don't know."

...When in doubt, I am tending to "stay with the projector"(advice Chris shared from another Tibetan teacher)...Regards, Brian

*I thought that was wonderful. Ed.*