

**Greville Street
Meetings
21 June 98
19 July 98**

**Issue No. 44
June 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 about.

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Editor's Note

I am continually surprised at how interrelated all this activity is: Dialogue meetings, Headless Workshops, the various teachings and readings we refer to from time to time. In the last issue we had a talk by Andrew Cohen, in this one a review of a book by Susan Blackmore. I wonder if anyone else sees a correspondence between these two apparently quite different points of view and whether you share my view that headlessness is a wonderfully effective way of bridging such apparent gaps?

We have a postcard from Robyn and Julian acknowledging our questions and saying that Julian is not yet out of the woods and is undergoing further treatment. This involves a lot of travel, back and forth to Perth. Robyn explains that it is not possible to deal with our questions until things settle down but that they will reply as soon as circumstances allow. We understand perfectly and send them both our very best wishes.

Next Headless Workshop Sunday, 5 July.
Future workshops on first Sunday every second month See page 6 for dates

What is Enlightenment?

The following letter is a response to my questions about enlightenment in NOWletter 42. It is a tandem contribution from Ann Faraday who provides quotes from The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying by Soygal Rinpoche, identified as (SR), plus some of her own observations (AF). These are combined with comments from John Wren-Lewis (JW-L). The original questions which head each section are in bold italics.

Dear Alan

Your latest issue of NOW arrived just as I was re-reading Soygal Rinpoche's 1992 best-seller The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying. When I first read it years ago, I found it far too "Tibetan" for my liking but so many people tell me they've been helped by it (including my estate agent!) that I thought I'd better take another look. I still feel the same way. However, before returning the book to its shelf, I thought you might appreciate the following quotes in relation to your questions about enlightenment on page 9 (of April issue):

1 Enlightenment is a supernatural state and completely outside the range of everyday experiencing.

(SR) "The Buddha said that enlightenment is within the reach of all through practice we too can all become awakened so whatever our lives are like, the buddha nature is always there. And it is always perfect ..."

but!

"The absolute truth cannot be realised within the domain of the ordinary mind. And the path beyond the ordinary mind is through the heart. This path of the heart is devotion."

(JW-L). *In my experience "enlightenment" or "Buddha-mind" embraces all everyday experience including the conceptual mind the heart and much else - a whole dimension of "eternal aliveness" which humanity has somehow trained itself not to notice most of the time. To adapt Werner Erhard's terms , all human culture, as far back in history as we can go, is built on "not experiencing our experiencing," and this narrowness of consciousness infects even spiritual philosophies and practices, including Buddhist ones.*

2 It (enlightenment) requires highly specialised training and trainers to get it. There is no hope for the DIY-ers.

(SR) "Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (one of the greatest modern Tibetan teachers) wrote: There is only one way of attaining liberation and of obtaining the omniscience of enlightenment; following a spiritual master."

(SR) "The master is your heart-link with the

absolute truth and the embodiment of the true nature of your mind."

(SR) "The Buddha says: Of all the buddhas who have ever attained enlightenment, not a single one accomplished this without relying on a master, and of all the thousand buddhas that will appear in the eon, none of them will attain enlightenment without relying on a spiritual master."

(So there! - AF)

(JW-L) *I doubt whether the Buddha ever said any such thing; the historical Buddha was self-enlightened, after rejecting teachers. Neither Ramana Maharshi nor William Blake whom I would consider enlightened, had any master and nor did yours truly. (So there!)*

3 It requires a great deal of time to achieve. (Some packages even offer additional lifetimes to complete the necessary workload)

(SR) "This recognition (of the nature of mind) and the freedom it brings, can only be the fruit of many, many years of the most disciplined practice of meditation, for it requires a long familiarity with and stabilization of Rigpa, the nature of mind".

"Only a few special individuals in history, because of their purified karma, have been able to recognize and become enlightened in an instantwe have to work through many lifetimes to purify our karma, before we reach the end of ignorance."

