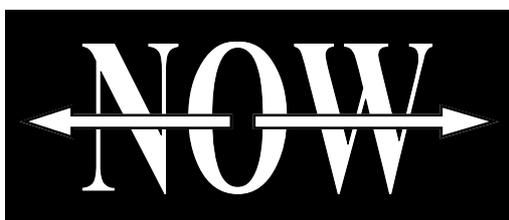


Greville Street
 Meetings
 15 June 97
 20 July 97



Issue No. 35
 June 97

**.....For there is a disease in him who
 despiseth present mercies, which till it be cured,
 he can never be happy..... Traherne**

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Editor's Note

This issue continues the Dialogue initiated at the December meeting on the right response to poverty and suffering which continued with the letter from Mishka in March and now, in this issue, with two letters from the UK, one from our own Phil Lanzon, lately returned from Russia, and another from Paul Swann, a contributor to the email Dialogue. I have put together a few notes on the 'Gathering' at Springbrook and reprinted an extremely readable and refreshingly 'no nonsense' article by John Wren-Lewis describing his condition and what it points to.

In addition to the regular Dialogue meetings which are always listed on the back page, there are two weekend workshops coming up which are described at the bottom of the back page of this issue. One at Hyam's Beach this month and one at Springwood the first weekend in August.

The NOWletter is an occasional paper which appears whenever there is sufficient material from readers and other sources to justify a mailing. (Between 8 & 12 issues every year) It started in 1992 as a spin-off from the 1991 visit of Douglas Harding and is concerned primarily with the question of waking up to what we really are. It is also designed as an extension to the dialogue meetings and as a link with those unable to attend in person.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The additional item on your address label shows whether your subscription is paid up for the current period and the month in which it is due to expire, i.e., 'May 98'. If your subscription has already expired you will see 'Expired'. (Correct me if I'm wrong as the system has just been upgraded.- also please do not hesitate to tell me to stop sending if you have had enough. If the subscription remains 'Expired' for two issues I assume the ex subscriber does not want to continue and will delete from the mailing list. The annual subscription is \$10.

Letter from Phil Lanson

(Written after reading Mishka's letter in the February issue on what is the right response to poverty and suffering. Ed)

Hi Alan & Margot

Thanks for the March newsletter, hope all are well
I read Mishka's letter and decided to put my oar in. I only hope I am not too far out in my estimation but she seems to be a little over the top in respect of expending energy in our already suffering mankind when that valuable and hard earned energy could be better utilised by concentrating on educating the children from the earliest stages all over the world thus ensuring these great 'divides' between our species don't happen again.

I've just spent five weeks working across Russia and clearly there is no way ordinary people of this country can ever expect to overthrow the Mafia - they are the ultimate tyrant! As things are, there will never be a change in a million generations.

Education at the earliest level is the only way to create a foundation whereby a new generation will grow up, flourish and flower amidst the compost within this huge garden we live in. What have we taught our children? We must try and think on this.

Communication with the poor is essential for our understanding of situations but if this does not go hand in hand with education then it is all useless - we will simply be wasting enormous energy to no avail.

Phil Lanson

Meditation, Social Action & Dialogue

(This is a contribution to the Dialogue email conference by Paul Swann which provides an interesting angle on the endless dialogue about what Dialogue is all about - Ed)

Well, I had a couple of what were probably "absolute necessities" when I left the London group back in 1994. One concerned meditation and the other was about social action. Actually the main reason why I left was that I found dialogue to be excessively mentally stimulating...it left me with a very uncomfortable physical/mental sensation of being "stuck in my head". As I was in the final year of my degree I felt that I needed to concentrate on my studies, otherwise I might have blown it. I just about scraped through!

Although I was aware that group dialogue is in itself a radical political activity, I felt a strong pull towards getting involved in something more "practical". David Bohm expressed the view that the global crisis is so urgent that we need to tackle the social/environmental problems that we're faced with as best we can, otherwise we may not have a planet left on which to dialogue. I felt in agreement with this and eventually got involved with Amnesty International. I've been (hyper)active at local, regional and national levels for the past couple of years, during which I inevitably encountered plenty of harrowing information about human

rights violations. But a few months back I stumbled across some information that really shocked me, and which made me realise how vital it is that we get to grips with the root causes. Hence my resurgence of interest in Dialogue.

On the subject of meditation, I'm only now beginning to understand what it really is. I'll copy below some thoughts on "true meditation" that I recently wrote to a friend. In the course of writing it I realised that, in a sense, dialogue is a form of "true" group meditation. The opening quotation is from "Bare-Bones Meditation" by Joan Tollifson, a staff member at the Springwater Centre for Meditative Inquiry in Rochester, NY. "I am coming to see that true meditation is a crucial part of social-changework, perhaps the most radical part of all since it gets to the root of all the problems. I say this not in order to discourage activism of other sorts, but only to suggest the possibility that meditation, in and of itself, is action."

