

Greville Street Meetings
3rd Sunday of every month
20 February
19 March
16 April

Issue No. 61
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Editor's note,

Thank you to this month's contributors. Long before the material for this issue started to roll in I had asked Virginia Parsell whether we could include her wonderful poem on death. It is quite coincidental that a number of the articles which then came together in this issue also dealt with death in one way or another. So death turned out to be a mini theme for the month.

It was great to meet some of the Victorian readers at the launch of Gary's book, some for the first time, and we are thinking about ways of doing it again. The mysterious numbers which precede your name and address on the label of your Nowletter show the month in which your subscription becomes or became due.

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 .

Annual Subscription \$12
Please make cheques payable to Alan Mann

Conversations with the Down-Under Mystic: An informal interview with John Wren-Lewis by Dan Sutera
Originally published by The Self-Knowledge Symposium Foundation based on the three universities of North Carolina, USA.

In a recent issue of *What is Enlightenment? Magazine* (<http://www.moksha.org>), Ken Wilber described enlightenment as the "radical realization of the ever-present condition of all conditions, a radical freedom in its radical fullness, an infinite Release in the midst of misery, a tacit realization that you are utterly one with all that is arising moment to moment in any and all domains, high or low, sacred or profane." To which the Enlightened John Wren-Lewis replied, "Well, yes, except on Thursdays! What in the *hell* does that mean!?!"

My curiosity about the seventy-seven year old author and skeptic-turned-mystic was sparked at a Self Knowledge Symposium (SKS) meeting at Duke University in the fall of 1998, when Aug Turak brought "The Dazzling Dark," an article John had written for *What Is Enlightenment?* (Volume 4, No.2). The article recounted his near-death experience and subsequent immersion in "eternity consciousness" or what is more commonly called spiritual Enlightenment. Raised Roman Catholic, I've always been uneasy dealing with the idea of "Enlightenment" and some of the more esoteric things talked about at the SKS. When I went to Australia for a semester abroad last spring, a few other SKSers suggested that I find John Wren-Lewis and ask him about his experiences in person. Why not? I thought. In Sydney, I found his number in the phone book. I called him up to ask him if he would like to meet for coffee, but ended up in a more than three-hour phone conversation with him. In his insightful, kind, rambling, rational, and witty manner, John did the best he could to answer all my questions about his experience and Enlightenment in general.

Once an outspoken skeptic of mysticism, John was thrust unexpectedly into enlightenment in 1983 as a result of a near death experience. On a long-distance bus in Thailand, he ate a piece of poisoned candy from a would-be thief. Though he didn't have an out-of-body experience, didn't see any bright white lights or meet any spirits, John woke up in a hospital bed in a new state of consciousness, which he would later come to call "the Dazzling Dark." John had been a long-time spiritual skeptic, and was a strong proponent of the "Death of God" movement in the 1960s. Although realizing after his experience that the mystics had been right all along, John has stayed true to his scientific roots and has been working hard to make Enlightenment understandable to the average person. Bringing Enlightenment "down to earth" is the main theme of his upcoming book, *The 9:15 to Nirvana*, in which he tries to explain simple things, such as how Enlightenment makes your corn flakes taste different.

After our initial conversation over the phone, we met in the city, where my friend Colin and I helped him carry a second-hand MacIntosh back to his place so he could finish his book. He lived in a picturesque location; it was on the coast, overlooking the Sydney harbor bridge. And John looked just like I thought he would energetic and alert, especially considering his age. As we spoke in his one-bedroom apartment, cluttered with spiritual research and notes for his book, John enthusiastically offered insights into the truth of existence. This time I came armed with a tape-recorder so as not to miss a word.

"My first realization after the accident was that nature did not involve suffering at all, it was only the human mind that was out of step with natural consciousness," explained John. "Human consciousness is unaware of the unconditional love of the universe!" John is now aware of that love, but says that he spends only about 50% of his day in eternity consciousness, since concentration of any kind causes the eternal, or the "Dazzling Dark," to temporarily recede. He is working towards perpetual eternity consciousness, and though some gurus have been claimed to have reached it, he doubts if it is possible. John experiences two types of regressions into normal consciousness; the first he calls a "slip-out," which happens once or twice a week, the second he calls "screening." When John needs to concentrate on something, the Dazzling Dark is pushed to the background, and the "role" of John Wren-Lewis takes the attention on the forefront of his mind. He used the metaphor of a camera shutter closing briefly then re-opening so he can see the world "correctly" (in eternity consciousness) again. Occasionally, the camera shutter gets "stuck," and this results in the slip-out. But he falls back into Enlightenment as soon as he remembers the Dazzling Dark, and no harm is done.

