



Issue 56 –September 1999

Meetings (10.30am - 3rd Sunday of every month)

81 Greville Street , Chatswood

Next Meetings –19 Sept 99 17 October 99

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The original Nowletter 56 was lost. This copy was reconstructed from a printed file copy in July 2004

*(More Responses to David Clouston's Challenge
'Are we in a Rut?'- IssueNo.54)*

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A reminder that the Nowletter is an experiment in communication and an extension of the dialogue process. Our local Dialogue takes the form of regular meetings in the Sydney area but of course, the point is to live it and the big question is whether we can bring it into our day to day living. The most obvious use of the Nowletter is the provision of a link for those who want to know what is going on but are unable to attend the meetings. The experimental aspect arises from the notion that a group of 'ordinary' people linked together, or gathered, in an enquiry into 'truth' or, as I prefer, into 'what is really going on' are far more likely to get it together than those committed to the search for truth through commitment to some external source or authority. For this reason, the enterprise depends completely on reader participation plus whatever I and others pull in from parallel activities. I am grateful for your recent contributions which are keeping me busy but there is a silent majority of readers from whom I would appreciate the odd article or letter now and again.

The Nowletter appears between 10 and 12 times every year and is a vehicle for news and views about awakening to what is really going on. Contributions from readers are considered the most valuable content so please think about letting me have your views, experiences, discoveries and responses.

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Yes, we are we in a rut

I feel it is important to respond to David's observations about the Dialogue process, specifically at Chatswood. He has certainly put forward a very stimulating challenge. I think he's also tuned in perceptively to 'what is' actually happening.

I guess those who have considered David's suggestion that we may be in a rut, and Warwicles point that much of what we say is predictable, are reacting in different ways for different reasons. I for one was moved to shut up for a while to reflect on the implications of these statements. I've since begun to wonder whether many of us are truly able to realize and confront our own limitations, or even admit they exist?

I reacted strongly to a number of recent articles from various contributors to the "Nowletter" who seem to me to imply that their knowledge, understanding or insight into the nature of self, thought and consciousness is informed by some mysterious source other than their own mental constructions (conscious or unconscious). I seriously contest such assertions as I found much of what was written to be a reinterpreted synthesis of Krishnamurti's teachings interspersed with a projection of ideals as to how other people 'should' think and behave. Rarely among the articles was there an owning of what was asserted. I respect and appreciate the contributions to the dialogue though I question whether the authors are alert to just how self deceptive and undetectable a tenacious illusion and/or the persistence of an old insight can be (not other people's illusions but our own).

I may sound harshly critical but I'm not excluding myself from scrutiny. My strong reaction is equally due to the battle with my own tendency to assume the authority of some marvellous insight I think I've had - I then wonder why the rest of the world doesn't want me to share it with them. The trouble with insights, I've found, is their paradoxical nature. We think they are a gain when really they are a loss.

As I see it, I am not a separate entity having a special insight and gaining a deeper

understanding of myself. Real insights, _penetrate the ego structure so that less of 'me' can prevent direct contact with the truth of 'what is'. The trap is that an insight may only be relevant to the particular conditioning of a particular individual at a particular moment. Ifs not a flag to wave or a feather to add to one's plumage, it's an opening from which reflection can take place more accurately on the psychological conditions that constitute the identity known and felt emotionally as Terry (or Jack or Jill).

The impact of my own experience of Dialogue over several years has effectively brought to the surface, and helped disperse, a number of delusions and misconceptions that had previously distorted my perceptions for decades.

It continues to humble me in the face of growing realization of how limiting and destructive my attachment to identity has been (the obstacle being the 'attachment' aspect not the 'identity aspect').

Speaking from a very personal basis (I can hardly speak from *anyone else's*) my ongoing experiencing: (in the sense of Alan's 5th category - Nowletter 55) is that of nagging torment - the torment of duality, of selfishness, of discontent of disgust in the face of a grotesquely brutal world. I am naturally concerned, and fortunately alerted to what has become clear - that the source of my woes (and potential salvation?) resides within. Pm also fortunate to have realized that anything I attempt to do 'pro-actively' to alter this state of affairs, can only serve to add to it. The situation doesn't require 'doing: any more to change it, it requires understanding that which continues to cause it.

