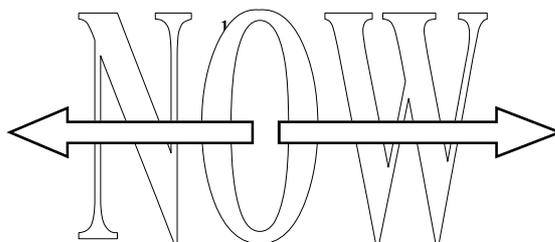


Greville Street
 Meetings
 20 September 98
 17 - 18 October 98
 (See below)



Issue No. 47
 September 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

As a result of the interest in Gary Hipworth's two articles (NOWletters Nos. 40 & 46) we are arranging for the next NOW group meeting to take the form of a weekend at which Gary will be present. Details are enclosed in a loose insert which doubles as enrolment form and a questionnaire designed to get some feedback on what you would like to form the content of our dialogues and suggestions about how we might run the weekend.

At this stage the plan is to have a full day on Saturday 17 October at the Swedenborg Church Hall, Shirley Road, Roseville. For Sunday we have booked the Swedenborg Centre Hall at North Ryde. There will be a modest charge for the weekend to cover hire of hall and to make a contribution to Gary's travel costs.

My thanks to contributors to this issue. I have slipped in a couple of pieces I have been hatching for months but unable to publish because of the volume of your contributions.

Next 'Seeing' Workshop Sunday, 1 November.
 Future workshops on first Sunday every second month, January, March, etc.

Backsliding Tour

Now God longs for nothing from you more than that you should emerge from yourself in accord with your being as a creature, and that you should admit God within yourself.

Eckhart

One of my recurring questions about headlessness or 'seeing' is 'what is the reason for backsliding?'. That is, why, having come upon one's true nature, this essential capacity at centre, do I invariably contract into my separate off-centre self?

Allowing that there are occasions when this ability to contract and focus is a vital survival function and allows me to act with maximum effectiveness in certain situations, e.g., getting this body out of a burning building, why does it persist when not required, when the crisis has passed. Why doesn't awareness of the open, non-dual first nature or, if preferred 'essence' not prevail? To put it another way, why does realisation not necessarily result in transformation?

I have been flogging this issue for a long time and it has become a sort of background theme to my continuing interest in headlessness. I wrote a few notes about this problem in Nowletter No.33 and headed 'The Trance of Ordinary Life'. I have found the query very useful in my relationships because nearly everybody I meet has an answer. Not surprisingly the answers are nearly all different. I came in for a bit of stick from Andrew Cohen during the Rishikesh retreat for clinging to it as a precious problem. Consequently, I am now seeing the question in what appears to be a brighter light. I decided to do a survey of some who seem be clear on this question and free of it as problematic. I will take all those of you interested in this subject on a bit of a tour.

First stop. I mentioned it in a recent letter to Douglas and this is what he said in reply:

First, the question we all come up with; how to prevent the habitual backsliding into petrification, unseeing. I think of the things that have helped me to return to this simple insight. The first is doing something about it - sharing it, chores like making tubes and cards, working it out in writing, seeking always the simplest, most succinct way of putting it, the most telling and vivid reminders, working out new "experiments", etc., etc., Doing. The second thing is not to fight these backslidings but rather welcome them as motives and occasions for us to come back to Centre, and the delight of rediscovery. After all, these diversions are diversions into into a world that's still God's world. Samsara is Nirvana, and, as I see it, the

true spiritual life isn't static at all, but the to-and-fro movement between them. (Douglas Harding Note 1)

Well, that matches my experience and is a good enough answer for me but not all readers of this newsletter are as taken with headlessness as I am so I had a look around and, a few days after the above message arrived and when I was reading through some notes I had made on Almaas in preparation for meetings and talks in Sydney organised by the Diamond Approach people, I came upon this:

The realization of both the condition of oneness and that of the supreme personal Essence now shows the deeper and objectively true relationship between Being and the person. As Being one experiences oneself as all of existence, boundless and eternal. One is a oneness which is the universe, but also beyond it. There are differences and varieties in the universal oneness but no separation.

As the Personal Essence one is a pure person, a personal presence of eternity. But one is continuous with the oneness, as a form co-emergent from Pure Being. One perceives oneself as a cell in an infinite body.

