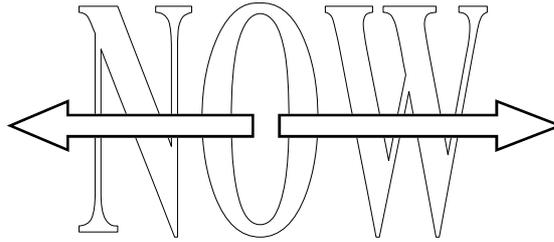


**Greville Street  
Meetings  
17 May 98  
21 June 98**



**Issue No. 42  
April 98**

**Meetings are held at 10-30am on the third Sunday of the month at 81, Greville Street, Chatswood and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of finding out whether transformation of consciousness, awakening to what we really are, or whatever we want to call it, can come**

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
<i>The Enchiridion</i>	
<i>Summary by Alan Mann</i>	2
<i>Letter from Ann Faraday</i>	4
<i>Letter from Margot Mann</i>	4
<i>Beginners Guide to Auroville by David Clouston</i>	5
<i>New Book by Marcia Murray</i>	8
<i>Dream Group - Chris McLean</i>	8
<i>Headless Workshops - Alan Mann</i>	8
<i>Meetings, etc</i>	10

**Editor's Note**

Last month's letter from the authors of the 'Enchiridion' prompted me to rework my original notes in an attempt to provide a summary (page 2) which would offer an introduction to those of you who have not read the book and provide the basis for some dialogue on the issues raised in Julian & Robin's letter.

David Clouston has written a very comprehensive record of his recent visit to Auroville and there are a couple of announcements about career milestones in the lives of two of our readers.

Steve Brett, Andrew Cohen's right hand man, is nearly here, details on back page. We have finally sorted out what to do about the Seeing Workshops and the plan is explained on page 8.

My thanks to those of you who have contributed articles and letters to this issue. The date on the address label shows your current subscription status, i.e., due date. Let me know if I've got it wrong, and remember I take a three month overdue subscription as a silent signal to cancel.

***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)***

**SUBSCRIPTIONS Australia \$10 - OVERSEAS \$20**

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

*This note is the editor's attempt to provide an outline of 'The Enchiridion', a 298 page book which is densely packed with detailed information. A summary of this sort can only provide a taste of what is a very weighty subject and create an appetite for the book itself and the method recommended by the authors. I also hope this note will provide a starting point for a dialogue with Robin & Julian. I have tried to retain the words used in the book as far as possible.*

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. This is due to a dichotomy of observation under the influence of which we believe 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 nothing can be said about either.

We see ourselves 'as living in' rather than 'living as' the universe and this way of understanding our situation has become the basis of our thinking and perceiving so that when we attempt to discuss this fundamental error with those who do not recognise it, we have to communicate with them in terms of that dichotomy, the language of duality, or they cannot understand us.

We can never fully "know" what the world is, we can never make a full summation of all our facts about it, we can only "be" that world. This means we must lower our ego defences and allow the inner and outer to dissolve into each other, we must become the universe, not just be a part of it. We are so encumbered with the accumulated products of our past dualistic actions that we become submerged in the dualistic outlook. This makes any periods of spontaneous non-duality very rare as such experiences are quickly smothered by the dualistic reality manifesting as the need 'to do'.

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 the possibility that it might be a false view. Attention is directed not to this root problem but to changing the world for the better.

We spend so much of our life trying to change the world or the setting of our existence, making it fit

our desires, that we do not realise the significance of the striving. The striving results from our dissatisfaction with existence. Much of the dissatisfaction arises from change. Change is the very nature of the dualist state which generates the illusion of time as though there was somewhere outside our state of being that could be the measure of it, but time is change, the idea of movement in all things.

Our dualistic world view can offer a miserable outlook if there is nothing else to be contemplated. The one thing we all have in common, is this ability, in our own way, to suffer. So is there any reason why we should not take this potential to suffer as a basis of existence, in order to understand that existence? Life's pleasures merely offer a temporary suspension of suffering. It is necessary to accept that you are the embodiment of your suffering. That suffering must be used as the motivating power to enable you to break the reality bonds.....you must use the power of your own mind and no one else's.

The term 'Reality Aligning' is how the authors describe the various mind directing influences which maintain the dichotomy - books, films,TV, and the general acceptance of the dichotomous world view in daily activity and relationship.