The other kind of regression is a more extreme slip-out, the shutter closes, and John cannot relocate the Dark. This has happened to him only a couple of times, and it has always been associated with severe physical or emotional pain. John describes the time when he is apart from eternity as his own "dark night of the soul."

One thing about the prospect of Enlightenment has always bothered me: the notion of the complete loss of self and identity. I asked John about this-is it true? Do you really cease being who you are?

In his enlightened state, John says it is as though nothing has changed and yet everything has changed. He has retained his personality, needs, and desires, but now is aware that the entirety of his existence is simply one of the infinite ways the universe is expressing itself moment by moment when I asked him if it was worth it, he says definitively that "Yes, this is the best thing that's ever happened to me and it's the natural birthright of everyone and I haven't got a clue how to reach it!" In fact, he feels that most

methods people practice to try to reach enlightenment are counter-productive in that they concentrate on self-effort and think along the lines of time and causality. Although the acausality of enlightenment may sound like bad news at first, John says that it is also good news in a sense because there is no need to kill yourself with spiritual practices or worry about making irreversible mistakes on the spiritual path. In the sixteen years since his experience, he has sought out other people who have permanent Enlightenment experiences. He has thus far found fifteen, and only two had previous spiritual backgrounds. Just as we are all different people, John told me, there is an infinite variety in the types of Enlightenment experiences that people have. John says the eternity/God/Dazzling Dark loves the variety. The best you can do in the meantime is be aware and to "travel hopefully."

"And besides," says John, "Death takes you straight there anyway!"

Now he really had my attention. I realized more acutely than ever before that the primary motivation behind my interest in spirituality was my fear and fascination with death and the prospect of life after death. So I popped the question: "what happens to you after you die?"

"I don't know. I haven't died yet!" John said with a laugh what he really meant was that he didn't know specifics about what part of a person survived death or what exactly happens to it, but he could tell me that some sort of "personal essence" returns to the unconditional love of the Dazzling Dark. Partly this knowledge derives from a real sense of closeness that John feels with family and friends that have passed away, a feeling that what was "good" in them is still contained in the Dark somehow. However, John is quick to point out that it is more than just a "sense" that there is "life" after death, he *knows*.

"The Dark," he says, "is constantly there, producing everything at every moment, from the big bang to the final whimper. when you die, the Dark in you lives on." John likens the whole space-time universe to a theatre in which eternity is playing out the "time game." The only place to go when your personal "time game" is over is offstage, and back to the Dazzling Dark. No judgement, no hellfire and brimstone, simply a return home to eternal love. "The entire concept of a fallen angel is ridiculous." says John, "I can't imagine anyone choosing not to have Enlightenment!" However, the fact that there is no hell is not to say that there is no universal morality. John clarified, "Although there is no sin that goes unforgiven, as Christ taught, that which is not in accord with unconditional love is immoral."

As a great sigh of relief echoed through my soul; I felt a new sense of vitality and freedom. But at the same time, I felt an overwhelming aimlessness due to the fact that there no longer seemed to be a huge "agenda"

for life. So I asked John, "If you were in my shoes, twenty-one years old and unenlightened, with a world of opportunities before you, what would you do?"

Characteristically, the playful John Wren-Lewis quoted Shakespeare, saying, "'There is nothing serious in mortality.' Live mindful of the fact that life is nothing but a grand play," he advised, "and become more settled day by day in the knowledge that death is but a return home. Remember that happiness is in the moment and its value is itself."

And with that, I was at peace, maybe for the first time ever. After years of mental turmoil and anguish over parting with constrictive Roman Catholic beliefs, and subsequently moving into a more worldly, open-minded, and rational spirituality, my feet had finally found some stable ground. In retrospect, John told me little that I hadn't already theorized or suspected, but being an extreme skeptic (just as he had been), I needed to see it to believe it. It is truly transforming to look with trust into a man's eyes as he sincerely tells you, "I know God." John Wren-Lewis did not bring my spiritual journey to an end, but to a new beginning. He replanted in me a mustard seed of faith that had long been uprooted. And for that, I thank him.

Dan Sutera

Nowhere Man - Launch

Margot and I enjoyed the hospitality of Jo and Gary for five days following the launch of Gary's book "Nowhere Man" at the The Ozone Hotel Queenscliff on Saturday 29 January. In addition to meeting Jo and Gary's friends and family we also met some of the extended Nowletter family some of whom we hadn't met before: Lyn Willmott, Eric Best, Sebastian and Candida Carvalho and Graham Watts. We also met Frank and Margaret (Jorkin?) friends of Dan.