I see Dialogue as an essential feed-back loop, a mirror that helps us to see ourselves through the eyes of others, more objectively than through introspection. I don't think very many people are willing or perhaps ready to confront a direct and true reflection of the subtly sophisticated 'self with its great myriad of clever deviations and concealed double standards. In too many ways we have proven to be a plague on the planet - an insatiable parasite consuming not only life sustaining resources but the right to life of alt other species. Our arrogance, our ignorance and our fear define what we are, and confine what we could be.

I've found evidence in everyday life of selfless benevolence and heart-warming kindness which I believe to be inevitably within the reach of human potential. Though we are capable of gross atrocities we are even more capable of overwhelming compassion. To question the nature of ego is not a rejection of life, it is to explore the causes in consciousness that substitute fantasy for reality. Our handicap is a paradoxical dilemma because we have to realize the fantasy before possibly seeing the reality. I think dialogue offers the best hope of effecting the necessary change.

Are we in a rut? Yes, of course - and we have been for thousands if not millions of years,

To those who think they have an answer superior to the arduous process of dialogue, I ask you humbly to consider who it is you are really trying to get the message through to - in your heart of hearts, is it not truly anyone else but you?

Now that I've put my foot in it as the latest self-appointed review critic for the Nowletter I'd better distinguish a few articles that I thought were inspiring, simple and (heaven forbid) 'personal' renditions of first hand experience : the headless email letters from Lucian Loren-Rymaszewski and Joel Agee were a joy to read they were pragmatic, matter of fact and courageously honest. They shared their experience with us without preaching it. The golfing article was very entertaining and I enjoyed Peter's and/or Celia's writing style. It's probably a good book.

It was delightful to read Lyn Willmott's masterful piece of thought provoking imagery. Rushcutters Park. made me feel seven again. Thanks Warwick! Katie Marin's response to her primary school education was an important indication, I thought that what might be right for one child isn't necessarily the same for them all. Alan's sixth category was insightful and a useful pointer to what I believe dialogue is wanting from us. The value of 'experiencing' may not satisfy the agenda hungry but it may provide a powerful learning shift for those willing to avail themselves of it.

All the articles from the last few Nowletters (whether I agreed with them or not) had various pearls laced through them and all were interesting and significant contributions to Dialogue process. I object to the condescending tone of some but even they provide a contrast which helps me to appreciate the diverse thinking styles, varying perspectives and different motives that collectively shape our humanity and steer our course.

Terry O'Brien

A Query re the Female/Male Balance

Having attended the Chatswood Dialogue groups several times during the past year, I have been struck by the male/female mix. What is it about Dialogue that attracts the men? Doing a head count a couple of months ago, I found the man/woman ratio was about 2: 1.

Other types of groups I have attended (e.g., Psychodrama, Processwork~ Conflict Resolution and various personal growth, creativity or relationship groups) have been almost exclusively female.

I haven't read the Mars/Venus book and I am reluctant to accept big differences between the sexes valuing equality and the commonality of all humans. However, to stir the pot, I throw 'm one hypothesis; is Dialogue an intellectual activity, whereas other aforementioned groups involve the emotions, the body and aspects of personal vulnerability. Are women more inclined to take risks in these areas?

Marian Nisbett

Listening & the new Meme

I enjoyed reading David's and Gary's articles on dialogue and if 'm a face-to-face situation I would no doubt respond with some short statement such as; "Ah but, dialogue to me is sharing together the process of communicating- or "dialogue is dancing with the unknown". If that were all I had to say (which really

it is) the Editor would be on my back for more, asking me what do I mean or charge me by the word for the space. So as Tim Shore would say "there is more"!

Dialogue is possibly the new memetics (meme) of communication and not a tool 'to-be-come enlightened'. I being an unrealised enlightened human person (low level, of course) find dialogue is a bloody good tool to communicate with others whilst attending/surrendering to the art of listening. No observation (listening), no dialogue! Both David and Gary's articles are their own observations which they have communicated to me - the reader. Are we not dialoguing? Or is it that I am not listening and merely responding from my prejudice?

Quote: - Krishnamurti's 13th conversation with David Bohm 'The Ending of Time'.

'I think it is that if I could Listen with all my being, with all my attention, it takes place'.

Barry Hora

Dialogue & Outcomes

The value of dialogue lies in the fact that it is the most potent weapon we have at our disposal for revealing the essence (what is actually going on) and of sharing what we are 'in common'. It is far more effective than any of the traditional means: meditation, worship, discussion, dance, mushrooms-, listening to teachers, etc.