One's identity goes back and forth according to the needs of the situation. Sometimes one is the cosmic body, the state of oneness itself. At other times one is a cell in this body, as a personal presence. The two realities, the oneness and the person, are both Being; they are complementary. One is both. This is important to understand because many believe that once ego boundaries dissolve there will be no longer a sense of the person, that only oneness will be left, forever. Many people are afraid of this prospect, and some are simply not attracted to it. In our understanding, the human potential allows the possibility of both conditions, without contradiction. We believe that those who teach that the two conditions are contradictory and exclusive of each other simply do not know of the Personal Essence.

(Note 2 - Almaas)

When a psycho-therapist friend found out that I was interested in this question he lent me a book by James W Jones (Note 3 below) which made me realise how deeply contemporary psychoanalysis and psychotherapy is involved in this issue. Here are a few quotes which capture the flavour:

.....For Otto, sacredness resides in the experiential qualities of awesomeness and mystery, giving the sacred a feeling of being

wholly other. Winnicott implies that the sacred is encountered through a transitional state of awareness transcending subjectivity and objectivity. Bollas suggests that sacredness consists in transformative power, the capacity to evoke the foundations of selfhood.....

.....for Loewald, the unconscious brings with it a sense of timelessness and unity. Experiences engaging us at the depths of our selfhood will be accompanied by perceptions of unity and timelessness and perhaps be times of transformation...

.....Besides being characterized by timelessness, unity, and transformation, moments that evoke the depths of our personal being will be carried by profoundly personal metaphors, or as Buber would say, they will be "I-you" and "I-it" encounters. Put another way, the unity that is experienced there is a unity in which selfhood is sustained, not lost. (My underlining)

(Note 3 - J W Jones)

It was Thomas Traherne who first introduced me to headlessness with his poem "My Spirit" from which I lift the following:

.....The Sence it self was I.
I felt no Dross nor Matter in my Soul,
No Brims nor Borders, such as in a Bowl
We see, my Essence was Capacitie.
That felt all things.....

Apparently, Thomas was not continuously functioning from Capacitie, because he added the following postscript to the above,

If this I did not every moment see,
And if my Thoughts did stray
at any time, or idly play,
And fix on other Objects, yet
This Apprehension set
In me
Was all my whole felicitie.

(Note 4 - Thomas Traherne)

It seems that 'returning to centre' was very much part of the game as far as Traherne was concerned. And the ability to do this at will seems such a common theme that I wonder where the idea that it is such a big deal or such a remote possibility comes from.

I had the notion that it might be profitable to seek examples closer to home and this was reinforced by Gary Hipworth's last article from which I extract the following:

....In this time my brain cells were probably rearranging themselves and it seems that eventually my brain **flipped over** from left mode, ego-centred functioning to right mode reality-centred functioning. Right mode is now in the driver's seat and "cross-talks" to its left half by way of patterns that represent the whole factual situation that confronts the total organism from moment to moment. It never gets ahead of itself because everything is changing every moment.

(Note 5 - Gary Hipworth)

This seems to reflect the earlier examples but from a situation where, unlike the state I describe in raising the issue, the open rather than the contracted mode is the normal or 'default' state.

An earlier 'local' example of this is John Wren-Lewis's 'condition' as described in his 'Dazzling Dark' article which appeared in Gnosis and which we reprinted in Issue No 35 and from which I now extract the following:

.....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.' 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.

(Note 7 - John Wren-Lewis)

The lesson for me in all this is the acceptance of two way working as the way things are and letting go of my concern that the primary, first nature awareness should predominate at all times. The transition from subjective first nature, to my thought dominated, objective, second nature is a natural process and can be reversed at will. Which reminds me of the report that Gladney gave us on 'Sudden and Gradual' which appeared in Nowletter 14, (p4) and from which I once again present my favourite quotation:

The process that leads to enlightenment is always gradual, whereas the experience itself no matter how well one is prepared, is always sudden.

We do not depart from where we are here and now in order to appropriate what we do not have. Rather, the way is near at hand and inseparable from the ordinary experience of our daily lives

Paradoxically, we must make the existential decision to find our way; otherwise, we will lose it to the extent that we become unaware that it is originally ours. Nevertheless, because it is originally ours, we can get it by simply exercising our will to do so. Willing is the necessary and sufficient condition for us to get it. The way is ours, sudden and simultaneously, when we will that this be done.