The launch itself went smoothly and the book is now sailing off into the unknown. Copies are available from Gary at \$20 plus postage of \$5. I think the book is unique in that it combines four elements in the one package; the biographical detail of the life experiences which preceded the change, the change itself, the effect of the change and the relevance of the Hipworth experience to those of us who are interested in what has happened and is happening in Gary's life. If you want a copy order through me and I'll arrange for Gary to send.

After the ceremony we all went round to Gary and Jo's house where Jo and her supporters turned on a handsome barbecue whilst we sat around chatting and dialoguing on the lawn. One of the bright ideas to arise was the possibility of a long-weekend group dialogue and gathering somewhere on the Vic/NSW border. More of this in the next issue.

Alan Mann

Further Impressions of the Headless Way

Introductory Note, by Shawn Nevins

My visit with Douglas Harding was inspiring, Metta. (Metta Zetty) You told me to, "imagine that you have arrived and things are perfect as they are." It took the visit to Harding for that to sink in. Harding's techniques of "seeing" allowed me to see what you asked me to imagine.

Further Impressions of the Headless Way

"I am not asking you to understand, I am asking you to look," by Saint Theresa, is a quotation filled with challenge.

Douglas Harding quoted her early in the twelve days I spent with him in England. The challenge is to experience rather than think about Reality; to drop one's beliefs about their nature and the spiritual path. The danger in the challenge is in potentially exchanging one set of beliefs for another. It is easier to believe in El Dorado than go there.

I attended a four-day workshop with Douglas Harding in England and spent the following week at his house. I wanted to immerse myself in the man and his message and determine if his way could lead one to discover their true nature. What follows is to help you and me to learn from what I heard, saw, felt, and thought over that twelve days.

The four-day workshop, billed as a "Gathering," drew approximately 45 people to Felsted, England. Catherine and Douglas Harding spoke each morning for a couple of hours, three guest speakers took a turn in the afternoons, and the evenings saw a question and answer/discussion format. Interspersed were some yoga, dance, singing, and zazen.

Douglas made a point of saying he did not structure this Gathering. Rather, he did what the organizers asked him to do. Several times he said it was an unusual format and I don't think he approved of the melange of offerings. I gather a typical workshop is focused on the Hardings and the experiments. That is what I will focus on, as well. The stories of crazy Irish psychotherapists, drug-fried Osho devotees, and the cigarette-smoking and saki-drinking Zen abbot will wait till later.

The Harding's format was similar to the workshop in Princeton on which I reported earlier this year. Even most of the experiments were familiar. One notable exception involved people drawing what they see of themselves from the first person perspective (not an outside observer drawing you, but what you see of yourself). What results are 45 pictures of bodies with empty space above the chest, which is essentially Harding's realization of his true nature: a headlessness that reveals an aware nothingness containing everything.

I could not escape the fact that the empty space, the void, was the same for every person. We all share this

void. More startling is what appears when you lay the pictures in a circle on the floor, so that the empty space faces toward the center of the circle and the feet face outward. "Either we're all crazy or there is something profound here," I said to myself. There on the floor was a perfect representation of the fingers on the hand of God -- the Atman and the Brahman. Forty-five bodies sharing and emanating from the Void. This was not some thousand-year-old picture in a book of metaphysics, either. It was freshly made, moments ago, by living hands.

Harding's way is in turning concepts into precepts, making you feel that you just experienced what you previously only dreamed about. A key point for Douglas is that this seeing is always available. No long years of discipline and training are needed to see who you really are.

He says:

"If I have to know anything about Douglas [psychologically] before I can see, then I'm stuck."

"I fear this [discussion] is descending into the psychological realm and that's not what Catherine and I are about. We're about this person here [at awareness] and not the little one here."

"There is no way of polishing that brick [the human] and making it a mirror."

"This is not a matter of deconditioning. There is no end to deconditioning the human. The deconditioned nature is present, always, right now."

"If you don't look now, it's not because you aren't ready, but because you don't want to."

"I think what I've done in my life is test the teaching of Ramana Maharshi -- that the solution to all your problems is to see who you are. I've found this to be true."

"If we're serious about our problems, we go to where they are resolved [the Center]."

Naturally, this position of Douglas's stirred up a hornet's nest of psychotherapists in the audience. After much discussion, Douglas did agree that in rare instances a person might be so sick that they needed the help of psychology before they could see their real nature.

Through the experiments, Douglas believes seeing of one's true nature is made easy; perhaps too easy.

"You've got to see it and take it seriously -- not dismiss it."