(JW-L) *Totally disagree again. In the light of my experience, enlightenment has absolutely nothing to do with purification, nor is it a learning process. It's a kind of instantaneous relocation into the Infinite which is already the substance of one's own and all being. My experience also leads me to agree with Krishnamurti that the "many lifetimes" idea is a positive obstacle, concentrating attention more than ever along the line of time.*

4 Once you get it, it remains, rock solid. It never leaks, breaks down or goes away.

(AF - I'll have to summarize here according to my understanding)

We can all get glimpses of our buddha nature throughout life, and it is at these times - deep peace, loss, shock grief, etc. - that it manifests. But we need the "highly specialized training" of meditation to stabilize such moments and somehow "string them together", so that eventually we can remain in that consciousness. A final, rock-solid illumination happened to the Buddha under the tree when he refused to budge until he "got it". Some masters are said to attain this final liberation

at the moment of death. Hence Soygal's second book entitled Glimpse after Glimpse, 1995.

(JW-L) My answer to this has been perfectly expressed by the Lady Julian of Norwich: "If there be anywhere on earth a lover of God who is always kept safe from falling, I know nothing of it - for it is not shown me. But this was shown - that in falling and rising again we are always held close in one love." I'd add that rising again gets easier and easier as experience of being brought back effortlessly by that "one love" gives more and more confidence to relax into it instead of trying not to fall (the surest way to fall off a bicycle is to try not to.)

5 The final product completely disposes of all moral difficulties by transcending such mundane concepts as good and evil.

(SR) "True teachers are kind, compassionate, tireless in their desire to share whatever wisdom they have acquired from their masters, never abuse or manipulate the students under any circumstances, never abandon them, serve not their own ends but the greatness of the teachings, and always remain humble....."

"In Buddhism we establish whether a teacher is authentic or not by whether the guidance he or she is giving accords with the teaching of Buddha. It cannot be stressed too often that it is the truth of the teaching which is all important, and never the personality of the teacher".

(AF) Well, that lets Soygal off the hook of alleged sexual harassment, I suppose.... or as Dennis Balson says about Krishnamurti:

It doesn't matter if K decided not to wed.
Nor does it matter who shared his bed.
To me, it only matters what he said.

(JW-L) My previous answer is relevant here, so much so that teaching for me becomes meaningful only if the teacher is upfront about his/her "falling" - and I'd say such honesty is precisely what might be most helpful to others. By falling I mean temporarily losing the eternity-experience and feeling not held by "one love", whereupon old fears, cravings and defence-mechanisms inevitably take over. While held in love, however, the rule can be Augustine's "do as you like," because in my experience the desire to do anything unloving simply disappears.

Observations on Enlightenment

(In response to Alan Mann's notes on page 9 of Nowletter No.42 on the Enlightenment Industry)

If the services offer what you say they do they are an absolute con.

1 Non-enlightenment is an un-natural state (common to the masses). To some, enlightenment

may be "everyday experiencing": the simplest, most accurate comparison: pulsating IN-perience.

2 There are no steps to take. Trainers are paid to satisfy customer demand. Enlightenment is never second hand though outsiders can be witnesses. In New Zealand at least one third of an audience, approximately 130 saw me transfigure and/or disappear in light. (This was nothing clever on my part. I did nothing at all but suspend the 'I'). The inperience of what they saw affected them more than anything I said.

3 It does not need time. It is beyond time and timeless.

4 It can be tapped into. In this sense it is abiding so does not 'leak, break down or go away'. But the individual is not in that perpetual state - otherwise it would be impossible to function. When out of that state a clarity of perception remains which can be clouded by stress. It cannot be perverted. Trying to explain it is distortion. What I say affects no-one, what I do opens doors.