I'd like to elaborate on what "true meditation" might be.

I've practised and taught various forms of meditation over the past 26 years, and there's a huge catalogue of methods and techniques on the market. Most of them can be categorised as concentration rather than meditation, ie they develop the mind, strengthen the ego, and are helpful and perhaps necessary in the early stages of personal development. Meditation, on the other hand, is concerned more with inquiring into the nature of the mind en route to letting go of the ego or self in the emptiness/void/silence (depending on who you listen to). Buddhist meditation goes down this path, but even Zen Buddhist meditation retains a concern with technique.

Krishnamurti, Vimala Thakar, Toni Packer and others teach that there's no technique for the transformation of consciousness because technique implies that transformation is something that the mind or ego can acquire and which can therefore be striven for. Such striving and acquiring are recognised as part of the movement of thought which, although it has its place, cannot enter into the dimension of silence. In silence, which is the cessation of thought, lies the unconditioned energy, transformed consciousness, or intelligence which these teachers try to describe.

In this context, "true" meditation might be described as an inquiry into the nature of mind and the processes of thought. The inquiry is entered into without technique, but with awareness of the movement of thought from moment to moment...whether one is sitting in meditation, or doing the dishes, or typing a letter. Thought is simply observed without judgement, and from the observation comes an understanding of how the mind works, and of how thought has a momentum of its own, and of how our conflicts arise, and of how we're messing up the planet.

Paul Swann

The inquiry reveals that the root causes of our problems lie in the fragmentary nature of thought. Right from the word go we're taught to think mechanistically, breaking things

The Work of this Moment Gathering - 3 - 5 May

I was a bit too involved in one of the workshops and in the operating side of things to give a broad coverage of all that went on at Spingbrook. However, I had the job of summarising the responses to a questionnaire we handed out at the end in an attempt to get some feedback for future events so I am in quite a good position to provide a summary of the fun and games.

We had a wider range of activities than usual. The 'activities' included talks and workshops covering Gestalt, Sacred Sound, Awareness, Healthy Body-Mind, Krishnamurti videos, Headlessness, Yoga, Tai Chi and Dialogue. Dialogue featured more prominently than on previous occasions and we decided to try to use Dialogue as the basis of all the open, participative sessions as well as the sessions specified as Dialogue..

The response to this higher profile for Dialogue was very positive and I imagine it will continue to be the operating system. The older hands will argue that what I am calling Dialogue has always been the basis of K related activities. This is so but, in my view, up to now it has been an implicit rather than as now an explicit approach.

There was a lot of support for 'burning issue' dialogue where the meeting tackles an issue which one or more feel strongly about. This is something I am keen to explore although there is also enthusiastic support for the 'absolutely no agenda' viewpoint.

The weekend at Springbrook reinforced a view I have developed as editor of this newsletter that everybody who has an interest in this enquiry has a unique response to the challenge of the enquiry. Thus, all the activities listed above are primarily a personal response to what K and other spiritual leaders have to say. This diversity strikes me as both inevitable and healthy. However, I am also aware how easy it is to assume that 'my' approach is the 'right' or 'only' approach. We have had some examples of this in the NOWletter and whilst I picked up a few signs at Springbrook there seemed to be less at this gathering than usual.

There is a feeling that we should have two annual gatherings, one in Springbrook and another in the Blue Mountains. We are working on this suggestion. There is also the possibility of quarterly weekends. Terry O'Brien is already running regular weekends at Hyams Beach and Howard Adams is planning quarterly weekend groups at Springwood in the Blue Mountains.

When we pick a theme for a gathering, in this case, 'The Work of this Moment' then it behoves us to come up with some sort of a response to what this might be or at least to what it is pointing. We had an open session at which we talked about what we all thought it might be. All the people who led sessions or workshops are doubtless demonstrating what they believe to be the work of this moment. In my case I am deeply interested in 'the trance

of ordinary life' and why it persists. Thus, my angle is to do with 'seeing'. I feel that Hui Neng was spot on when he said that 'the purpose of life is to see'. We pinched the title for the gathering from Toni Packer so I will let her have the last word:

I can't see any way of working together except with what comes up from moment to moment. Working with clients or friends seeking help, I would put the highest priority on listening and looking together openly, and, if the occasion arises, asking questions in a simple way, without knowing or searching for immediate answers or solutions-letting feelings, emotions, questions or comments arise and unfold in that quiet listening-space of not knowing. Isn't the problem of our moment-to-moment living our central spiritual question?

This is also my last word and I am not suggesting this represents a consensus view. For those of you too far away to join in the annual Springbrook festivities, watch this space for details of the Blue Mountains gatherings.

Alan Mann

The Dazzling Dark

This article first appeared in the magazine 'Gnosis' It

This message appeared on the Dialogue email conference with the claim that it is the record of an actual radio conversation released by the Chief of Naval Operations, 10/10/95:

1:Please divert your course 15 degrees North to avoid a collision.

2:Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees South to avoid a collision.

1:This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

2:No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.

1:THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER ENTERPRISE, WE ARE A LARGE WARSHIP OF THE US NAVY. DIVERT YOUR COURSE NOW!

2:This is a lighthouse. Your call.

It may well be apocryphal but it is a neat parable about the danger of assumptions.

opens with an introduction by the editor of the magazine. It is reprinted here by permission of the author.

John's article starts in the next column.

In our last feature of this issue of What is Enlightenment?, we are pleased to present the vivid and thoughtful account of a former spiritual cynic's experience of being suddenly and unexpectedly catapulted into an altered state of consciousness. Fascinating as a unique expression of transcendent realisation, John Wren-Lewis's description of his powerful spiritual experience is deeply moving and profoundly inspiring. His perspective is unique, he claims, not only because his awakening was thrust upon him without him seeking for it, but also because, for that very reason, he questions many commonly held beliefs about the nature of spiritual awakening.

While his experience is undoubtedly genuine, as his description of it makes very clear, many of his conclusions about the nature and meaning of the whole event of spiritual transformation express the familiar view that beyond the ultimate fact of being itself, it is dangerous to draw conclusions about the meaning of being itself. We look forward to future dialogue with him to question some of his conclusions in the hope of bringing light to this most challenging area of religious thought, i.e., is there meaning and significance to life itself and to consciousness being aware of itself, or is the fact of life and consciousness meaningless beyond the fact that it simply is?

*John Wren-Lewis is a man whose fearless and refreshingly irreverent stance makes him willing to question many ideas that for too long many would not dare to question. Andrew Cohen first heard of John Wren-Lewis when he received a letter from him in 1991 describing his experience and asking advice. In response, Andrew called him and they had a lively exchange. In March 1995 when Andrew Cohen was visiting Sydney, Australia, where John Wren-Lewis lives, they had several public and private meetings together. John Wren-Lewis is an awakened man who is unusual because, in spite of having many strong opinions based on a lifetime of intelligent exploration, he remains open-minded and ever-curious. Before his experience occurred, John Wren-Lewis, mathematical physicist and humanist psychologist, was a primary exponent of the Death of God movement of the 1960s. He has published extensively and held several professorial appointments in the United States and the United Kingdom. He is currently hard at work finishing *The 9:15 to Nirvana*, a book that further elaborates on the subject of this article.*

**A Near-Death Experience Opens the Door to a permanent transformation -
by John Wren-Lewis**

Some, if we believe what they tell us, are born with God consciousness. Some struggle to achieve it by strenuous

spiritual practice, though by all accounts the success rate isn't (and never has been) encouraging. I had God consciousness thrust upon me in 1983, my sixtieth year, without working for it, desiring it, or even believing in it, and this has understandably given me a somewhat unusual perspective on the whole matter. In particular, I wonder if discipline isn't altogether counterproductive in this context and the idea of spiritual growth totally mistaken. Before I had my experience, I was a Freud-style sceptic about all things mystical. I wouldn't have called myself an atheist or materialist; in fact I'd published extensively on the need for a religious world view appropriate to a humanity that has come of age in the scientific and technological area.(1) But I emphasised that such a faith would have to be essentially positivistic, focused on the human potential for creative change, which I believed could become as effective in the social realm as it has been in the physical realm. I even believed it possible that the creative human personality might eventually discover technologies for transcending mortality, but I saw mysticism as a neurotic escape into fantasy, due to failure of nerve in the creative struggle.(2) What happened in 1983 could be classified technically as a near-death experience (NDE), though it lacked any of the dramatic visionary features that tend to dominate both journalistic and scholarly NDE accounts.(3) As I lay in a hospital bed in Thailand, after eating a poisoned candy given me by a would-be thief on a long-distance bus, there were some hours when the medical staff thought I'd gone beyond recall. But I had no out-of-body vision of what was going on, no review of my life, no passage down a dark tunnel to a heavenly light or landscape, and no encounter with celestial beings or deceased relatives telling me to go back because my work on earth was not yet done. And although I'd lost all fear of death when eventually resuscitated, this had (and has) nothing to do with believing I have an immortal soul that will survive death.