We need to seek out or create an environment which allows the mind to go free. The extended wilderness experience is a recommended approach and explorers should 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.

Turning attention away from complete absorption by worldly concerns and directing the major part of our attention to understanding the absolute reasons we exist and suffer is all we can do. Everything else is rendered meaningless by death. To live dualistically without suffering and without the depths of awareness that suffering or its potential brings, seems hollow, it would be as though we were anaesthetised but awake. Suffering is not caused by some outside force or evil exerted upon us. If the dichotomy of subject and object is healed, there is no you the suffering can work on.

It is possible by practising harmlessness and some concentration techniques summarised below to come into Universal Harmony by means of a process described as Totality Mergance. The 'world' has to be recreated by those who experience the Totality but, in the end, their world and even the Totality are transcended by reintegration into the infinitude. There is nothing in this 'Totality Path' that can be held up as being a

truth, it is strictly experiential. If you don't experience, don't believe - no faith - no assumptions.

The basic notions and techniques used to gain access to the Totality are straightforward and obvious. There have always been ways of easy access to the Totality but it was generally felt that access was not valid unless it took a great deal of effort and time. The following outline of the recommended approach is extracted from several chapters of the book.

1 Point concentration and ultimately absorption are practised by means of conventional meditation techniques.

2 As a result of the development of concentration it becomes possible to access what is called 'the dynamic display' at will. (This I understand to be the highly aesthetic imagery which seems to be running behind our every day consciousness and which sometimes becomes apparent when the mind is still.)

3 When reliable access to 'the dynamic display' is established, it is then possible to observe the flow, it is important not to try to modify or control it in any way, and eventually move with the flow in a process referred to as streaming or the Peacock's tail, so called because of the similarities of beauty and the shimmering movement.

4 If carried to a successful conclusion this results in the complete transcendence of the dual state and re-integration with the Totality.

5 A further, final phase involves merging with the Infinitude.

The greatest impediment to integration with the Totality and Infinitude may be a very real fear of actually succeeding, actually arriving at the state of total and absolute freedom. Fear might well be a primitive ego defence mechanism because, in the end, such utter freedom demands the annihilation of the model or idea of the entity you call yourself, the entity that you have consciously and unconsciously constructed.

The state of flux we are in (in our daily lives) is identical to the dynamic aspect, however the dynamic aspect is the manifestation of that state of flux in the absolute form, with no suffering and no doubt, whereas your individually experienced existence is a manifestation of suffering. The Peacock's Tail describes the progression of intensity in the display of the dynamic aspect. It is the supreme manifestation of our absolute being potential and has its climax in the 'felt-seen light' which, in turn, reaches the peak experience of the unified Totality, which dissipates directly into the

Infinitude.

When familiar with the phenomenon (dynamic display) a certain area of the display may attract awareness more than the general unfolding of the pattern does. As attention is given to this point it becomes more and more significant. Eventually the whole of the dynamic aspects patterning will stream into that point or apparent point. As that one area accumulates more and more aesthetic brilliance your whole attention will be increasingly held by it. The point will grow and grow as the firmness of your attention increases until it reaches a critical stage of commanding your entire and total awareness. Your identity is totally consumed and lost within it and there is no longer any choice in the matter. At the critical stage concentrator and area of concentration become one and the same. By this stage one's humanity has been transcended and obliterated. One no longer 'is' there is no thinking principle left, this is another realm or dimension altogether. Just prior to total absorption, attention to the point and the intensity of that point reach an absolute maximum. This is the one pointed Totality of mind and is the ultimate stage of consciousness or awareness attainable and the final stage of dichotomy.

Any structure or display has also gone, there being now only pure formless experience. ...the most wonderfully perfect 'felt-seen light'..you are that light and that light is you. There is nought but enlightenment. This great lightness grows in intensity until it becomes all embracing and then instantly dissipates. ..It is immediately after this merging or Totality, at the dissipation of the 'felt-seen light', i.e., your pure potential, that the infinitude is realised, although not realised by you, for there is no 'it' to realise and no 'you' any more to realise it. That infinitude and your absolute being are no longer in any way whatsoever, separate, Not two, not one.