Rome Warren

Points of View

I preface this letter from Enid with the quote from Almaas which I used in the last NOWletter and which prompted her response:

The personality is a point of view. Enlightenment is a point of view - nothing else. It is not a certain state. Personality is the point of view that there is something we need to get, somewhere we need to go. Enlightenment or freedom or reality is a point of view, that "what is" is what is. That is, what is there is what is there - and there is no hope for anything else.....Almaas - From " The Freedom To Be" p73

Dear Margot & Alan

Thank you for the May NOWletter- a quality issue which I will take with me to my desert island .

But I'm puzzled about Almaas. Is ALMAAS an acronym? a name you found on the internet? or an agent for some multi-national conspiracy to hasten the deterioration of language, to separate meaning from words? or a 'point of view', i.e., a personality.

The paragraph you quote, of course, is out of context, so what I say is possibly unjustified, but - as it stands - isn't it just nonsense?

Look at the first sentence: 'the personality is a point of view'. Does this mean that it is the 'personality' - i.e, something superficial, that has a point of view? (I'm using 'personality' in the sense of mask (persona) - something we put on to face whatever jumps up at us in life, ; and as we change our masks frequently we change our point of view).

Perhaps that is what is meant....

But no: because Almaas confines 'personality' to the "point of view that there is something we need to get, somewhere we need to go". Not has but is. Extreme identification.

So much for the fixed but fragile mask.

Next we are told - what Enlightenment is. It too, is a point of view. Not yours, not mine, not Ramana Maharshi's, or Rumi's or John Howard's. No it, too, is fixed; it is a 'point of view', that 'what is' is what is. But this is a qualified 'isness', 'without hope for anything else'. Which means that hope cannot be part of the isness?

So it is an exclusive 'what is'. And it is further qualified by being "there"? Now (important word NOW) where is "there"?

Talking about points of view here is an insight I had last night watching Dragons of the Galapagos (ABC again) and found myself too poignantly identified with the baby dragons who are barely hatched when they have to make a perilous journey to the water. The first experiences of their lives are of threat, fear and struggle. Some are squeezed to death by snakes, some clawed and borne off squirming by hawks. There is a sense of triumph when some reach the sea. All my pity and sympathy went to the baby dragons.

But then there are the baby hawks. All fluffy and hungry and anxious, waiting for their parents to bring them - after long and exhausting hunting - a wriggling baby dragon which the chicks greedily devour. They will survive to soar the skies and dip into the valleys and hunt nourishing baby dragons.

It depends on the focus of the story as to whose side I'm on, This was the dragon's story and I wanted their survival. But the hawks were also represented. The fluffy chicks had to be fed - and the succulent baby dragons were just right for them.

Seeing both sides of the story I'm robbed of my point of view and left in a vacuum. Instead of meddling in the isness of things, I wonder at the whyness of things. Does survival and satisfaction depend on others suffering such fear such struggling, etc. William Blake

"Joy and woe are woven fine
A clothing for the Soul divine."

I hope he's right . Now I'm connecting with the chaos theory (such as I can understand it and knowledge of which I owe to Now meetings) the amazing interconnectedness of everything.

"The Bleat, the Bark, the Bellow and the Roar
Are waves that beat on Heavens Shore."

and Soygal Rinpoche: ".....Everything is inextricably interrelated; we come to realize that we are responsible for everything we do, or say or think, responsible in fact for ourselves, everyone and everything else, and the entire universe."

And since 140 new galaxies have just been discovered, that does blow the mind. Gosh!

Enid Jenkins

(I have put a note about Almaas on page 7 - Ed)

Passionate Uncertainty

Browsing in the English Unitarian publication "The Enquirer" I encounter views worth sharing with other enquirers:

"Unitarians have a passionate poetic certainty in the importance of uncertainty.....When we stop clinging to that which cannot be known, we find ourselves held by that which will not let us go."

Not all Dialoguers believe in God, and if they do, the concept of God may well differ. But I believe most of us welcome the encounter with minds of any period who are attempting to express the inexpressible. An English Unitarian (Rosemary Arthur) gives us her translation from the Greek of an anonymous 6th Century pagan hymn.