(Note 4 - Tu Wei-Ming)

Perhaps I should now call subjective first nature 'pre-subjective first nature' thereby incorporating Mr Winnicot's insight and acknowledging the revelation of headlessness. That is, the revelation of our essential 'capacity' in which all things, subjective and objective, arise and fall away.

Alan Mann

Note 1 - Letter from Douglas Harding

Note 2 - This appears under the heading Transcendence and Embodiment on page 457 of 'The Pearl Beyond Price'.

Note 3 - 'Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion - Transference and Transcendence' by James W Jones

Note 4 - Thomas Traherne - 'Centuries, Poems & Thanksgivings - Vol 2'

Note 5 - Gary Hipworth - Nowletter No.46

Note 6 - John Wren-Lewis "Dazzling Dark article which appeared in Gnosis and was reprinted in Nowletter No.35.

Note 7 - Sudden & Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought (Edited by Peter Gregory, 1987)

Non-Self - The Tantalizing Paradox of Buddhism

In deep meditation (we are told) "one" watches the disintegration of the ego, seeing it for what it is a bunch of 'aggregates', the outcome of genes, conditioning, experience and general karma. And then one asks what happens to the watcher when there is nothing to watch? There is a total blow-out and there is no thing. No thought. No watcher.

"Was it for this the clay grew tall?" This nothing from my ego-based view-point, makes me recoil in terror. Whatever my miseries, my discontents, my limitations, my acknowledged "dukkha" I love the green earth, I love inter-acting with people, love being puzzled, even love groping my way through the mists of thought - because my deluded ego trusts that ultimately there is a clarity, an understanding, a 'reality' to be achieved and enjoyed.

But what is the truth of the matter? Or is truth, no-truth?

Paradoxes guard the outskirts of language. What are they protecting? "There is nowhere to go" "no one to go there" there is "no arriving". Free from all thought, all taint, the mind having no function, becomes "no-mind". And Nirvana, the goal we are aspiring to is "no where".

Ego bound and attached, I cannot accept my own annihilation. I want to live for ever! I don't even want to be lost in karma and subtly continuing in a "process". I want me to continue.

So I have stretched my mind to its ego-bound limit and gone, not beyond language but to its dizzy edge - and decided that there must be, no, is an alternative to existence. There is an alternative to being. There is "is-notness" beyond "ising" Nirvana, free from existence, is a gate to infinite non-existing realms which this tiny universe cannot contain.

So believes, at this pinprick in time, ego-Enid. Self-calming? Perhaps - (because I want to be a conscious participant); but couldn't it also be the case?

Paradox protects us from the truth and at the same time protects the truth. But it is a guard, not a deadlock. The way out is the way in.

Enid Jenkins

P.S. The Trap

But the greatest trap in all of this is to think I am Awareness, while continuing to act from the thinking self - deluding oneself with understanding derived from conceptual knowledge, which has its own place, but which can never replace the act of Seeing. You cannot think your way out of this problem - Seeing is not a matter of thinking but of doing. There simply has to be that shift into Seeing, which is our inherent nature, our Being.

Kriben Pillay - Noumenon Newsletter - <http://www.udw.ac.za/~kriben/noumenon.htm>

Thinking with the Heart

Notes on the Mindware meeting at Mosman on 18 June 98. Robert Tilley gave a talk entitled: Thinking with the Heart - the logic of spiritual consumerism.

Alan Mann

This is written some days after the event and is a personal response not a review of Robert's presentation. I found it particularly interesting because of the recent exchange on these pages about the enlightenment industry.

Robert talked of the over-simplification of the spiritual message. He explained this was due to pressure from both suppliers and consumers of 'spiritual' products. The customers are now conditioned by current technology and the high speed of modern life to give attention only to matters of high impact, short duration and which are easy to digest. Thus, offers of instant or almost instant transformation and a complete forgetting of the labours of the path which is the traditional idea of what is involved.

This compression leads to caricaturing of the issues and the players and reason-free reliance on intuition and feelings. There is no time for doubt and the need for certainty is fertile ground for dogma.