On the contrary, it has everything to do with a dimension of aliveness here and now which makes the notion of separate survival a very secondary matter, in this world or any other. In fact it makes each present instant so utterly satisfying that even the success or failure of creative activity becomes relatively unimportant. In other words, I've been liberated from what William Blake called obsession with futurity, which, until it happened, I used to consider a psychological impossibility. And to my continual astonishment, for ten years now this liberation has made the conduct of practical life more rather than less efficient, precisely because time consciousness isn't overshadowed by anxious thought for the morrow. I didn't even notice the change straightaway. My mind was too busy catching up on why I was in a hospital at night, with a policeman sitting at the foot of the bed, when the last thing I could remember was feeling drowsy on the bus in the early morning and settling down for a comfortable snooze on what was scheduled to be a seven-hour journey across the jungle-covered mountains. I'd suspected nothing, because the donor of the candy a charming and well-dressed young man who'd been very helpful with our

luggage had left the bus some miles back. With hindsight, I guess he decided that retreat was the order of the day when he saw that my partner, dream psychologist Dr. Ann Faraday,⁽⁴⁾ wasn't eating the candy he'd given her. (Ann's heroic rescue, when I started turning blue and the bus driver insisted I was just drunk, is quite a story in its own right, but not the point here.)⁽⁵⁾ The fact that I'd undergone a radical consciousness shift began to become apparent only after everyone had settled down for the night and I was left awake, feeling as if I'd had enough sleep to last a lifetime. By stages I became aware that when I'd awakened a few hours earlier, it hadn't been from a state of ordinary unconsciousness at all. It was as if I'd emerged freshly made (complete with all the memories that constitute my personal identity) from a vast blackness that was somehow radiant, a kind of infinitely concentrated aliveness or pure consciousness that had no separation within it, and therefore no space or time.

There was absolutely no sense of personal continuity. In fact the sense of a stop in time was so absolute that I'm now convinced I really did die, if only for a few seconds or fractions of a second, and was literally resurrected by the medical team, though there were no brain-wave monitors to provide objective confirmation. And if my conviction is correct, it actually counts against rather than for the claim so often made by near-death researchers that personal consciousness can exist apart from the brain. My impression is that my personal consciousness was actually snuffed out (the root meaning, according to some scholars, of the word nirvana) and then recreated by a kind of focusing-down from the infinite eternity of that radiant dark pure consciousness. An old nursery rhyme conveys it better than any high philosophy:

Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of Everywhere into here.

Moreover that wonderful eternal life of everywhere was still there, right behind my eyes or more accurately, at the back of my head continually recreating my whole personal body-mind consciousness afresh, instant by instant, now! and now! and now! That's no mere metaphor for a vague sensation; it was so palpably real that I put my hand up to probe the back of my skull, half wondering if the doctors had sawn part of it away to open my head to infinity. Yet it wasn't in the least a feeling of being damaged; it was more like having had a cataract taken off my brain, letting me experience the world and myself properly for the first time for that lovely dark radiance seemed to reveal the essence of everything as holy. I felt like exclaiming, 'Of course! That's absolutely right!' and applauding every single thing with tears of gratitude not just the now sleeping Ann and the small jar of flowers the nurse had placed by the bedside, but also the ominous stains on the bed sheets, the ancient paint peeling off the walls, the far from hygienic smell of the toilet, the coughs and groans of other patients, and even the traumatised condition of my body. From the recesses of my memory emerged that statement at the beginning of the book of Genesis about God observing everything he

had made and finding it very good. In the past I'd treated these words as mere romantic poetry, referring only to conventionally grand things like sunsets and conveniently ignoring what ordinary human consciousness call silliness or ugliness. Now all the judgments of goodness or badness which the human mind necessarily has to make in its activities along the line of time were contextualized in the perspective of that other dimension I can only call eternity, which loves all the productions of time regardless.

It was mind-blowing even then, when I was taking for granted that this had to be a jumbo-sized mystical experience visited on me, of all people, as a kind of cosmic joke, from which I must quite soon return to normal. I envisaged making public recantation of my anti-mystical views and joining the formerly despised ranks of spiritual seekers. Because my sceptical bias had been recreated along with the rest of my memories, I toyed with the possibility that I might simply be suffering some after effect of the poison, which the doctors had diagnosed as probably being a heavy dose of morphine laced with cocaine. I didn't really believe this, however, because there was no trace of the trippy feeling that was always present when I took part in a long series of officially sponsored experiments with high-dosage psychedelics back in the late 1960s. Later, when the eternity consciousness continued into the following days, weeks, months, and years, any ordinary kind of drug explanation was obviously ruled out. Moreover my bewilderment was intensified as I discovered how all kinds of 'negative' human experiences became marvels of creation when experienced by the Dazzling Dark. To convey even a fraction of what life is like with eternity consciousness would take a whole book and I'm currently in the last stages of writing one. It must suffice here to illustrate two features that have most impressed me and others who know me, notably Ann. First, if there were a section in the Guinness Book of Records for cowardice about physical pain, I would be sure of a place there. But with eternity consciousness, pain becomes simply a warning signal which, once heeded (irrespective of whether a physical remedy is available), becomes simply an interesting sensation, another of nature's wonders. The Buddha's distinction between pain and suffering, which I used to think was equivocation, is now a common experience for me. And second, my erstwhile spectacular dream life has been replaced, on most nights, by a state which I can only call conscious sleep, where I'm fully asleep yet distantly aware of lying in bed. It is as if the Dark has withdrawn its game of John Wren-Lewis to a nonactive level where the satisfaction of simply being is totally unrelated to doing.⁽⁶⁾ The main point I want to make here, however, is that perhaps the most extraordinary feature of eternity consciousness is that it doesn't feel extraordinary at all. It feels quintessentially natural that personal consciousness should be aware of its own Ground, while my first fifty-nine years of so-called 'normal' consciousness, in ignorance of that Ground, now seem like a kind of waking dream. It was as if I'd been entranced from birth into a collective nightmare of

separate individuals struggling in an alien universe for survival, satisfaction and significance.