To the Unknown God

*O you who are beyond all things, how shall we
address you?*

*How can a word describe you? For you are defined
by no words:*

*You, the only unalterable, being the begetter of all
speech.*

*How can mind consider you? You who are
comprehended by no mind:*

*You, the only unknowable, being the begetter of all
thought*

*Everything which speaks and which does not
speak proclaims you.*

*Our common yearnings, our common griefs, rise
up to seek you:*

Our common joys rise up to praise you.

*All things rest in you, all things unite in you, all
things seek you.*

*And you are the end of all; the One, the All, the
Nothing.*

*Nameless, how can we name you - you, the
undefined?*

*O you who are beyond all things, how shall we
address you?*

from Margaret Armstrong

"Dying to Live - Science and the Near-Death Experience" by Susan Blackmore.

I am sure many of you will be familiar with this book. I had missed it completely but John Wren-

Lewis told me about it when I responded to a paper which Susan Blackmore gave at Reading in 1996 which he sent me. The paper is entitled "Waking from the Meme Dream". I hope to circulate the paper with a future issue of this newsletter.

Susan Blackmore was a senior lecturer in Psychology in the Department of Psychology at the University of the West of England, Bristol in 1993, when the book was published and may still be there. She has written other books on related subjects and has studied Zen. I think what she has to say is very relevant to Dialogue and to our Workshop activities.

The theme of the book can be summarised as an exploration of what she says is a fundamental choice to be made about NDE's, whether NDE phenomena are a glimpse into life after death or the products of the dying brain.

The author explores these alternatives and analyses the arguments for both positions before summarising her conclusions in a final chapter of the book and which I now reduce even further as follows:

1 The 'consistency argument'; that NDE's are similar throughout the world and throughout history.

The consistency is acknowledged; joy, peace, the tunnel, light, the out of body experiences, the life review and the changes or after effects of such experiences. However, she believes these can be explained without resorting to the paranormal. Joy and peace arise from the action of natural opiates released under stress, the tunnel, light and noises from the reduced oxygen supply to the cortex, the OBE explained by the breakdown of the body image and the models of reality on which we normally rely. The life review is a result of endorphin caused random activation in the temporal lobe and limbic system where memories are organised. This dissolution of self accounting for mystical experiences and the after effects.

2 The 'reality argument'; the NDE's feel so real that they must be what they appear to be, a journey into the next world.

I quote directly: *"By exploring the reasons why things seem real I have provided an alternative interpretation. It is useful for us, as biological organisms, to separate what is real from what is not. However, the distinction is largely artificial. All we have is model building and we call some models 'real' and some 'imaginary'. The most stable and persistent ones, like those based on the senses, we call real. The ones that affect the limbic system in certain ways we feel as 'familiar' or 'meaningful'. Mostly this works out well but during the NDE it leads us astray. Stable tunnel forms in the cortex*

seem real. An out-of-body perspective taken on in imagination seems real. So the felt 'realness' of NDEs is no evidence that there is anyone to travel out of the body or any next world to go to. The dying brain hypothesis thus accounts better for why the experience seems so real and can also account for why obviously 'unreal' things are seen in NDEs as well".

3 The 'paranormal argument', NDEs involve paranormal events which cannot be explained by science. Therefore, they must be evidence of another dimension or the existence of a non-material spirit or soul.

She rejects this argument for two reasons:

1) She points out that she has cast considerable doubt on the defence itself (detailed throughout the book), many cases are very weak to start with and others become weaker the deeper you look into them

2) I quote: *"Secondly, even if the evidence were compelling, it could not be explained just by claiming 'There is an afterlife'. If the evidence changes in the future and truly convincing paranormal events are documented then certainly the theory I have proposed will have to be overthrown - along with a lot more of psychology, physics and biology - but the afterlife theories we have encountered here (in the book) will not do instead".*

4 The 'transformation argument', that people are changed by their NDE's, becoming more spiritual and less materialistic.

"The afterlife hypothesis attributes this (transformation) to NDEers having a spiritual experience in another world. In fact this does not really explain it at all. There is no obvious reason why an afterlife should be a better one nor why contact with it should make people who return nicer. This is simply assumed.

