

Next Meeting
19 May 96



Issue No. 30
May 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.

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THE FUTURE OF THE NOWLETTER

This is the thirtieth issue of the NOWletter and the month of May brings us to the end of the current 12 month subscription run. I think it is time for a break, change of approach or complete abandonment of the newsletter.

I hid the following message in the body of the February letter, (*When next we meet, would you quietly mention the word 'Nightingale', if we are unlikely to meet a brief note would suffice. Thanks, an explanation will follow.*) The

explanation is that this was a device to see if anyone was actually reading the newsletter. Judging by the response, the readership numbers about five which is 12.5% of the total circulation including Margot who proof reads it nearly every month. Maybe we could put it together on a random basis whenever we have enough interesting material instead of a regular monthly publication. What do you think?

This month we have the responses to my critique of Dialogue as we know it, Mishka on Wilber and a truly remarkable Australian book on what it is really all about.

DIALOGUE - DOES IT WORK?

The February NOWletter carried my note on the current state of Dialogue under the heading "Dialogue - Why doesn't it work!" with a request for comment, especially from those of you who disagree with my claim that it is not working. We had a reply from Terry in the February issue and this issue includes replies from Elsa and Erik. I have also had a bit of an insight into my dissatisfaction so I am having a second helping.

Elsa writes:

After reading Terry's response I felt I had none better. But, Alan, as you are serious about getting feedback - "heavy feedback" you write - I will respond to some points you made.

Under your heading "Purpose or no" (p. 2):

Dialogue has no aim, no agenda, which you find confusing. Bohm himself seems at the root of your confusion.

You give two quotes which you think capture the apparent contradiction.

One in which Bohm states "...we have no purpose, no agenda as we don't have to do

anything....Rather we need a place...where there is no special purpose - sort of an empty place where we can let anything be talked about."

compared with:

"I'm suggesting that there is the possibility for a transformation of the nature of consciousness, both individually and collectively, and that whether this can be solved culturally and socially depends on Dialogue. That's what we are exploring."

I read that differently. One does not contradict the other. A possibility for a transformation does not come about by having a purpose or plan, or aim. It can come about when we do not have to do anything. To explore means just that - not being able to know where it will lead us. To be free of assumptions, goals. What we need, as Bohm states, is an empty place where we can let anything be talked about.

Is it possible that this is why Dialogue "doesn't work" (your words, not mine) at Greville Street? We do seem to talk a lot about Dialogue, its rules, how it should work, what it can lead to, instead of really Dialogueing.

Also on the subject of purpose and aim, you write:"... self-improvement is what it is really all about if self is defined more broadly than we usually allow." - I cannot be sure what you mean here with 'self defined more broadly'; you don't mean Self? Self can never improve Itself. And anyway even if I as self think I need improving, who is doing the improving and who is judging whether I am improving or not?

The things you have difficulty with (page 2) are:

1) 'A strongly held and strongly presented point of view which its proponent will not seriously allow to be questioned' - I could have missed something but I haven't heard this happening. Perhaps the problem lies in the "not seriously allowed to be questioned" part. Was the proponent questioned seriously enough, or did the momentum get lost by the mentioning of another topic? This is my difficulty: we either skip too fast to something else or we endlessly go around a topic, like for instance the emotion / feeling

one, which you found lively, but to me could have been dealt with in a third of the time. We need not have talked about the meaning of the words - how we 'dealt' with feelings would have been more appropriate.

2) The second is the 'outright rejection of a point of view which I hold strongly but which I am not presenting very convincingly.' - Again, I never heard at the meetings I attended any "outright rejection". There has been intense probing so the questioner could try to make sense out of that which was not presented clearly. Patience is to me the key word here. If we really want to hear what the other is saying extra effort and / or quiet is necessary to get to know what the proponent is saying.

On the other hand, if you know you cannot present something convincingly you can't be surprised if you are misunderstood - the word convincingly worries me though. 'Clearly' would surely be the better word? We are not out to convince one another after all.