The Totality experience itself, should not be seen as an end to all endeavours or as an ultimate goal, but should be understood as being the final gateway that opens the way to the infinitude, which has no beyond. You can, by passing through this gateway of the Totality, shatter forever all forms of belief or the need to have any solid bases of belief, and this includes, the end, of the need for any beliefs whatsoever, the Totality being the pre-eminent access to ultimate freedom; mind or being freed from belief and thereby reintegrated with the infinitude.

*End of Editor's summary. I welcome questions in the form of letters to Robin & Julian which I will pass on to them and your permission to print, together with their replies, in future issues of this newsletter.*

## The Medium is the Message - Enchiridion Letter 1

Dear Alan,

Thanks for sending me your latest summary of The Enchiridion. It must be at least your third attempt to make sense of the book for those of us who tried and failed. Like you, I found it heavy-going and difficult to understand. But I appreciate how much the authors have put into it, and feel it deserves better than just being ignored. I hope the following comments help.

In their letter to NOW (No. 41, March 1998), the authors bemoan the fact that they have received no real criticism of their work for its content, only the manner of its writing. As a seasoned author (and reader), I would like to suggest that it is precisely the manner of their writing which obscures much of the content, leading inevitably to confusion and misunderstanding. It is impossible to criticize or comment on what is unclear to us!

I found the book too long by half, repetitive, rambling and badly punctuated, but as you say, nothing a good editor couldn't remedy in future runs. But what to do about the overall tone of doom, gloom and sermonic rebuke? I really resented the implied references to my (as reader) moral and spiritual turpitude, especially when prefaced by the pronoun "we" ("we are dazzled by ,...." or "we are addicted to ..."), which really means 'you lot out there. This hypocritical and condescending mode of communication should be reserved for the pulpit. I feel that Julian and Robin would have received much more attention had they presented themselves, not as Old Testament prophets or New Age channellers, but as a friendly couple with some interesting research to share with their peers. The first rule of good writing is to respect your readers and get them on-side as soon as possible.

I would like to see a much more personal approach, telling us in greater detail exactly what they did to elicit such apparently spectacular results. What is their background? Did they ever take psychedelics? What about the mishaps, blunders and amusing episodes of their research? Fallibility and humour quickly get readers on-side, and need not compromise a serious message.

If a re-write is out of the question - and it would require a great deal of time and discipline - then how about trying a different medium, say taped interviews or videos? At the end of the day, the medium itself is always more truly the message than the content, and a light, happy-sounding interview with a sympathetic and intelligent interviewer (how about it, Alan?) might be just what the doctor ordered. I don't want Julian and Robin to disappear into the sunset, the desert or the Great Dividing Range, never to be seen or heard of again. They are too interesting for that.

Please convey my best wishes for Julian's health. Love to them both and I hope that we might meet one of these days.

**Ann Faraday**

## Trust Us - Enchiridion Letter 2

I found 'The Enchiridion' very hard to read and I had a very mixed response to what I read. For a start, the idea that searchers should go within themselves and cut off from the outside reality-aligning\* world seems strange.

This concept of living just for oneself on a long-term basis does not seem desirable, or possible. We are all interdependent, globally or personally, no matter how badly we handle our relationships. Indeed, there is an underlying elitist assumption by the authors that the Totality is not for everyone. p.186 "*The best we can hope from dualism is non-antagonism to those who choose to travel this way and perhaps, even support with our basic needs.*" Presumably, people undergoing this experience need to be fed and looked after. (At least I think they do - we didn't hear much about ordinary personal experiences in the pursuit of the Totality.)

The writers seem torn between wanting recognition in the form of positive responses, but not wanting to be distracted from the exploration. This seems like a movement into the separation or dualism \* which they deplore at some length in their book. The letters they have written to Alan about 'The Enchiridion' and the minimal reader response it has attracted have strong overtones of "poor us", and there are references in the book to writing it to "help others", instead of the more likely explanation of "for themselves - ie. for the Totality."

The most off-putting aspect of the writing for me was the endless, often patronising repetition. Every time I thought they were about to tell me their secret I had to read another well-meaning lecture. I thought 'here are people who have found something amazing and they are desperate to tell me about it and get a positive response, but they don't trust me to do it right.' Much has been said about the way it is written, but it is important enough to say again - 'The Enchiridion' is too long, too preachy and endlessly repetitive. It is packed with questionable assumptions including the assumption that suffering is the basis of life. Bad punctuation and spelling hinder the flow of meaning (it's no use pooh-poohing this aspect if you wish to communicate effectively.) These are all problems, of course, which could be fixed.