By contrast, the dying brain hypothesis is compatible with two reasons for transformation. One is simply that being made to think about death can affect a person's priorities deeply, whether it is their death or another's and whether they have an NDE or not. This alone can make them less selfish and more concerned for others. The other is that coming close to death can provoke the insight that the self was only a mental construction; that all the struggles, attachment and suffering of life depend on that artificial construction and that it can be let go. There never was any solid self and there is no one to die. With this insight fear is left behind and life can be lived more directly and fully. The dying brain hypothesis accounts better for the mystical insight of the NDE and the changes it can bring about".

I hope this summary hasn't destroyed the flavour of

a very carefully argued and convincing case which I found quite fascinating. Perhaps because it reinforces my disenchantment with what I regard as the over-specification or inflation of 'enlightenment' whose promoters often draw on the sort of brain states associated with NDE's to justify their claims.

I will conclude with two quotes from the book which have provided me with food for contemplation and which we might look at together one of these days:

Page 162

"My view shares with them (Bohm and Pribram) the idea that the world is all illusion, or Maya, but differs from them over the underlying reality. It is not that I propose a totally different underlying reality. Rather that there is not one. Once you see that all 'you' are is a collection of mental models, you see the illusion. Imagine you can see through that illusion to an underlying reality and all you will see is more models of reality - more illusion. Mystical insight is not having a great psychic self that can penetrate through illusion to ultimate reality. Rather it is simply not needing to construct either 'self' or 'reality'".

And the book's final paragraph

We are biological organisms, evolved in fascinating ways for no purpose at all and with no end in any mind. We are simply here and this is how it is. I have no self and 'I' own nothing. There is no one to

die. There is just this moment, and now this and now this.

The book is out of print but there should be copies in libraries. There is one in the Adyar which I will be returning this week. How grateful we should be for the Adyar service.

As a post script to my Susan Blackmore exploration on the Internet I came upon an open letter from someone called Clay Stinson to Ken Wilber in which he attempts to give Ken a severe battering.

The address:

<http://weber.edu/~diane/keny.html>

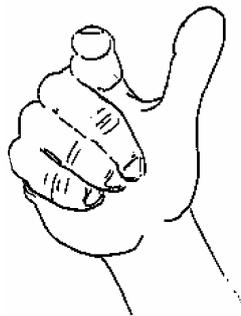
If anyone finds or has found Ken's reply to this assault I would appreciate a note.

Alan Mann

Headless Workshop - 24 May 98

I think there were 10 of us at the third Greville Street workshop which was the second in the now regular bi-monthly programme. We have adopted a system which involves people leading the experiments which they find particularly interesting or effective and changing them in an attempt to convey their own understanding and insights. I was nervous about the consequences of changing the standard approach but it is working quite well. I think we have to watch out that by providing a high

1998 Headless Workshops



**5th July
6 September
1 November
3 January 99**

Ring Alan Mann (02) 9419 7394

First Sunday every second month
81 Greville St, Chatswood

level of flexibility we don't lose some of the key elements of the experiments which are embedded in the orthodox presentations. We certainly lost our way on a couple of occasions at this meeting.

Barry Hora is specialising in the 'Closed Eye' experiment and offered a completely new version linking it to quotations from Nisargadatta, Almaas and Krishnamurti.