Even so, there have been plenty of problems in adjusting to awakened life, because the rest of the world is still taking the separation state for granted, and my own 'resurrected' mind still contains programs based on the assumptions of that state. So in the early days I made every effort to assume the role of spiritual seeker in the hope of finding help. It came as a real disappointment to find that no one I consulted, either in person or through books, had a clue, because ancient traditions and modern movements alike take for granted that the kind of eternity consciousness I'm living in is the preserve of spiritual Olympians, the mystical equivalent of Nobel laureates.

Fortunately the mystical state seems to have a growth pattern of its own which is gradually enabling me to deal with the adjustment problems and a fascinating process it is. In the meantime, however, I'm very concerned that all the seekers I come across accept as a law of the spiritual universe that they have to be content with years perhaps many reincarnational lifetimes of hopeful travelling, rewarded at best with what T.S. Eliot called 'hints and guesses' (7) of the eternity-conscious state, whereas I see that state as the natural human birthright.

My intensive investigations in this area over the past decade have left me in no doubt that proponents of the so-called Perennial Philosophy are correct in identifying a common 'deep structure' of experience underlying the widely different cultural expressions of mystics in all traditions. Nonetheless I find no evidence whatever for the often-made claim that these traditions contain disciplines for attaining God consciousness that have been empirically tested and verified.(8) On the contrary, the assumption that God consciousness is a high and special state seems like the perfect defence mechanism for not asking whether spiritual paths are really leading there at all. Yet this is a very pertinent question, since many mystics whose utterances most clearly resonate as coming from life in the eternity-state have asserted that their awakening was 'an act of grace' (or words to that effect) rather than a reward for effort on their part.

Indeed the more I investigate, the more convinced I become that iconoclastic mystics like Blake and Jiddu Krishnamurti(9) were right in asserting that the very idea of a spiritual path is necessarily self-defeating, because it does the one thing that has to be undone if there is to be awakening to eternity: it concentrates attention firmly on 'futura'. Paths and disciplines make gnosis a goal, when in fact it is already the ground of all knowing, including 'sinful' time-bound knowing. To me now, systems of spirituality seem like analogues of those dreams which prevent waking up (for example, to wet a thirsty throat or relieve the bladder) by creating a never-ending nocturnal drama of moving towards the desired goal, encountering and overcoming obstacle after obstacle along the way, but never actually arriving.

In other words, I've begun to realise that my former

scepticism wasn't all bad. I think now that I was like the ignorant peasant boy in Hans Christian Andersen's famous story who simply wouldn't go along with the courtiers wishful thinking about the emperor's glory in his new clothes. My mistake was to put down the impulse that causes spiritual seekers to want a greater glory than ordinary life affords and makes them hope it's there in the great traditions, even when they have no experiential evidence of it. Or to switch to an even older fable, I decided that heavenly grapes must be delusory when I could see that none of the ladders people were climbing in pursuit of them ever reached the goal. Now I not only understand the urge to find something altogether beyond the shallow satisfactions and the blood, sweat, toil, and tears of this petty pace, but I know from first hand experience that the 'joy beyond joy' is greater than the wildest imaginations of a consciousness bogged down in time. But I can also see that the very impulse to seek the joy of eternity is a Catch-22, because seeking itself implies a preoccupation with time, which is precisely what drives eternity out of awareness. Even disciplines designed to prise attention away from doing are simply another form of doing, which is why they at best yield only occasional glimpses of the eternal Ground of consciousness in Being.

So what to do? One thing I learned in my former profession of science was that the right kind of lateral thinking can often bring liberation from Catch-22 situations, provided the Catch-22 is faced in its full starkness, without evasions in the form of metaphysical speculations beyond experience. This is the exploration to which my life is now dedicated. It's a search project in which anyone who's interested can join, because the very fact of being interested means that somewhere at the back of your head you are already as aware of the Ground of consciousness as I am. So rather than take up my little remaining space with any of my own tentative conclusions, I'll end with a couple of cautionary hints. First, beware of philosophies that put spiritual concerns into a framework of growth or evolution, which I believe are the great modern idols. Both are important phenomena of eternity's time theatre, but as paradigms they're old hat, hangovers from the age of empire-building and the work ethic. We should know better today, when astronomers have shown that the kind of planetary destruction that was once imagined as a possible divine judgment could in fact be brought about at any time by the perfectly natural wanderings of a stray asteroid. The 'I want it now' attitude, so often deplored by spiritual pundits as a twentieth-century sin, is in my view a very healthy sign that we are beginning to be disillusioned with time-entrapment. A truly mystical paradigm has to be post-evolutionary, a paradigm of lila, divine play for its own sake, where any purposes along the line of time, great or small, are subordinate to the divine satisfaction that is always present in each eternal instant. Mystical gnosis is knowing the instant-by-instant delight of Infinite Aliveness in all manifestation, irrespective of whether, from the purely human standpoint, the manifestation is creative or destructive, growing or withering, evolving