Maybe a facilitator would be a good idea to help prevent these difficulties?

You also say: "Until the environment is such that a complete identification or integration with what is going on becomes possible then I do not think Dialogue has a chance." (p.2 para 4) - I have trouble with the word 'complete' - Aren't you too hard here on yourself, the group and Dialogue, and isn't that setting pre-conditions for the process? For it is a process, not the pinnacle of achievement.

Dialogue already has a chance. We are there together at Greville Street aren't we? We are relating and at least trying to dissolve some communication barriers.

A stocktaking is a good idea, but let's not worry too much if we are still "thrashing around", in Terry's words! We could get too self-conscious or ambitious about the workings of Dialogue. Maybe at this stage we cannot suspend our most cherished opinions, which you state is "absolutely essential." It may in the end only become possible because the process of Dialogue has had an effect

on us.

To end, Alan, with "lighter feedback"! Thank you for giving so much of your time. For the Newsletter, for being such a good host. For giving me so much stimulation and food for thought! Above all, thank you for sharing.

Elsa Harting.

Erik writes:

Alan, here are a few comments on your long and thought-provoking article in NOW.

You raise a lot of issues, and the Newsletter is probably the best place to discuss some of them, while others are maybe best talked about in Dialogue.

Something which we can do in the Newsletter is discuss what Dialogue is, what it might achieve, whether it works or not. It would be good if we could come to some agreement on this. To my mind, these topics tend to occupy us needlessly during meetings and hinder us practising Dialogue itself. We attempt to dialogue / discuss about whether we are dialogueing or discussing, endlessly looking over our own shoulder. Why? I believe it is because some of us feel that 'if only it is done properly' it will lead to greater awareness / enlightenment / expansion of consciousness of me or, preferably, the group. I think there is no point in worrying about that: it will be done more properly if we already have greater awareness, and not if not. We can only do things wholeheartedly, 'with all our might', if we do them for their own sake, not to gain something else. Greater awareness might be a result, it should not be an AIM. And I believe this is the spirit which Bohm et al. proposed for the Dialogue process. I have another quote from their 1991 "Proposal" which illustrates this:

" It is not concerned with deliberately trying to alter or change behaviour nor to get the participants to move toward a predetermined goal. Any such attempt would distort and obscure the processes that the Dialogue has set out to explore. Nevertheless, changes do occur because observed thought behaves differently from

unobserved thought. Dialogue can thus become an opportunity for thought and feeling to play freely in a continuously engaging movement."

I really think this point is crucial to the whole endeavour - as long as we continue to focus on what we want Dialogue to do for us (individually or as a group), it will never live up to our expectations. In the same way in which an artist, I imagine, will not produce any satisfying art if the aim is money, fame or prizes. And who will say Dialogue is not a form of art, of 'group art'? And what individual will / can judge whether it is done well?

You will agree that we cannot Dialogue in a Newsletter, since there is not the opportunity to have the interplay of question, answer and explanation, examining of assumptions etc. necessary. So that I assume that your invitation for a response to the idea of "other is what you really are" (on p.3 of issue 28) is an invitation to Dialogue on it at a future Meeting? (That, by the way, is another thing we could do in the Newsletter: sow seeds for Dialogue, raise topics which might be examined in meetings.) As you say, even if the idea seems absurd to some, that is no reason to kill the Dialogue, on the contrary! All that is needed is the ability and freedom to examine our assumptions and prejudices, for and against any idea.

As a general comment, I have wondered who actually reads what is written in the Newsletter? Some of the writings have been quite provocative, but there usually has not been much mention of them in the Meetings. That seems a shame, since much thought must go into people's contributions. Would it be a good idea to set aside some Meeting-time for a discussion or Dialogue about matters raised?