I like what I know of the authors, both from their letters and their book, but I want them to trust me, even if I get it wrong.

**Margot Mann**

\* These terms are explained in Alan's summary of the book.

**Beginner's Guide to Auroville**

A few miles from Pondicherry, an experiment in human unity and community has been quietly going on for the last thirty years. It was established by the Indian government in February 1968, and has been pursuing its own course ever since. The community is called Auroville, after the Indian saint Sri Aurobindo whose ideas and ideals form its foundation. It has grown slowly from a few hundred residents in 1968 to 1,200 today.

I have just got back from a short visit of five weeks, staying with my friend Kathy. She lives in a community called 'Adventure', at the bottom south-western corner of Auroville's green-belt. She is serving out the compulsory Newcomer period of a year, after which she will be an Aurovillean. Shortly after her arrival there in early 1997, she sent me the following message:

*If you are interested in the idea of spiritual community, you've got to come and see this!*

I went. I saw. She's right. It's really something. Even amongst all the strange and wonderful experiments in living that have characterised the late twentieth century, Auroville is a collector's piece. General descriptions of it are beyond me; it devours adjectives faster than I can think them up - fascinating, frustrating, exhilarating, exasperating, impossible, wonderful, insane, chaotic, harmonious, divisive, boring, ambitious - And then what would I say about the second week?

Having been there, I feel compensated for missing out on that other experiential gem, Rajneeshpuram in Oregon. Who lives there? Auroville's 1,200 or so residents are from India and all over the world. Foreigners have indefinite resident-visas from the Indian government. The largest national group is about 350 Tamil, followed by French and German with around 300 each. The opening ceremony in 1968 was attended by representatives and children of over 120 countries; a sample of the earth of each country was poured into a huge urn, which can still be seen today near the centre of town.

What do they all do?

There are no community activities in the Ashram sense. Everyone does what they want to do, which may or may not intersect with what some other people are doing. Many people are involved with some kind of environmental restoration work, both within Auroville and outside. A huge range of activities come under this heading. For example, the state of Tamil Nadu is notorious for its governmental water-subsidies and resulting over-use of the water-table. Salination is becoming a serious problem. There are several projects undertaken by Aurovilleans to restore the traditional reservoirs in the surrounding area; some of the

same people are helping Auroville communities to prevent the run-off of annual monsoon rainwater. Planning and upkeep of the community itself is the work of many Aurovilleans. So does what governance is allowed to exist (see below). Some communities offer different forms of healing. These tend to be free or very cheap for other Aurovilleans, with most of the revenue coming from guests or visitors. Work for money in the usual sense hardly exists. Since most Aurovilleans are there to further their spiritual development, whatever they do is part of their 'work'. A very frequent comment I heard was 'This is my karma yoga'. And 'this' might be running the Centre Guest House (hullo, Tineka!), working at the Solar Kitchen or holding a Savitri circle every Sunday morning. The Mother suggested that a certain number of hours every week should be dedicated to work for Auroville. Some people do this, some don't. Some get paid for it out of a central fund, others don't. This seems to be entirely on the basis of need, since it's also possible to be 'paid' from the fund even if no work is being done.

What do they believe in?

Impossible to answer. There is enormous reverence for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But in no sense is there anything resembling Aurobindo-ism. There is a central meditation hall - the subject of some heated debate over the years - called Matrimundir. It is the subject of great reverence within India; busloads of tourists come through it every afternoon. However, there is no obligation, or even expectation, on any Aurovillean to go there. There are diverse spiritual and cultural events going on constantly at the different communities. These are not regarded as being the business of anyone who does not wish to attend. I feel I would have to live there for a long time to discover the common thread of belief in Auroville.

Is it a separate country?

In many ways, it does indeed operate as an independent country within very broadly defined limits set by Delhi. Outside interference of any kind is minimal.