Anybody find that hard to swallow?

Of course! There is something missing from the statement or, more accurately, it is trying to lift more than it can carry. I am pretending a certainty that can not be justified and assuming that what is true for me must be true for everybody else. It is this sort of unquestioned assumption and assertive certainty that can destroy dialogue and if, as some are claiming, this problem is rife then we are failing dialogue by not addressing the problem face to face in the meetings.

The 'Are we in a Rut' dialogue raises a number of issues and made me try again to deal with the constantly recurring question of what is Dialogue really all about. My latest answer was included in a recent response to Richard Lang who runs the 'Look for Yourself' email conference and other headless activities in the UK and on the net. Richard had mentioned the problem of 'no outcomes' in another context and I thought of making my contribution here by way of reprinting this short exchange.

Richard who had just returned from what he described as a 'dance camp' said:

Another temptation on such a course as this dance camp is that there is something to get. This was a Gabrielle Roth inspired dance camp, which means that movement was explored in the framework of five basic rhythms, which are the stages you would see in a wave as it begins, grows, breaks, splashes down, and returns to calm This is a very useful tool for working with movement, with feelings, with any processes that we might experience in our lives. But I know the temptation of thinking that there is something to get a release to be had, an intensity to be felt and insight to be arrived at. Falling into this way of thinking, I am left feeling I haven't made it, that I lack something essential.

But resting in no-thingness, I know that I have it, anytime and all the time. Then, whatever I am given, from the One – for this is where all things come from – is just what I need Though it may not be what I think I need!

And because that seemed close to what is so often presented as an objection to Dialogue, I replied:

That is wonderfully expressed The idea that nothing is gained i.e., no outcome, is also often interpreted as purposeless activity in our dialogue explorations whereas the whole point is to do with process not outcome. My understanding of dialogue in the Bohmian sense is to find out whether it is possible to relate free of the images we have about one another and free of the concepts we have about everything. It will

be clear why I find headlessness an invaluable approach in these meetings because it enables the flow, in this 'aware capacity here', of whatever is going on and that is enough. At the same time, I am so conditioned to seek successful outcomes that I find myself getting caught up in periodic waves of dissatisfaction. A further parallel with your report is that in response to 'too much head and too little heart' complaints about dialogue, we recently introduced a focusing session as a means of breking through to an acceptable balance. I always felt that seeing was enough to balance the heady stuff but now we are into seeing, feeling and thinking. Has anyone got any other suggestions? Maybe movement dance? Perhaps you will be the one to introduce us to the Gabrielle Roth approach on your next visit

Richard mentioned that David Clouston has been to see him and that they'd had a long chat. I hope we'll be able to include a note from David on his England trip in our next issue.

Alan Mann

The Rut - In or Out?

In dialogue meetings, I find we often speak with too much certainty and don't know when to stop. By definition, if we engage 'm dialogue we can't be in a rut because dialogue is a process which challenges certainty and involves being aware of group needs. So we are only in a rut when we are not 'dialoguing'.

Margot Mann

Orthodox Abbot & Zen Monk

(I include this report from Jan Hamer on her visit to Nacton because it deals with the question of whether there is a practical aspect of 'seeing', dialogue, etc-and here are two affirmative responses from two quite different angles. Ed)

My 29-hour visit to Douglas Harding's Gathering allowed me to hear two out of three of the speakers he had invited, people steeped in religious traditions who feel that their practice has been influenced by Douglas's work in "Headlessness." The two speakers I heard were an Eastern Orthodox monk and a Rinzai Zen abbot.

The first, Father Silouan (not sure of the spelling), an imposing black-robed bespectacled monk with long hair and flowing beard, discovered Douglas and saw his True Nature in the paper bag exercise twenty-five years ago – though he really only got it, he said, riding home afterward on his bicycle. Orthodoxy, for him, came later. The relationship of Seeing to his religious practice lies in Douglas's question "How do we live our Seeing?" He views the primary confusion of living as our glorification of the "me" rather than of the "I am," and he traces the real name of God, going back through Greek to Hebrew as "I am," (not "God" or "Lord,") affirming that the meaning of that "I am," at least to him, is what Douglas is talking about, the Void or Who You Really Are.