When a person's commitment to the dogma is challenged they often respond by saying that in these matters one has to think with the heart. This is understood as an entirely different process from what we normally regard as thinking. Robert demonstrated that this was a misguided and sentimental view of fairly recent origin and that the great philosophical and religious traditions did not abandon reason and that 'thinking with the heart' implied admitting the heart into the reasoning-perceptive process; heart together with thought rather than heart instead of thought. He suggested this was a matter of orientation and I find that a very useful notion with relevance to our recent exploration of Almaas's claim that enlightenment is just a point of view. And what is headlessness if not a reorientation of our usual way of looking.

This led to questions about what do we mean by heart and what do we mean by spirituality. The answer to the first question which appealed to me was Terry's notion that, in this context, heart means reponding from the 'Now' from here, from what is actually going on rather than solely from our bank of concepts. That is - allowing thought to function free of the accumulation of our histories, drawing on them but not driven by them. This is, of course, very dialogic but I hadn't made the connection as far as the heart-mind issue is concerned before this meeting.

Unity Consciousness under extreme conditions

Margaret sent an extract from 'Venture to the Interior' with the comment that "this description of Laurens van der Post's experience of Unity under extreme conditions was worth a thought":

It follows his description of a couple of barbarous executions which the POW's had been paraded to witness.

All this time our twenty-five men had stood fast, but the officer next to me, Ian Horobin, though still on his feet, was dead to this world, a condition that did all honour to him. He, like the rest of us, was living out each last second with those two humble, nameless victims, and living them through with neither hope, nor pity, nor expectation for himself. But at the first bayonet-stab he winced, as though he himself had received the blow, and swayed on his feet.

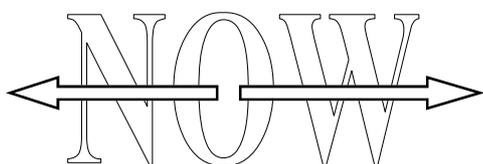
I put my arm round him and in that way managed to hold him through the rest of the whole bloody business; and in this moment, for me, lies the real significance of that afternoon. For as I put my arm round Horobin, a stranger, in order to support him, I felt to my utter amazement, how near he was to me. There seemed to be no barrier between us; we might have been the same person under the same skin; and, in spite of the dreadful circumstances of the moment, a tremendous warmth and reassurance welled up within me, like wine and song. All sense of isolation, all my restless, seeking self, my desperate twentieth-century awareness of isolation and doom vanished. I was out of it all in a flash, and far beyond in a world of inseparable nearness. This, I knew, was true: this nearness of him to me, of me to him. It was the heart of reality. That was how we all were, close to each other, if only we would allow ourselves to be so. With a singing sense of deliverance from unreality, from the prison of myself and my surroundings, I resolved that in the years to come I would never forget this moment. I resolved that if I lived - and I did not really care then one way or the other - I would try and carry this moment along with me in all that I did. Then Nick put out his arm to help Horobin, touched me, and I noticed that he, too, felt equally near.

from Margaret Armstrong

S.O.S

I had a computer accident this month which resulted in the loss of the NOWletter mailing list. I have rebuilt it from various sources. I don't think I have lost anybody but I have lost the subscription record so if I have remembered you wrong please tell me. Where I just don't know you will see DON'T KNOW on your label. Please straighten me out.

DIALOGUE MEETINGS SYDNEY AREA				
LOCATION	DAY OF MONTH	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
North Ryde	First Saturday	Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road North Ryde	12.30pm Barry Hora	043 622 843 Wk.9997 4412
North Sydney	First Wednesday	Don Bank Museum, 6 Napier St, North Sydney	7.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127
City	Third Saturday	Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Barry Hora	043 622 843 Wk.9997 4412
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	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
Glebe	Second Tuesday	Ring for details of meeting address	Donna Toussard	9660 8603



Special Message Inside

DIALOGUE MEETINGS OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY AREA				
LOCATION	DAY OF MONTH	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
Ourimbah	5th Sundays	RMB 6445 Enterprise Drive Ourimbah	11 am Barry Hora	043 622 843 Wk.9997 4412
Nowra Jervis Bay	First Sunday	North Nowra Community Centre Nowra	11am Joan Everitt	02 4443 4727
Headless Workshops - Sept 6, Nov 1, Jan 3, Mar 7. (First Sunday every second month)				