Although Auroville occupies a defined geographical area, it does not yet actually own all the land within its borders. This situation is complicated further by the fact that three large villages, with a total of nearly 30,000 residents, sit half-in and half-out of the 'city' limits. There is a plan afoot to buy up all land within Auroville, but this will certainly not include the villages. So exactly where Auroville physically begins and ends is hard to define. This is thoroughly appropriate: a similar lack of definition exists in nearly all areas of Auroville life. Since I often confuse understanding with definition, I have a tough time understanding Auroville.

How does it work? Okay. The tough one -

1) No-one owns anything

The first line of the Auroville Charter reads, 'Auroville belongs to nobody in particular'. It goes on to say that Auroville is open to all who wish to further their connection to the divine. This means that the residents don't own their houses. All permanent structures belong to Auroville itself. Anyone who comes to live there has to sign an agreement to this condition. If someone leaves, her house theoretically is resumed by Auroville. There can be some compensation paid for improvements, but how this might work in practice is not very clear because people don't permanently and irrevocably leave Auroville that often. There is a limited amount of 'buying' and 'selling' of properties between residents, but no-one is supposed to make a profit. Again, the rules are unclear.

2) No-one is in charge

The spiritual father of Auroville, Sri Aurobindo himself, died in 1952. Although he is not as well known in the West as Krishnamurti or the later twentieth-century gurus, Sri Aurobindo is revered in India both as a saint and as one of the foremost freedom-fighters against British rule (by whom he was briefly imprisoned). His Ashram in Pondicherry is tremendously powerful, both as a religious and local political force. The spiritual leadership of the Ashram continued after 1952 in the hands of his colleague and disciple, a French woman called The Mother. It was she who, with the full co-operation and involvement of the Indian government, established Auroville. She died in 1973, leaving a huge body of work known collectively as Mother's Agenda.

Under the later agreements with the Indian government, drawn up after a period of intense conflict between Auroville and the Ashram after The Mother's death, there is a formal system of government for the community. However, this really only regulates Auroville's 'external' relationship with India.

Internally, there is a high level of resistance to any organization or hierarchy. This isn't just the passive dislike of authority that exists in many communities. It is a feeling that Auroville should actively resist the emergence of formal structure. Leadership is not a welcome concept there.

The only authority that almost everybody agrees to recognise is the Residents' Assembly. This is a meeting open to all Aurovilleans, at which anyone may speak. It has the reputation of being a shambles, and apparently attendance has been in decline for some years. I was lucky to attend one (there have been phases during which visitors are

not welcome); there were about 70 people there. I didn't discover whether Residents' Assemblies can have a formal Agenda. At the moment they have someone acting rather like the Speaker of the House of Commons; this person more or less 'calls' whomever wants to speak, and keeps track of who wants to speak next. However, what gets discussed, and in what order, and how, is left to the meeting.

I was very fortunate in also attending several meetings devoted to exploring 'Sociocracy', a concept of social organization developed in Holland. A reasonably influential group of Aurovilleans felt that this might provide a workable structure. Accordingly, a small number of them had been to Holland to meet the creator, a very genial Dutchman called Gerard; he in turn came to see Auroville while I was there. (Incidentally, both trips were fully funded by the Dutch government. This is typical of the support Auroville enjoys from governments and NGO's all around the world. It is viewed as a fascinating social experiment, and thus a worthy recipient for diverse research-grants, miscellaneous funding and special-project entitlements.)

At the Resident's Assembly, a man stood up and said 'What we need in Auroville is not more organization - it is more madness. We don't need Sociocracy; we need Socio-Crazy'. I wondered if there could be anywhere else on earth where I would feel - as I did - that he had made the most significant contribution to the discussion.

3) Rules and agreements are not generally enforceable I haven't found out whether decisions reached by the Residents' Assembly are actually enforceable. Decisions made by other bodies (for example, the Development Group) do not seem to be. Given the amount of energy and work consumed by these groups, it seems amazing that their instructions can simply be disregarded.

However, as usual, it's not that simple.

The Development Group exists to monitor the transformation of Auroville from its present population to the intended 50,000 people envisaged by The Mother. The transformation is itself controversial. While the intentions of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are held in great respect - being perhaps the closest thing to a unifying force among Aurovilleans - they are by no means blindly endorsed by the community. This is particularly true where future plans appear to compromise past and present achievements. Population-growth will have a huge impact on the local eco-system.