The word "Doxa" as in "orthodoxy" started by meaning "opinion," but eventually came to mean "glory," and the glorification of this "I am" is, Father Silouan says, the primary purpose of the liturgy. Seen this way, "the rite is permeated with wonder," the sacrament bringing one to a higher state, though he admitted that "we tend to run away from this mystery." He suggested the "me" is inherently condemned to hell, with its passions and sickness, and to awake to "I am" is the only remedy, the only penance. Not all are able to awake, but that some can is sufficient.

The listeners had some questions: how does the elaborate liturgy and multi-layered dogma and terminology enhance or support simple garden variety Seeing, or does it instead deflect one from the simplicity? Also, does emphasis on the need to transcend human weakness and passions through identification with the "I am" lead to non-acceptance of the human condition, self-hatred, a preoccupation with sin and penance? (Catherine Hardmig even went so far as to suggest radically, "We love one another because of our weaknesses-they are necessary. I can't love a perfect being!")

The next day, Abbot John Toler padded into the meeting room in traditional slippers and a different kind of robe to talk to us about Zen. His head is shaven, his hooded, rheumy blue eyes seem to take in everything very quietly and from a great distance as if he were looking on from another century. Arriving

□ in Japan by ship 45 years ago as a Texan drafted into the US Army, John was surprised to find beauty and hospitality in a country against which he had held a prejudice. He learned Japanese and worked for ten years in an advertising firm there, becoming involved in Zen practice as a layman. Gradually his practice became so consuming that he decided he might as well become a monk, and applied to undergo the arduous, years-long training required.

John spent some time acquainting us, by unexpectedly comic and dramatic demonstrations, with the training and life of a monk, from the moment of arriving at the monastery, bowing and supplicating acceptance that is ritually denied for days. "They even throw you out in the street twice a day," said John, but then, with his wickedly incongruous grin, admitted that wasn't so hard for him because it allowed him to smoke a cigarette.

Moving through his training and the arduous life of a monk, meditating with little sleep or food, begging outdoors in all weathers, and continuously ruminating on the koans posed by the roshis, John eventually became an abbot of a monastery in a rural area, where he happily remains at the age of 68. Only a few years ago did he come across a book of Douglas's translated into Japanese that fulfilled his Zen practice. The roshi, he said, had always told him he knew the truth, but just didn't know that he knew. "After I encountered Douglas's work," said John, "I knew that I knew, And what was it that I knew? That the innermost core of my Self is unknowable. "

In light of all the terminology and concepts that Orthodoxy seems to have attached to their version of the above, the "I am," I couldn't resist asking John if there's any more to be said about this unknowability. That slow Texan drawl and grin: "There might be a lot more that could be said ... but this is probably enough."

Does he share the point with his colleagues? If they are people who seem as if they could be interested or receptive, he might give them a book of Douglas's, or show them the pointing finger.

True Zen doesn't exist without Headlessness, though many practice Zen without reaching that point. He gives as an example the concept of the Vajra Sword, cutting off delusion. "That sword is really about cutting off your head – what greater delusion is there?" What, someone asks, is the difference between Zen and Douglas's work? Both headlessness and Zen allow you to see what you really really are. But that grin again... "Zen makes it more difficult!"

Ultimately, the Zen work seems to address the same question posed by Father Silouan – how to live one's Seeing. "Even after you know who you are," says John, "you have to keep at it; that's where true Zen training begins. "

'Heisenberg'

(Note to the conference from Jan Hamer on her return to the USA after a recent visit to the UK)

Dear friends, I hesitate to interrupt the current meditative silence of the conference remember David Farrell's describing it as a creature that moves, breathes, and sleeps. But this passage leapt out at me and begged to be shared with you all – from a play in London by Michael Frayn, *Copenhagen*, about the wartime visit of German physicist Werner Heisenberg to Danish physicist Niels Bohr and Bohr's wife. Here is Heisenberg speaking:

"How difficult it is to see even what's in front of one's eyes. All we possess is the present, and the present endlessly dissolves into the past. Bohr has gone even as I turn to see Margrethe ... Margrethe slips into history even as I turn back to Bohr And yet how much more difficult still it is to catch the slightest glimpse of what's behind one's eyes. Here I am at the centre of the universe, and yet all I can see are two smiles that don't belong to me ... I can feel a third smile in the room, very close to me. Could it be the one I suddenly see for a moment in the mirror there? And is the awkward stranger wearing it in any way connected with this presence that I can feel in the room? This all-enveloping, unobserved presence?"

