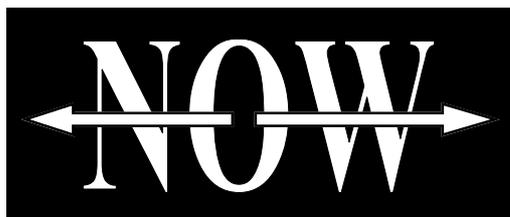


Greville Street
Meetings
15 Feb 98
15 March 98



Issue No. 39
December 97

NO GREVILLE STREET MEETING IN JANUARY

Meetings are held at 10-30am 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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Editor's Note

There will not be a meeting in January. Margot, Enid and I are off to India for a month. We will be spending twelve days at the Andrew Cohen retreat which is held annually at Rishikesh and visiting other places of interest. A report of the key issues in the next NOWletter which will probably appear in March.

We are nearing the end of this subscription year (May). I am beginning my annual soul searching about the need for and the form and frequency of this publication. I tend to assess the value-vitality of the NOWletter on the basis of non editorial contributions. For example, there is too much of me in this issue. So, if you would like it to continue would you consider sending in an article or letter from time to time.

A very happy Christmas to all.

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)

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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 the word 'DUE'. After sending a number of issues out with 'DUE' on the label and getting no response by way of a subscription I take it as a signal that the subscriber wants me to stop.

The 'Teachings'

I thought Gladney's article JK the Essential Teachings an excellent opening to the subject of the teachings themselves after all the attention to the teacher in recent months. However, so far no response from any of you so I will take it that Gladney has done a thoroughly comprehensive job of identifying what he describes as the essential elements of the teachings'

I would like to add Krishnamurti's 'start from the unknown'. That is, instead of a reflexive dive into what is known about any subject that comes up, what about starting from not knowing. I realise that this is not exactly an original approach, but to apply it in conversations, as K did with contemporary biologists, physicists and other learned folk as well as the ordinary fans, involves quite a shift in the way we normally go about such matters.

Also, he always seemed to be insisting on starting from here, from what is going on now and thereby resisting the almost automatic drift into concept which is how we usually destroy the living enquiry.

To digress a little. I have been thinking quite a lot about teachers and teachings lately and it strikes me that they feature far too prominently on the 'path'. It seems to me that the matter of critical concern should be 'what is this deep interest I have in these matters'; how did it arise, where is it leading, what is its purpose?

That, I think, is the primary issue and Gladney identified this as a major aspect of K's teaching. Both teachers and teachings are secondary matters. The rush to the 'wise' is a perfect example of searching for the key in the light shed by the teachers instead of over here, in the dark, where I dropped it.

Alan Mann

The Consequences of Enlightenment 1

Letter from Evelyn Baigum

I read the notes on your enquiry with Andrew Cohen with great interest. I think you let him get away with an unsatisfactory response to question 2,

2 Is it possible for a realised being to behave towards others in a cruel or hurtful way?

His reply to this was, *"Oh, absolutely! Of course it is. Look, there's hardly any exceptions. If you do some serious research about the way most spiritual teachers actually live and what they've been up to there are very few exceptions."*

This raises the interesting possibility of enlightened human beings behaving like absolute bastards and, consequently, the question of whether we know or can agree on what we mean by enlightenment. Well, what I mean by enlightenment is someone who has realised their true nature and is no longer trapped in ego identification.

Assuming the above definition is acceptable, at least for this correspondence, then what exactly is the point of it (enlightenment)? That is, realising the wholeness of life as actually the case and not just as a concept, how can I continue to wilfully damage 'others' as freely as I cheerfully did in my ego-bound state. In other words, is there no behavioural consequence of seeing that 'I am the world'?

Of course there is and Cohen points to it himself when he says:

This is something that is easy to talk about but difficult to

understand. It is something one has to experience in oneself to get a clear understanding of what it means to have no choice and, in the discovery that we have no choice lies liberation.

Can you imagine a situation in which the liberated human being has no choice but to do evil? Well, I'm afraid I can't.

In view of this apparent paradox, which you also pointed to in your summary, I can only think that Cohen believes there is a spectrum of enlightenment ranging from the odd glimpse to total transformation or, perhaps, a situation where someone can fall in and out of enlightenment.

I can't come at that. It's like being a little bit pregnant. I think the word should be reserved for the 'no choice' end of the spectrum and the backsliders reclassified; downgraded from 'liberated' to 'seekers grade 1!