The environmental restoration work done all over

Auroville since 1968 is spectacular. Photographs from that era show the place to be literally a desert. The famous banyan tree under which The Mother sat to articulate her vision was almost the only living thing for miles around. I've been told it was possible to see from there to the coast. Soil erosion was nearly 100%. Nothing grew. Water ran straight off the land. Kath and Horst took me to see one of the last remaining canyons that is still in its original 1968 state; it is a hard, red, unworkable landscape, resembling a coloured photo of the surface of the moon. Nothing could be less hospitable.

Now, Auroville is a green paradise. By dint of extraordinarily hard work (I don't believe that any of us can really conceive of what it was like for the early settlers), the eco-system has been restored. There is still much to be done, according to the experts living there. However, it is possible to walk in a twenty-year -old forest, and see trees growing 'au naturel' that are on the world Red-List for endangered plant-life. I bicycled from one end of Auroville to the other without ever being out of sight of lush groves. It is impossible to look at what has been achieved without feeling immense gratitude and awe. Many people see the further development of Auroville into a City as imperilling the work that has been done. Issues that come before the Development Group are almost by definition controversial.

I attended a meeting at which a particularly sensitive development project was discussed. It had been exhaustively explored on many previous occasions; its impact had also been debated by the Green Group, whose area of concern includes preservation of a 'green belt' around the centre of Auroville. Most members of the Development Group were openly fed up with talking about it. However, they scrupulously turned their attention to it again. It consumed about an hour of their meeting. There was much disagreement, which all concerned did their best to resolve. They concluded by coming to a firm decision: the project was approved and could go ahead. The decision was recorded in the minutes. An announcement would be made in the AV News (the Auroville newspaper). Issue closed? Not a bit of it. Opposition to the development from within the community led to a confrontation between two or three Aurovilleans on the site itself. An angry series of letters was published by A V News. More deliberations by the Development Group followed. Permission to go ahead was withdrawn on the grounds that the issue had become incapable of resolution. As I was leaving, the owner of the project announced that he would not be proceeding. That appeared to be the end of that particular story. So what was the Development Group doing? What difference did their decision make? Did they, in fact, have any authority to make a decision? Could they

enforce it? No-one quite knows. All that can be said is that they were some of the participants in a process whereby an important issue was debated by Auroville. Their decision was neither binding nor enforceable. But nor was it irrelevant. It's relevance was simply different from that of a formal body with recognized powers. The decision was one voice in a slightly rowdy, disorganized choir. How much that voice counted for cannot be quantified. But it was heard.

#### 4) No decisions are final

It is obvious from the above that nothing can ever be - in the accepted Western sense - finally decided. Almost any dispute in any developed country can be resolved by a court of law. At whatever level the case may be decided, the court's ruling is final and enforceable by the civil authorities. There is a point where no comeback is possible.

Auroville is resisting any move towards this system. In the event of any disagreement, there is no-one to appeal to who has any authority to impose a settlement. Hence I was told several times 'The thing to avoid at all costs in Auroville is conflict; once you get into conflict, you're lost'. This made me think very hard about the legal and constitutional conventions that I normally take for granted. Perhaps the two defining characteristics of Western society are the ability to own land, and the enforceability of private contracts between individuals. We are so familiar with these concepts that they are almost invisible to us. From moment to moment, we are as unaware of them as we are of the oxygen we breathe. As with oxygen, as soon as we are deprived of them we start to struggle and panic. (How would you feel if a man showed up at your house, and announced that he had the right to live there forever, at no cost to himself, whether you liked it or not?) We realize their indispensibility to our entire way of life. There often follows a realization of how extremely odd and arbitrary these two ideas are. For example, most of us would be outraged if it was seriously proposed that someone could own large chunks of the air, and charge us for inhaling it. But the exactly identical oddness of allowing private individuals to own bits of the surface of the planet, from which we can be legally excluded or charged for occupancy, seems natural. Similarly, the law will ruthlessly enforce an agreement reached between consenting adults, even if it clearly isn't in the best interests of one party, or the community. At present, Auroville will have none of this. Perhaps it never will. Perhaps a new system will be worked out whereby some of the idiocies of our own procedures will be absent. Perhaps they will find a way to allow structural anarchy and individual co-operation to exist together.

What does it have going for it?