Jan Hamer

Focusing at Greville Street

There were 11 of at our introductory Focusing workshop which was facilitated by Marian Nisbett. (9 women and 2 men). This was my first serious contact with Focusing although I had read the introductory chapters to Gendlin's book some years ago. For those who know even less than me about it I will summarise the summary sheet which Marian handed out.

- Bringing Awareness into the body
- Finding or Inviting a felt sense
- Acknowledgement (of the felt sense)
- Getting a handle on it (What word or image matches this feeling?)
- Finding a relationship with it
- Finding a relationship with it
- Being like a friend (Establishing a positive interaction with it)
- Being with it
- Questions (about how it fits in my life, congruity with body sense, etc.)
- Resonating (integrating with body sense) Receiving (Staying with it)
- Coming back to the body (overall effect in relation to body)
- Ending (Review & conclusion of process)

This is a hopelessly inadequate way of describing the process and I recommend the book, Focusing by Eugene T Gendlin, Bantam. (I found out that the 'g' in Gendlin, is a soft one, as in gentle).

We did a guided exercise with Marian and then split into pairs and took turns to listen to one another. The problem I took into my exercise had an associated anxiety which I located in the solar plexus region. I gave attention to this during the course of the exercise and found there was quite a shift. The feeling remained at the end but it was as though I had done a 180 degree turn and this had somehow changed my attitude completely. So, although the problem was still there and the feeling remained, the negativity which was generating the anxiety had evaporated. So that was my first experience of Focusing.

I am probably a typical person who takes the body for granted and dismisses the sensory signals, the feelings of discomfort, by pushing them aside or covering with some distraction or other so it was quite an eye-opener for me. There is a parallel too with my interest 'in 'seeing', in the headless sense, which is also omnipresent. but also almost totally overlooked. And the value for dialogue, if dialogue is about what is really going on in the widest sense, needs no elaboration.

It shares another characteristic with 'seeing' ' in that it is not clear what happens next. It is a very personal enquiry and skill and not something that lends itself to group work but, like seeing, it would make an enormous difference to group activity if it was practised by the participants. I would like some feedback on whether anyone would be interested in follow-up activity and what form that should take.

Alan Mann

Introductory comment: The spot below has been filled in recent months by a series of short pieces by Peter Crook In view of the 'Are we in a Rut Dialogue' I thought the following introductory comments which I have lifted from one of Peter's leaflets would remind us that there are other parallel activities offering what seem to be similar approaches to our Sydney Dialogue meetings as well as contributing to the Dialogue.

An outline of intent for discussion groups

This leaflet is to explain briefly the purpose of the small group sharings, private one-to-one sessions and talks on specific topics relating to human consciousness and the art of enquiry.

To explain something new you sometimes must show first what it is not. The work is not dealing with Any religion or belief system or creating these in another form.

*It is not teaching any system of self-help, mental visualisation, meditation, metaphysical topics; neither confirming or denying their reality.

*Developing mind power, positive self-images, psychic abilities or developing the consciousness that you have any further.

*Coming to any conclusions which make statements that confirm any view of relating to the world.

The small group gathering are not intended to have:

*People sitting and intellectualising about metaphysical subjects.

*Any individual pointing out his own point of reality and persuading everyone else that they are right or wrong.

*Individuals debating abstracted theories or supporting each other's neuroses.

It is interesting in itself why, as human beings, we attach ourselves to someone else's words, or to a particular system of self-help. It is the consciousness that seeks to develop itself that must be looked at. This self-supporting and self-maintaining consciousness, which exists within each of us, requires an environment which supports and nourishes the art of inner enquiry. The art of enquiry is looking at the movements of consciousness as they exist within ourselves. This is not introspective self-analysis or the analysis of theories or our belief systems, but a way of looking at these movements of the mind.

It is looking into, not at, a common movement which exists within each of us. For example, the urge to be more aware - looking into the movement of energy which moves the person towards something. Most importantly it seeks to discover who is it that wants to be more aware, and on what basis are particular systems or dogmas chosen to achieve this awareness.

These gatherings are only to provide a space where you can genuinely, by yourself or in reflection with others, break the flow of the conditioned human consciousness which exists within us all. No one is better qualified to enquire than anyone else. Because you have meditated for ten years, have psychic abilities, hold degrees in philosophy or have read all the metaphysical books, makes you no more consciously aware than someone who is busy just coping with daily life with all its pressures.

Peter Crook