Erik Harting

Alan writes:

It is clear from the foregoing that I am not communicating the nature of my dissatisfaction with the dialogue process. I recently enrolled on the van den Heuvel run email Dialogue and a contribution from a Finnish participant showed me what I was trying to get at:

Date: Thursday, 18 Apr 1996

From: Matti Vaittinen
 Subject: Understanding What It's All About

Among other things that I found very good and illuminating, Don wrote:

Often, in our group, the one quoted (generally without attribution) is Krishnamurti. And here, I am also notorious for leaping in with objections. It's not that I object to K or his thinking, but to the insistence of some that we listen to and take for granted certain proposals that they are unwilling to see inquired into and tested in the dialogue.

So far the only person quoting K has been me (Matti)- I mean the time I've been 'present' in this 'room'.(the email dialogue) However, I take Don's comment not to be pointed at me because he didn't object to my observation that 'proprioception of thought' and 'choiceless awareness' really are trying to convey the same meaning. --Which leads me to suggest the following:

I remember talking to David quite casually at the beginning of the Gothenburg Seminar in 1988 and one of the things he mentioned to me was the year when he and Krishnamurti discussed for the first time. It was in 1961. I remember the year as it's when I was born. I mentioned it to David, and I think we both found some humour in the coincidence. Anyway, the fact remains that David's interest in what K was trying to say (these days people seem to use the word 'teachings' which I, however, find a contradictory term in the light of K's teaching (see what I mean?!), and yet, K himself didn't object the use of that word) - David's interest to dialogue with K lasted more than twenty years! From this I conclude that David felt K had an insight to convey and that he indeed tried very hard to 'get it'.

What do we do in Dialogue? We talk. Most often it could be called a 'discussion' but something more is involved. What is it? Empathy? A good will? Yes, I take them for granted in a dialogue. One isn't put down for being stupid, or believing in something that the rest don't take to be true. Another difficulty is,

how do we understand each other (or even ourselves!). Still, there's something more to dialogue. Let me ask one question: is this 'something more' a quality which is supposed to 'take place' as a result of good will, empathy and an attempt to understand the other person even if it requires the very strenuous job of leaving things 'in abeyance'. Is this 'something more' just a hypothesis or is it in fact a 'common' phenomenon between people who truly and deeply understand each other?

Let me put it differently: are we trying (if this were a face-to-face situation) something that has occurred many times before, or are we attempting something 'impossible' - something that hasn't occurred earlier in the history of human kind? I'm sure 'the flow of meaning' has taken place among a lot of people (including myself). It's rare, but it does happen. Therefore, the 'flow of meaning' can't be the answer to my question. It must be, then, 'proprioception of thought'. That's our 'goal' even though it can't be arrived at as a result of an effort. It comes if it comes. It is a hypothesis. If it emerges it'll be a new quality of the mind, but then again one could ask, whose mind? Mine or the group's?

Choiceless awareness or proprioception of thought, what do they mean (verbally)? The only way I can approach this question is through an example that David went over in seminars many times and that can be tested in real life almost every day. (But here I reverse the object.) Let's say I call somebody stupid. The other person becomes offended. The reaction varies according to the context of the situation (some people might punch you, some find a few four-letter-words to shout back, some become quiet) but I think the movement of the reaction is always the same. To be hurt. To want to hurt back, one way or the other. Krishnamurti often said: do not react. I find this very interesting. He didn't mean 'don't fight' but something much more subtle. He meant: 'even if you reacted verbally or physically to other person's outrageous statement about yourself see or observe the whole movement of your reaction.

In other words, something goes into abeyance. I think if one does this often enough the possibility

of suspension arises. Out of the blue someone calls me stupid but - instead of a blind surge of emotional reaction with which I identify myself - the whole reaction chain is immediately suspended.

So, all in all and summa summarum what I think dialogue is about is the following: it is an attempt to find out if choiceless awareness can arise in a group . To my understanding, what we do in a dialogue is a continuation of the dialogue that took place between David and Krishnamurti. What I'm saying is the opposite of what Don wrote above: we take for granted certain proposals and are WILLING to inquire and test the proposals in a dialogue. Dialogue does have a history.