My original response to Barry's approach was concern that we had lost the self-stripping process which is the essence of the standard version but later, after the meeting, when I combined the standard version with Barry's addition I had some very interesting results which are too involved to cover fully here. Briefly, when you are reduced by the experiment to seeing that what you are is 'whatever is going on and nothing else' then 'you' are exposed to the action of the actual in burning up any residual or arising conceptual movements. And that is what inevitably happens if we stick with what is actually going on. (I see reflections of this both in Andrew Cohen's comments on surrender as covered in the last issue and the destruction of mental models which underpins Susan Blackmore's conclusions reported in this issue) This is also how I interpret K's injunction to start from the other shore if we want to cross this particular river.

The question of direction which has interested me in the past also arose. Why, with eyes closed do I retain the sense of a forward looking point of view? Is it just habit, the third personhood hanging in, or what? Barry reported this as falling away when he tried it later.

David Clouston said that the tube experiment did not work for him with the same intensity as on the first occasion. I wonder whether this loss of intensity is inevitable. He said:

The one that packs the most punch for me is the Tube. I agree with your comments about doing it twice. We didn't do that this time. The amazing revelation is that there really is NOTHING in my end of the tube; this didn't come out quite so clearly for me as before... which may be due to familiarity with the concept, of course.

Since the workshop I have been to a couple of Margot's yoga classes (the ones for beginners) and I'm asking her to work out an experiment to explore pain in the headless mode.

I always get a lot out of the workshops and this is more so under the new arrangements as the leadership is increasingly shared. There were new insights for me as a result of the 'Closed Eye' (referred to above), and the 'Octopus' experiment. Others who had not attended previous workshops found themselves deeply involved but

without a sense of actually 'seeing' it or maybe seeing but not believing. I am also very interested in why this is so.

After the meeting we got a letter from Douglas which reassured me about our democratic and unstructured approach to the workshops. He said:

"Your letter of April 28 was most interesting - and especially your description of the "workshops". It's important that these workshops, going on round the world, should try out different formats and procedures, and not bog down in any standard pattern. The experiments or tests, too, are for developing and giving birth to babies".

DEH

I thought that a wonderful denial of dogma from the person who initiated these proceedings. I look forward to tossing all this about with you at the next meeting on 5 July which is the first in the now regular slot of first Sunday of every second month.

Alan Mann

A H Almaas

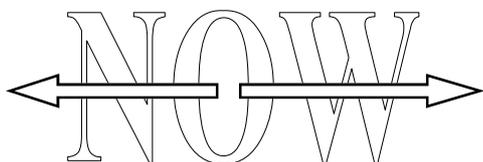
This introduction to Almaas is taken direct from the Almaas web site with minor adjustments.

A.H. Almaas is the pen name of A. Hameed Ali, the originator of the Diamond Approach. Born in Kuwait, his academic background is in physics, mathematics, and psychology.

Ali has developed the Diamond Approach over the last 25 years. He discovered, through self exploration and work with others, that the ego, or personality, is not only an impediment to growth and happiness, but also covers up vital aspects of us that we need if we are to feel fulfilled or at peace or to acquire the ability to be present and operate in the real world. In 1975, Ali founded the Ridhwan School in Boulder, Colorado and Berkeley, California. In 1986, he founded Diamond Books, which now publishes his writing as A.H. Almaas.

DIALOGUE MEETINGS SYDNEY AREA

LOCATION	DAY OF MONTH	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
North Ryde	First Saturday	Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road	12.30pm Barry Hora	043 622 843 Wk.9997 4412
North Sydney	First Wednesday	Don Banks Museum, 6 Napier St	7.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127
City	Third Saturday	Theosophical Society Level 2, 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 & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Clontarf	Fourth Sunday	49 Peronne Avenue Clontarf	11am Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127

**DIALOGUE MEETINGS OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY AREA**

LOCATION	DAY OF MONTH	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
Ourimbah	5th Sundays	RMB 6445 Enterprise Drive	11 am Barry Hora	043 622 843 Wk.9997 4412
Nowra Jervis Bay	First Sunday	North Nowra Community Centre	11am Joan Everitt	02 4443 4727
Headless Workshops - See list on page 6				