towards some noetic Omega or fading out.

My second warning is to mind your language, for the words we use are often hooks that catch us into time entrapment. For example, when we use the term 'self' with a small 's' to describe individual personhood, and 'Self' with a capital 'S' for the fullness of God consciousness, the notion of the one gradually expanding into the other becomes almost inescapable, again concentrating attention along the time line. Mystical liberation, by contrast, is the sudden discovery that even the meanest self is already a focus of the Infinite Aliveness that is beyond any kind of selfhood. Again, when the word 'home' is used to describe eternity, there is an almost irresistible temptation to think of life as a journey of return, whereas mystical awakening for me has been like Dorothy's in *The Wizard of Oz*: the realisation that I never really left home and never could. Here too T.S. Eliot has the word for it: 'Home is where one starts from.'⁽¹⁰⁾ Finite life is a continual instant-by-instant voyaging out from the 'eternal Home' into the time process to discover new 'productions of time' for eternity to love as they arise and pass away.

Against this background, the main positive advice I would give to spiritual seekers is to experiment with any practice or idea that seems interesting which is what the Buddha urged along time ago, though not too many of his followers have ever taken that part of his teaching seriously. Ancient traditions and modern movements alike may be very valuable as databases for new adventures, but to treat them as authorities to be obeyed is not only 'unscientific' but seems actually to go against the grain of the divine lila itself, since novelty is apparently the name of the time game. I suspect gnosis comes as 'grace' because there are as many different forms of it as there are people. Yet because we're all in this together, sharing experience is integral to its fullness. Whatever experiments you make, share your failures, your hints and guesses, and your awakening too if it happens, with warts-and-all honesty, because 'everything that lives is holy.'

John Wren-Lewis

NOTES

1. See for example my book *What Shall We Tell the Children?* (London: Constable, 1971) and the quotations from my earlier writings in J.A.T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963), the foundation work of the 'Death of God' movement in the mid-1960s.
2. See especially my article 'Love is Coming-of-Age' in C. Rycroft, ed., *Psychoanalysis Observed* (Baltimore, Md. Penguin, 1968).
3. The best overview of this subject is still C. Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: The Near Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
There is now also a *Journal of Near-Death Studies* published quarterly by the Human Sciences Press in New York.
4. See Ann Faraday, *Dream Power* (New York: Berkeley, 1973) and *The Dream Game* (New York: Harper & Row,

1976/1990).

5. A fuller version of the story is told in my article 'The Darkness of God: A Personal Report on Consciousness Transformation through Close Encounter with Death' in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 28, no. 2 (1988), pp.105-121, and in my forthcoming book *The 9:15 to Nirvana*. At the time of this incident, we were on holiday from fieldwork in the Malaysian jungle which led to exposure of the 'Senoi Dream Tribe' legend as a fraud. See Ann Faraday and John Wren-Lewis, 'The Selling of the Senoi' in *Lucidity Letter*, vol. 3, no. 1, (1984), pp. 1-2.
6. For further details, see my article 'Dream Lucidity and Near-Death Experience: A Personal Report' in *Lucidity Letter*, vol. 4, no. 2, (1986), pp. 4-12.
7. See T.S. Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages,' 5, in *Four Quartets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1944/1959). As an example, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (London: Sheldon Press, 1974) relates Merton's discussion with a very high Tibetan meditation master in which they both admitted to each other that breakthrough into 'direct realization' still eluded them after thirty years of assiduous practice. A high Tibetan lama once told me he expected to spend many more reincarnations before reaching a state of continuing 'eternity consciousness'.
8. See for example Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1944) and Ken Wilber, *The Atman Project* (Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 1980).
9. For notes on Krishnamurti in this respect, with particular reference to recent reports of his alleged affair with a married woman disciple, see my article 'Death Knell of the Guru System?: Perfectionism vs. Enlightenment' in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 34, no. 2 (1994), pp. 46-61.
10. T.S. Eliot, 'East Coker,' 5, in *Four Quartets*.

The Pearl in the mouth of a Swine

Our perennial burning question has popped up again. 'The pearl in the mouth of the swine is still a pearl' - this quotation or, more likely, misquotation is frequently offered to explain why the misbehaviour of spiritual teachers should not be allowed to detract from their teaching.