FROM: Alan Mann, 100352,1663
TO: William van den Heuvel, Re: Copy of: Choiceless Awareness

Hello Conference

I reacted very positively to Matti latest on a number of counts. For me, the major aspect of Krishnamurti's teachings is the implicit teaching rather than the explicit. That is, the great monologues on love, fear, what is going on, etc., whilst interesting in themselves are secondary to what I see as his primary message which is to take as authority only what is revealed in the living moment, now. This strikes me as the essence of what we are calling dialogue and trying to come to grips with in our meetings and presumably in this email version of dialogue.

Matti concluded:

So, all in all and summa summarum what I think dialogue is about is the following: it is an attempt to find out if choiceless awareness can arise in a group .

I have never heard it expressed in these terms nor, in all my attempts to describe it, did I think of describing it in this way myself. But I think it is exactly right. Thank you Matti.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR INTELLECT - By Mishka Jambor

Ken Wilber has been, in his own words 'one of the New Age' designated 'intellectuals' His interesting self-disclosure (Wilber, 1995) is the starting point of my own meditation. My question is the same as his: 'what is the role of the intellect in the spiritual Journeying'? I will be answering it on the basis of my life experience.

Matti But let us start with Wilber's conclusions.

When the intellect is made servant (brought to serve the spiritual quest - M.J.), it is a wonderful friend, shining the brightest of lights on the darkest of realms, bringing warmth and clarity to all it touches. It is no accident that many of the greatest spiritual sages have been jhoni yogis - those who use the intellect to go beyond the intellect. Shankara, Aurobindo, Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, Schelling, Nagarguna, Plato . . .

It all seems promising, the key idea being that the intellect is used to go beyond the intellect. Let us ask for specifics: how is it done ? Wilber does not describe a general way or many different ways of using the intellect for spiritual purpose; he is only describing his own way, and only with respect to guiding others. But this, surely, is not the main way people can deploy their own intellectual abilities. But let us hear Wilber's method:

To use the mind to beat the mind, my writings therefore always have two parts: a strong criticism of the merely pre-rational, an attempt to get people up to rationality, and then an equally intense attack on rationality, in an attempt to open people to the trans-personal.

The only way Wilber describes the legitimate use of the intellect is in very general terms, which are hardly a guideline. Here is a sample:

. . .the intellect is a fast and furious path to enlightenment. The mind burns bright,

incinerating obstacles with an extraordinary efficiency.... it has been my good fortune to find that when the intellect is polished until it becomes radiant and shining, it is a staunch defender of a Truth and Beauty that reaches quite far beyond its own capacities, and in that reach serves his master more than faithfully.

The question remains open - how does one use the intellect? I will describe two of possibly many uses of the intellect for the spiritual end. I will preface my explanation with a certain picture of the state of affairs in the spiritual realm.

Despite the plethora of teachings, practices and researches into spirituality - from the various spiritual traditions and from independent researchers - the field is by no means well explored. The lack of overall synthesis of various viewpoints and philosophies is usually glossed over by practitioners by their tuning in to one specific set of teachings and practices and overlooking the discrepancies and inconsistencies between different traditions. For a basically non-intellectual practitioner that strategy may be a correct one. For a practitioner with an alive intellect, however, this situation is a challenge. How does it all fit together?

One would then work towards a synthesis - a pursuit that may take a lifetime. (The reason why most such endeavours were unsatisfactory must be the bias of the thinker hence a lack of impartiality and/or lack of patience with the material - attempting the synthesis prematurely, rather than allowing it to reveal itself.) This is precisely the type of work that Wilber is engaged with - one can see such grand synthesis emerging through his work, and Wilber's omission in mentioning it may just be a matter of modesty.

If it is correct that the body of spiritual knowledge (theoretical and practical) humanity possesses is incomplete, there may be other unknown as yet paths and practices one can discover. Jesus, Buddha, Ramana Maharshi and Krishnamurti taught their own brand of spiritual knowledge and practice - and there seems to be scope for other approaches. In fact many gurus and teachers (new religious movements!) do precisely that - teaching out of their own life

experience and special insights and revelations.