From all the above, you may have gathered that Auroville can be a pretty tough place to live. This is true. It is in no sense an easy life. Many visitors (perhaps most) find serious faults with Auroville; hearing negative comments about it from guests and tourists is a common experience.

On top of the structural chaos, it is not a particularly welcoming place. People are friendly enough, but it has a definite air of slight withdrawal. Auroville isn't that interested in what you think about it. You're welcome to come and stay, but don't take that to mean that we care how you feel. This attitude was a considerable shock to me for a couple of weeks. The genuine indifference to my very existence - let alone my opinions - took a while to get used to. A small but powerful example was not being introduced when we met new people; they in turn did not introduce themselves to me, or even acknowledge my presence. (The universal exception to this was Aurovilleans from Australia. I have never been so glad to hear a G'day mate, how's it going.) Basically, it's as confronting as hell to the humble visitor. This is probably why so many people slag it off after a short stay.

So what's the good bit?

In a word, aspiration. If there is one thing that all Aurovilleans have in common, it is an aspiration to live a better life. Not one with more possessions in it, but to live increasingly in unity with others and God. This is why so many 'obvious' solutions as to how Auroville might be organized better are rejected; the fact that something has worked reasonably well elsewhere is no reason why a better method cannot be evolved now. At its worst, this can be a cheap, wholesale rejection of all existing and previous societies - particularly Western ones. But at its best, it truly offers us all the two most precious of God's 'mundane' gifts, Faith and Hope. Faith that there is indeed a path; and Hope that we can indeed walk it together. Hope that our lives do indeed have meaning; and Faith that it is indeed within us to discover it. Things can, they really can, be better. And that is why, when I have put aside my churlishness at Auroville's occasional rude behaviour towards me, I am truly grateful that it is there and that I have been able to go there. Because there is at least one place on the Earth where a group of people, despite knowing in advance all the clever reasons why it won't work, and isn't worth it, and shouldn't even be attempted when there are so many more 'reasonable' things to do, despite knowing at least as well as I do that it's all basically hopeless, are making one more assault on the hill.

Whose side are you on?

**David Clouston**

### **Masks and Reflections**

A surprising proportion of the Newsletter readership are authors and have either written or are in the

process of writing books. The latest is Marcia Murray, a professional graphologist, whose "Masks & Reflections in Ourselves and our Handwriting" has recently been published. The book, as the title indicates, is primarily about graphology but Marcia has interwoven a number of themes with comments on interpretation and explanation of the art and science of graphology which, as far as I am concerned, add considerably to the value of the book. These additional strands are the biographical notes which provide the background to her life work and explain her interest and education in the subject plus a very frank spiritual biography which underpins the psychological and spiritual aspects of her work.

I spoke to Marcia about handling enquiries for her book or her professional services and she welcomes direct contact which can be made by ringing her on (02) 9997 8483. You may have seen a review of the book The SMH Good Weekend of Saturday 25th April.

### **Dream Groups**

Chris McLean, occasional visitor to the Greville St meetings, reader of this letter, a key contributor to the nohead email conference and one of the participants in the Douglas Harding seminar at UTS in 1991 has resigned his teaching position and is now starting a new career as a therapist in which he will be combining his Buddhist experience with his extensive training in psychotherapy. He is running dream groups of five or six persons maximum and anyone who would like to know more should ring Chris on (02)99606 919

### **Headless Workshops**

I now propose to continue the headless workshops on a regular basis. The need for introductory workshops for first timers is quite clear but once you've got it, what next? You either get it or you don't. Unlike most other approaches you don't have to make a career out of it. On the other hand there is real value for those of us who have benefited from the experiments to get together now and again.

Richard Lang is going through the same process in England, here is an extract from a recent letter:

*Thanks for your thoughts. We are all working things out as we go along! One of the things I am interested in doing is running a retreat for Seers! Such a retreat would be a mix of meditation, dance, chanting, groupwork/talking, silent periods, Qi Gong, etc. Everyone who came on it would have done a workshop already, so they would have some familiarity with the experiments, which would be used and played with and developed during the retreat. This is actually combining all the things I am trained in, love, find valuable!. I have done this in the past, to a degree, but would like to*

*develop it more. I don't quite know the steps to this yet, but at least I have a sense of where I would like to go!*

*It seems to me that such things as Andrew Cohen is doing, and things that lots of other people are doing, are valuable. I think, why not combine this directly and openly with Seeing? Here at centre we are home, and there, wherever there is, we give room for things to develop. Not in order to get enlightened - that is already established and just needs attending to, but as part of an ongoing creative process, a relative healing process, a community building process, a fun process!  
Best wishes, Richard.*

Well, I don't think I'm up to the Qi Gong, etc., but others of you might be and, anyway, you get the message. To some extent, the Now group meets this need but we have tended to become much more dialogue oriented than we intended at the outset. Now that dialogue is well established elsewhere, largely through the work of Barry and Terry, perhaps it is time to refocus?