Eve Baigum

The Consequences of Enlightenment 2

Note by Alan Mann

Not everyone agrees with me and Eve on this issue, in fact, we seem to be in the minority. Someone has challenged my case on the grounds that the three wise monkey stance overlooks the reality of evil in the world and that I seem to be separating the ultimate in realisation, 'God', from the sufferings of his/her creation.

I don't conceive of God as something above and separate from creation but that part or aspect of the movement of creation which we describe as the good. I am suggesting that realised persons will, by very definition, be awake to the needs of the good and consequently participate in that movement rather than lend their weight to the sleep of evil, the unnecessary.

So why do I think that the realised person has no choice in the matter, that it is not, as I think Andrew Cohen and perhaps Krishnamurti might claim for the 'fully realised person', a matter of choice?

1 Even in my normal, half awake trance-like consciousness there is a fairly strong resistance to the doing of deliberately hurtful acts.

2 On the occasions in my life when I have had a taste of the wider view there is no question of doing evil. It is not a moral decision, a matter of choice, it is simply impossible.

3 All the great teachings, as far as I can see, hold out the revelation of compassion and love as the outcome of complete understanding so how am I supposed to reconcile that with the retention of the option to do evil? My own experience, however limited, seems to verify alignment with the good as a consequence of breaking free of total identification with the movement of ego.

4 One of the outcomes of liberation seems to be the dissolution of the hard and fast boundaries between 'self' and 'other'. It then becomes a matter of self interest, albeit enlightened self interest, to avoid hurting self through damage to 'others'. There is a common or collective imperative which arises as a response to the understanding of one's true nature.

This seems to be self evident but there are so many people whose views I respect and who disagree with this point of view that I look forward to the exposure of my blind spot or some clarification in future issues.

Alan Mann

The Nativity and Headlessness

The following extracts are taken from the latest issue, Number 17 of the "Headless Way" the newsletter published by the Douglas Harding group in the UK. I selected the first extract entitled 'The Nativity' from an article by Hymie Wise, a former Jesuit priest, and therefore well qualified to make the connection between headlessness and the true nativity.

The Nativity

*Saint Ignatius wishes us to grow in a sense of the reality of the event of the Nativity and of its relevance to us" (Spiritual Exercises 125.) Nothing is more earthing than to arrive home at where we really are, this zero point this sheer capacity, this emptiness which is always present and ready to receive whatever is... It is **not** a question of understand nor is it a question of **meaning**, it is simply what Ludwig Wittgenstem sums up in one of his pithy sayings: "Don't think, just look" ("Denk nicht schau nur") What is really wonderful is how very clear this place always is. t cannot be sullied in any way, cannot be scratched or clouded over. It's the reception area for the whole world and yet remains **totally** free.....*

*.....To be the Space, the Capacity, the Emptiness of which Douglas speaks demands a dying which is a daily experiment/exercise. The name of the child is Emmanuel which means 'God-is-with-us As I sit and repeat it I notice the 'us'. 'Us' is an 'Inn' word. 'Us' is a community word. The Emptiness is an emptiness for **everyone No one** is excluded. Tonight on T V. I saw Pol Pot. The man accused of genocide, one million Cambodians are said to have died at his hands. There is room at the In for Pol Pot. Pol Pot is one of us. The Nativity takes place this moment. I do not understand. This contemplation enables me to see, not to think! I sit in the Silence of the Nativity which takes place **here and now***

Hymie Wyse

The next extract is three paragraphs taken from a five page review of 'The Little Book of Life and Death by Douglas Harding. The review is by John Wren-Lewis and although this extract is out of context I include it because it explains so clearly what I often find so difficult to communicate - the essence of headlessness.

Like Ram Dass, I found the book 'a delight', especially fascinating for me because it raised directly the very issue about which I'd been puzzling off and on for six years: if, as I'd now discovered, the sense of alienated human individuality is just an illusion, are there less drastic ways of un-learning it than dicing with death? Harding puts his own contention in his own distinctively humorous fashion: why wait for, and risk, an NDE he asks when you can at any time have a PDE (Present Death Experience) simply by following the advice of the medieval Chinese sage Huang Po observing things as they are instead of believing what you've always been told about them? Harding then reiterates his classic 'No Head' exercise: if you actually look at your experience, you'll find you've already undergone one of the most reliable processes for ensuring death of the self, lamely decapitation because in actual experience there's nothing above your shirtfront but the world presenting itself; your head is something you only think is there as the centre of your consciousness because you've been conditioned to identify yourself with what you see in mirrors or photographs Just take this experience really seriously as the basis for living, he urges, and you already have enlightenment; you don't have to find eternity because you've never really been without it and never could be.