I know it is not a rational response but I have never agreed with this. I am hoping to initiate a Dialogue which might open me to the opposite and majority position.

John Wren-Lewis recently sent me an article by Ken Wilber in which Wilber attempts an apology for and explanation of the extraordinary behaviour of Da Free John. (He now calls himself Adi Da. Are we expected to interpret the adoption of these crackpot titles as evidence of enlightenment?) In my case, the argument is most frequently heard in defence of Krishnamurti. Some of us associated with Krishnamurti Australia were recently warned of the danger of looking at the man rather than his teachings.

The Krishnamurti teachings made a big impression on me. This is why I am still involved in Krishnamurti activities but I don't understand how we can separate the teacher from the teachings. To do so is surely to put the word before the thing; to give priority to the concept, as expressed by the teacher, rather than the 'seeing-acting' exemplified by the life of the teacher. To do otherwise is to deny the message of Krishnamurti's teaching if not the teaching of others.

I hold the view that the the most effective teaching lies in the action of a teacher and if a teacher's actions are not in harmony with the teaching then the teaching is either 'second hand' or false.

In Wilber's article he points out that 'even if Einstein was a complete psychotic, E still equals mc2.' Well, that is a strong argument but I find it less than convincing because of Wilber's assumption that the study of physics and the study of the wholeness of life are directly comparable. My position is that if there is a true understanding of the 'wholeness of life', enlightenment if you prefer, then it is reflected in the individual concerned. It seems unlikely if not impossible that such a person will behave like a complete bastard to fellow manifestations of the 'unnameable'.

What is this freedom they are talking about? Judging by their behaviour, it not a matter of being free from the whims of ego.

I have now revealed my assumption of a moral dimension to all this and that brings up to the second major objection to my point of view. 'The 'Unnameable' is beyond right and wrong, good and bad. To expect the great spiritual minds to conform to Alan's petty moral concepts just goes to show how far off the mark he is'. I will look at that one

if a Dialogue develops around this issue.

Chaucer had a specification for what we two consider to be a REAL TEACHER

An excerpt from **THE PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES**, from the 1997, Margot Mann translation.

There was a priest of a country parish who was a good man of religion and although poor, he was rich in good thoughts and works.

He was a clerk, an educated man who used to preach Christ's true gospel and devoutly teach his parishioners.

He was benign and hard-working, and patient in adversity: this was proved many times.

He was very unwilling to excommunicate those who did not pay their tithes: it is certain he would rather give his poor parishioners some of his own money and belongings.

[The Easter offering was presented to the priest.]

He knew how to be content with a modest sufficiency.

His parish was extensive with houses far apart but he did not neglect to visit the most distant parishioners, rich and poor alike, in sickness or misfortune, whatever the weather.

He went on foot, carrying a staff. [cf. Christ's apostles.]

He set a noble example to his flock: first he did charitable deeds and after that, he taught. He got those words from the gospel [Matt. v.19: 'Whoso shall do and teach the commandments of Christ, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven] and he added the following figure of speech: if gold rusts, what shall iron do? In other words, if the priest cannot resist temptation, how should his flock do better?

For if someone we trust, like a priest, is evil, it is not surprising if a layman, usually not a learned person, becomes morally corrupt.

And shame it is, if a priest take note, a defiled shepherd and a clean sheep.

A priest should set a good example by his purity and show his flock how to live. He did not leave his parish in the charge of a curate and let his sheep become stuck fast in the mud while he ran to London to St. Paul's to seek a chantry [where a priest was paid to sing mass daily for the repose of a rich man's soul], nor was he retained as a chaplain to a brotherhood or guild, but he remained at home and looked after his flock conscientiously, so that the wolf did not cause damage. He was a shepherd, not a hireling. [This is a reference to John x.12: 'He that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth.']

And although he was holy and virtuous, he was not scornful of sinful man, and was neither arrogant nor haughty in his speech, but discreet and benign in his teaching, leading folk to heaven by honesty of life.

His task was to set a good example, unless it were an obstinate person, whether of high or low rank, when he would immediately rebuke him sharply.

I believe there was nowhere a better priest: he expected no pomp and reverence, nor did he have an over-

scrupulous sense of moral duty, but he taught the teachings of Christ and his twelve apostles. He taught, but first he followed it himself.

John Pepper

This is a simple teacher operating on an understanding of what Christ is about. He has no pretensions to the role of 'world teacher'. Why then do the 'world teachers' think they can get away with talking about it whilst leaving the doing of it to their followers?

Anything less than Chaucer's prescription is just not good enough because it carries the implicit message all children become familiar with, 'don't do what I do, do what I say.'

Alan & Margot Mann

P.S.