We tend to forget that the NOW group started as a result of Douglas's visit to Sydney in 1991. The original membership was formed by writing to people who had recorded their names, during the Harding seminar at UTS, as wanting to continue some form of contact with the work of Douglas and John Wren-Lewis.

I thought we might hold first-timer headless workshops, according to demand, plus a quarterly or bi-monthly meeting at Greville Street for those interested in an ongoing connection. After discussing with other interested people at the last two Greville St meetings we decided that there is no reason why we cannot benefit from starting all meetings as first timers. That is, we will start off with an hour of experiments with volunteers taking responsibility for particular experiments so that the load is spread and everybody gets a chance to lead the workshop. This, I can promise, provides a very powerful incentive to getting to the heart of the matter.

After the experiments we will spend an hour or so looking at headless videos and or dialoguing through hot topics relating to headlessness and/or the discussion papers which I put together from time to time. The next meeting will be on the 24th May. Thereafter, we will plan to hold workshops on the first Sunday of every second month starting on Sunday 5th July.

I thought Richard's throw-away line on enlightenment (in the above extract) was interesting. Recent experience has led me into quite a powerful awakening. Not the awakening promised by the enlightenment marketers but I have at least woken up to my lack of discrimination and

spinelessness when confronted by the super confident purveyors of enlightenment services. So, over the next few months, I plan to start a dialogue on these issues in which I hope readers of the NOWletter will all participate.

The main assumptions on which most if not all of these 'services' offered are:

- 1 Enlightenment is a supernatural state and completely outside the range of everyday experiencing.
- 2 It requires highly specialised training and trainers to get it. There is no hope for the DIY'ers.
- 3 It requires a great deal of time to achieve. (Some packages even offer additional lifetimes to complete the necessary workload)
- 4 Once you get it, it remains, rock solid. It never leaks, breaks down or goes away.
- 5 The final product completely disposes of all moral difficulties by transcending such mundane concepts as good and evil.

I think these assumptions are questionable and it may be that they are simply a cover for rather flaky or maybe even non-existent products. I am well into the first stage of my market research. The assumptions that I bring to the issue are that both headlessness and dialogue provide very effective means for testing these claims and revealing what is actually happening..

I will be reporting on my findings in these pages but I would much prefer to report on your findings, either for or against, so please give serious thought to throwing your experience into the ring.

**Alan Mann**

### **1998 Headless Workshops**

**24th May**

**4th July**

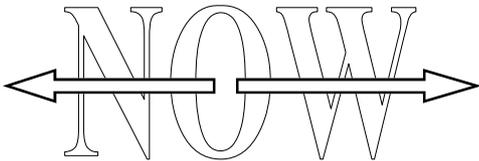
**5 September**

**1 November**

**Ring (02) 9419 7394**

**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
North Sydney	First Wednesday	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) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan Mann	02 9419 7394
Clontarf	Fourth Sunday	49 Peronne Avenue Clontarf	11am Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127

**Steve Brett - Dates**

Steve Brett, a close associate of Andrew Cohen, will be visiting Australia in May to give talks on the Andrew Cohen teachings and to lead dialogues and question and answer sessions at various venues in Sydney and other centres in NSW

**Evening talk and Dialogue**

Thursday 7 May 7.30pm at the FACE Centre in Balmain

**Full day Seminar in Sydney**

Saturday 9th May - 9.30am to 6pm at the FACE Centre in Balmain

For details ring FACE Centre on (02) 9555 2932  
479 Darling St, Balmain (Entrance at rear of building)

**Next Headless Workshop**

**10.30am Sunday 24 May**

81 Greville St, Chatswood  
(02) 9419 7394