Ah, but there's the rub - taking it seriously enough to make it the basis for life. To me now, eternity-consciousness is absolutely and undeniably obvious, just as Harding insists,

but my failure to get his point for all those years wasn't just superficial prejudice, that age-long brain-washing into alienated individuality caused the separate-self perspective to snap back into place no matter how faithfully I tried to do his exercises, leading me to conclude that he was just playing with words to put across a mystical belief. In 1991 I had the chance to quiz him on this point when he visited Australia to promote his new book on overcoming stress (Harding, 1990), for which he was himself the best possible advertisement; an octogenarian breezing effortlessly through a crowded cross-continental schedule of lectures, workshops and media interviews which most people half his age would have found punishing. I asked him how many people he'd found, over the years, who could open to the eternity experience and remain open just by doing his exercises, and he readily agreed that 'taking experience seriously' was the problem. Even he himself, he said, had needed years of practice but he insisted - and I readily allowed - that this kind of practice is an altogether different kettle of fish from most spiritual disciplines, which are undertaken on the basis of faith and belief rather than direct and simple observation.

So my own hunch is that we need more research, yet on the detailed psychodynamics of 'un-enlightenment' in so-called normal consciousness and that's now my own life-work (Wren-Lewis, 1992 & 1993.) But in the meantime I cannot recommend Harding's work too highly; however limited the practical success of his exercises (and you may have better luck than I did), they are for my money the only serious game in town at the moment, and I'm sure his paradigm of consciousness is the key to the future, not just in near-death studies but for the whole of psychology and behavioural science (see, e.g., Faraday, 1993.)

John Wren-Lewis

(It's a pity to crop these excellent contributions but I can supply photo-copies of the complete articles to anyone who would like the full story -. Headless workshops are now held approximately every quarter let me know if you would like to be listed for advice of the next one. Editor)

The Consequences of Dialogue

(Alan Mann on Terry O'Brien's night seminar)

Terry organised a big dialogue gathering at the Well Being centre in North Sydney 'Dialogue - What is its Practical Meaning? About 65 people attended. There was a spread of specialised interests representing groups involved in community activities which might find dialogue helpful.

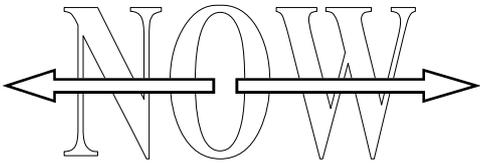
These people introduced themselves and described what they did. We then split up into three groups for about 45 minutes of dialogue followed by a break and a final one hour session with everyone involved. It went well, surprisingly well in view of the fact that many were meeting Dialogue for the first time.

In the final session I found myself listening to the speakers and agreeing with what they said although many of the statements were contradictory. I wondered what was going on. Am I totally without discrimination; bending to whatever point of view is being expressed, truly "a feather for every wind that blows". This was followed by a sense that although this was illogical it was actually happening. As though whatever was spoken was what I was at that moment; my consciousness at that moment simply what occupied awareness free of my opinions and reaction. The reaction as judgement, opinion, belief, etc was available but unlike my normal consciousness it was not responding automatically. It had to be deliberately brought into a field of awareness completely occupied by the speakers words. My opinions no longer came unbidden.

Later, after the meeting, I found myself back in automatic reponse mode as I discussed some aspect of the night's events. Congratulations to Terry on the successful outcome of what must have seemed a fairly risky enterprise.

Workshops

There were nine of us at the second Headless Workshop held at Greville Street. We went through the videotape in which Douglas answers a number of questions put to him by an off-camera voice. We listened to the questions, switched off the tape and answered them ourselves. We then let Douglas have his say and I'm pleased to report he got most of the answers right. We didn't have enough time to run through the full tape and will complete the exercise at the next workshop. (David C. your navy knitwear is here)



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	7 Jan - Community Centre 165 Blues Point Rd 4 Feb & onwards - Don Banks Museum, 6 Napier St, North Sydney	7.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 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	02 9419 7394
Clontarf	Fourth Sunday (NO MEETING ON 28TH JANUARY)	49 Peronne Avenue Clontarf	10.30am Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127