That brings me to the second way of spiritual use of the intellect. If there are yet unknown paths to enlightenment (or to higher levels of spiritual development), could they be first discovered intellectually, to be tested later with counterpart practices? I believe this is a real possibility. A spiritually oriented thinker may create models of deeper reality such that they are maximally consistent with a number of traditional teachings. Such models of spiritual reality may intimate new pathways for spiritual growth.

Further corresponding practice by the enquiring thinker may bring new data with which to test the model and possibly modify it. An interesting interplay of theorizing and practicing/testing may develop. Does this theory-and-practice-in-the-making not feel right in our scientific era? In traditional spiritualities theory was given, and sometimes viewed as sacrosanct, while the practitioner was only asked to assimilate it.

Here the situation is more demanding - both practice and further theory have to be progressively developed starting only from the initial model (which nonetheless comprizes a lot of what is already known in the realm of spirituality). I am guessing that this novel spiritual enquiry, both intellectual and practical, be best conducted collectively - within a group of daring and passionate fellow-seekers. (Is this high enough goal for our intellects to be striving for?) Ken Wilber "Mind and The Heart of Emptiness" Quest

Mishka

BOOKS

ENCHIRIDION TO THE TOTALITY - A MANUAL TO EXPLORATIONS BEYOND THE UNIVERSE, REASON AND DEATH by J Fortnum & R E Bollard

This is a remarkable book. I bought it on Carlo's recommendation after overcoming a strong resistance to the title. It is a difficult publication to come to grips with. I thought it repetitive, badly laid out and far too long. (Sound a bit like the NOWletter?) However, there is nothing that a good editor, spell-checker and proof reader

couldn't fix. in future runs.

So much for the superficial aspects, the content is another matter. There is a number of things which I recommend it to me:

It seems to be 'first hand' the result of the direct experience of its two authors.

It avoids supporting quotations from the authorities (gurus) in this field.

It resists any attempt to 'validate' its findings by pointing to similarities in the established religious traditions.

I have never found anything which comes so close to matching what I have found to be true. (That is, when I have put energy into finding out for myself instead of taking the easy course of reading & listening to others). Although, I hasten to add, I do not claim to have seen anywhere near as deeply or as clearly as the authors.

The proposal that the 'dynamic display' offers a route to clarity is one I find very intriguing.

It is a local product and appears to be made in Australia or Australasia. (Prophets in our own country.)

Here are a few, out of context observations, (*Direct quotations in italics*) which I have selected to whet your appetites. I also have a set of reading notes I jotted during my first reading if anyone would like a copy.

We are trapped in a framework of consensual reality which is conceptual and entrenched to the point that we are unable to see beyond it. Chapter 2 explains how we are locked into a dichotomy of observation, believing the observer to be separate from the observed. This is a fundamental aspect of our humanness. We can never become aware of the dichotomy as long as we are perceiving dichotomously. But when the split is absent, the observer and the observed are no longer separate and then nothing can be said about either.

This dichotomy has become so entrenched in our ways of thinking and perceiving, that when we attempt to discuss this fundamental error of dichotomy, or the alienation it produces, with those who do not recognise it, we have to communicate with them in terms of that dichotomy, or they would never understand us.

The term 'Reality Aligning' is used to describe the various mind directing influences which maintain the dichotomy - books, films, TV, and, I imagine, the general acceptance of the dichotomous world view in daily activity and relationship. We see ourselves 'as living in' rather than 'living as' the universe.

Chapter 6 deals with the importance of seeking out or creating an environment which allows the mind to go free; the wilderness experience and the transcendence of boredom.

P38 You must be ready to accept that in the end, if you succeed in destroying your old inhibiting reality, you may be utterly alone. So very few succeed in this venture that you may never meet another travelling in your direction. Yet feelings of loneliness should not arise in you, for there is no separate entity that is you.