[Explanations in square brackets taken from a Penguin Chaucer from the library which I don't have time to check before the print deadline. I'll pop in the next issue.] (The extract above seems to underline my case so well that I couldn't resist further emphasis by really underlining the more pointed passages.)

I have a gap and will fill it with a last, last word on this subject from Basho-

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Lancaster letters

Cherith Adams sent me the latest batch of letters from the Lancaster group. I think they *"Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the wise. Seek what they sought."*

wonderful we had Jill Robinson's contribution in the last issue and here are two more. The Lancaster dialoguers jot down their thoughts and reactions from time to time. What about us doing likewise and giving them some feedback?

John Pepper

Invanably, our lives are overburdened with activities and agendas. Endlessly, we flee from ourselves and the fearful mystery of who we are and what is our purpose in life. We cannot abide the teeming space and silence at the heart of us. Dialogue helps us to look into that emphness to discover what's going on there. It's a species of group meditation-with-words (and sometimes without them) in which we endeavour to draw a map of the mind, heart and spirit as they traverse unfamiliar territory It's a new way of communicating with others, and one of the most profound exercises in developing self-awareness I have encountered.

Gillian Kelly

Two things strike me immediately as I begin to think about Dialogue: the first is that I often wonder to myself why on earth I'm there and the second is that, unless I have work commitments, Dialogue takes priority over any other simultaneously occurring activity. I do not have any certainty that this latter fact will always be so, neither do I have anything specific or convincing to say about its benefits - or indeed its effects of any kind, yet I keep going.

When I find it particularly frustrating, and we're 'getting nowhere' (wherever it may be that I believe we should be 'getting') I tell myself that this is a complete waste of time; that I only go to be part of a group; to enjoy the social network that is coming into being around it; that it has just become a habit or that I just keep going 'in case' because I can't bear to miss anything.

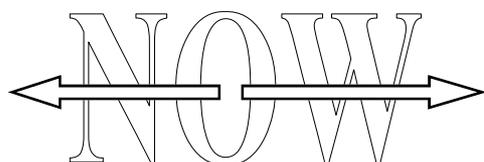
There is truth in all of these, and yet - when I feel that the group is fragmented, and pulling in umpteen different directions; when misunderstanding is rife and I want to walk out on the whole thing, I suppose I reflect that this _ human relationship, whether we are gathered for Dialogue or out in the world at large and that no matter how many times I may walk away from specific situations, I can't walk out of the world of humanity and human relationships and all the structures that we have created here, as long as I live: so I stay and my staying Is an acknowledgement of that, and an accepting of my own responsibility in whatever is taking place.

Accepting my own responsibility sounds very fine. In fact its much easier to see everyone else's responsibility than my own, and that is one of the things that I have an opportunity to observe in the group. I see the construct of my self in action: I see how I promote my self, protect my self, seek safety in alliances, build walls of articulateness, or charm, or assertiveness or playfulness around myself; how I compete - for attention or for power; how I bully, manipulate or seduce all in theservice of self - or, m other words, for me I see with increasing clarity how mechanical and repetitive is the essence of all my relationships and I notice too that to the extent that my perception of all this increases (not quite the right word but...) so it seems that the activities of the self-sustaining mechanisms increase proportionately.

I can, of course, look at all this in my day-to-day life and some of the time I do, but the space, focus and collective energy of the Dialogue seems to me to be a unique resource. Above all, the very fact of people coming together and staying with this process has an action in itself.

Gillian Kelly

DIALOGUE MEETINGS SYDNEY AREA				
LOCATION	DAY OF MONTH	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
North Ryde	First Saturday	Swedenborg Centre !, Avon Road	12.30pm Barry Hora	043 622 843 Wk.9997 4412
McMahons Point	First Wednesday	Community Centre 165 Blues Point Rd	7.30pm Terry O'Brien	044 438 353 018 410 127
City	Second Saturday	Theosophical Society 484 Kent St	2.30pm Barry Hora	043 622 843 Wk.9997 4412
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd)	10.30 am Alan Mann	By Arrangement Ring 9419 7394



Exploring frustration & Guilt

Hyams Beach on Jervis Bay
Saturday 28 & Sunday 29 June

Saturday

1.30 pm Topical Dialogue

Dinner at Indian Restaurant (Vegetarian available)

Sleeping bag accommodation at Terry's

Sunday

9 am Breakfast at Terry's

Then to Brogers Creek for Native American tee pee
Dialogue starting 11am and followed by lunch at 1pm.

Social afternoon, walks, etc.

\$8 for breakfast & lunch.

Ring Terry (044) 438 353 to book

An Enquiry into Understanding

30 Bee Farm Road Springwood NSW
Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 of August

The weekend starts at 10.30am on Saturday
and concludes at appx 4pm on Sunday.

There is some accommodation at The Gestalt
centre and we are looking at alternatives.

Full details in the next NOWletter.

**To book a place ring Margaret Pridham
or Howard Adams (047) 512 176**