P40 You should also be beware of withdrawing from the wilderness when boredom sets in, it is only after this boredom has been defeated by inaction that the mending process starts.

(Editor's underlining - a sign of enthusiastic endorsement)

The belief that our awareness and that of which it is aware are separate is the cause of feelings of alienation from the perceived outside world or universe. This alienation is the root of dissatisfactions that become so completely integrated into our lives that we cannot accept our alienation. Attention is directed not to the root of the problem but to changing the world for the better.

p47 To progress along the way pointed to in this book, the reader should be willing to accept that all our present beliefs and ideas about the meaning or purpose of life, might be erroneous because the initial basis from which those beliefs and ideas originated were also, most probably, erroneous.

We become so encumbered with the accumulated products of our past dualistic actions that we submerge in the dualistic outlook. This makes any periods of spontaneous non-duality very rare as such experiences are smothered by the dualistic reality manifesting as the need 'to do'. Goes on to say that by practising harmlessness and some concentration techniques mentioned later in the book, it may be possible to come into Universal Harmony by means of a process described as Totality mergance.

Chapter 15*the baseline is suffering, we have to work at being happy.* P90 *The one thing we all have in common, is this ability, in our own way, to suffer. So is there honestly any reason why we should not take this potential to suffer as a basis of existence, in order to understand that existence?*

Chapter 16 The state of ignorance is self perpetuating as we reproduce and rear our offspring in ways which ensure they are aligned to our reality. P95... *we should try to outline to our young the limits of our ignorance, not the wonders of our present state of knowledge..*

People seem unable to apply the lessons of life (this is the editor's own favourite perplexity) *"They are unable to integrate the deeper philosophical lessons into their lives because of their reality-value momentum."* and when we do see it.. (P99) *So valid is the new outlook of non-duality...It seems so straightforward, one cannot believe one ever saw it as a dichotomy. etc.*

The authors use 'Mind' to mean there is mind only and nothing else. This leads to the use of the term 'mind only' to describe 'what is'.

P166 *Our ignorance is not an affliction, it is the core of our Humanity, it is what we are.*

Chapter 30 deals with the Mind Only Attitude and Time, P167 *After all, what is the past? When is the future? What is a memory? Are they not all products of the now?* P174 *There is no denying the power and attraction this illusion of time has over us.....Time does indeed appear to exist and yet it has no substance, this is the stuff of all great mysteries and phantoms.*

P179 *It is not possible for this pathway to offer anything solid to believe in and no socio-cultic construction of reality is favoured above any other. The suffering and Totality spoken of here, are beyond all socio-cultic realities as they are our basic human potentials. This work can only point the way as best it can, through the composers acknowledged present conscious and unconscious socio-cultic filters. They cannot define the way absolutely for you and your circumstances.*

Chapter 34 deals with a recommended meditation technique. The value for me was the notion described as the 'absorbance point'. I imagine this to be analogous to the transition which occurs when one of those incomprehensible computer generated patterns becomes a three dimensional image, same data new interpretation.

'The Peacocks Tail' is a term used to describe the progression of intensity in the display of the dynamic aspect. When the display of the dynamic aspect is focusing or streaming to a point, it is called the peacock's tail. There isn't room to include the authors description of the process here. However, it is of particular interest to me as I think it is what I have always referred to as the 'unconscious parade'. They go further to suggest that the cultivation of the capacity to access this aspect of ourselves is the route to the Totality. The only other extensive references I have found to this phenomenon are in the writings of Wilson Van Dusen and I have often wondered what lies behind this marvellous activity.

The book is set out in a workbook format in four sections. Every section has a 'Prelude' and a 'Conclusion' and these opening and closing 'statements' bracket chapters which carry the detailed discussion and footnotes. As a first approach I suggest the interested reader might read the preludes and conclusions to get an overall feel before diving into the detail. If I had done this myself, my introductory comments to this note might have been kinder.

This is a far more serious work than the Celestine Prophecy and, for that reason and because it is a work book not an entertainment, it will probably be largely ignored.

Alan Mann