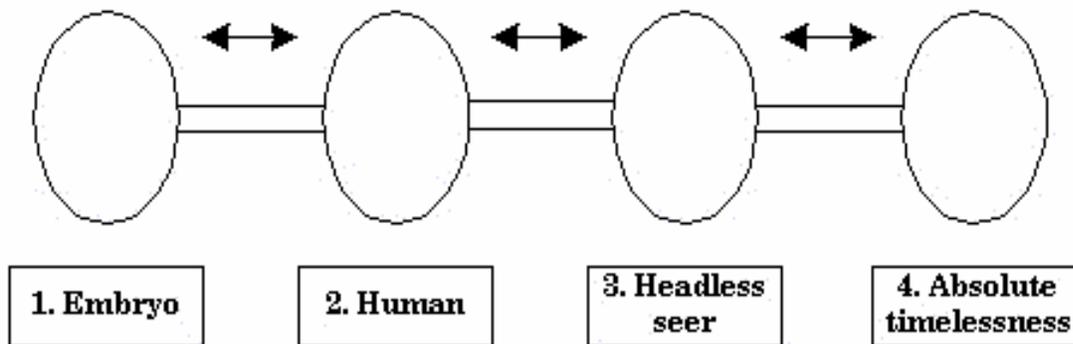
"You may have the seeing, but miss the significance."

What is difficult is to not forget the seeing; to live it consciously everyday until it becomes habit.

"Everyone lives from their true nature. To live from there is not seeing that you're there....You're not conscious of it."

"It's possible to see who you really are and be a disgrace to this vision, until you are settled in it."

While the experiments dominated most of the Harding's time, they did delve into some concepts regarding the nature of the human. Douglas divides the human into "Awareness (spirit), mind, and body," with "mind providing the filling for awareness." Douglas



also diagrammed an interesting "Four Wombs (Stages) of Life":

Note the double arrows between each womb. They signify how one travels back and forth between the wombs. People try to escape the traumas of life and return to the embryonic stage through pleasure. Those on the Headless Way continually bounce between wombs 3 and 2 as they try to live the seeing. There is even travel back from womb 4 (death) by near-death experiencers. Harding also notes the significance of the tunnels that connect each womb. We are born from a tunnel, Harding utilizes tunnels in some of his experiments, and tunnels are generally reported in NDEs.

I found it impossible to judge from the workshop if Harding was pointing a way to enlightenment. I needed to get closer to the man. Ever giving of his time, he invited me to spend the week at his home in exchange for helping him with the gardening. Thus began a magical week at Sholland Hill, England.

"This was my path and perhaps it will be of use to someone else." Douglas Harding

I believe this is what every true spiritual teacher says. No teacher can lay out a sure path for the seeker. Every teacher's path is infused with his personality, and the student's best hope is that they will find another piece to their path. That is what I hoped for from Harding.

Harding is ninety-years-old, has a full white beard and thinning white hair. He carries a healthy amount of weight with the careful gait of the elderly. Typically, he wears a t-shirt spotted with stains from preparing meals and marks from the blue pens he uses to sketch diagrams in his notebook. Harding is quite active, even though he swears he is naturally lazy. He spent his days reading and making sketches in preparation for a workshop in France, and in cooking three meals a day for the assorted folk staying with him that week, along with an occasional snooze. In between working and reading, we talked.

Douglas' conviction is deep. When he speaks, his words carry you with him. Sometimes he speaks as

passionately as a young man and at other times it's as if he's in the nothingness quietly calling out to you. I asked if when he first "saw" he was convinced of its validity. He simply said, "Yes," but it was as if a granite mountain whispered the answer, such was the authority. Still, while I glimpsed the nothingness that Douglas says is our true nature (our first personhood), I was not sure that was enlightenment. I expected enlightenment to carry a force of conviction that would leave one without a doubt as to Reality. Douglas says seeing is enlightenment (he doesn't like the word enlightenment, though) and that my doubt is typical resistance to the seeing. The third person (the little Shawn) continually throws up questions and concerns.

The key is to stick with the seeing until, "seeing becomes natural." "Remember you have a long habit of not-seeing," Harding says. He feels that, "determination, passion, and trusting (that the seeing will give you the answers) determine if one sticks with the seeing." As for why he's stuck with it, "I think what's kept my eye on the ball these sixty years is having something to do. Devising experiments has kept me on this. I think by giving this away I have gained it."

My pattern for the week was to glimpse my nothingness, then doubt it and ask Douglas my questions and concerns. Douglas's answers would lead me back to seeing without doubt, but shortly after I'd tumble into doubt again. Many of my questions centered on what seeing reveals about death. For Douglas, our true nature, consciousness, awareness, spirit, first personhood, center, voidness, or nothingness and everythingness (he uses these terms interchangeably), is timeless. It is outside the realm of birth and death. Your seeing center was always there, there before you were born and there after you die. While the headless seer in womb three dwells in time and timelessness, after death we dwell in the absolute timelessness of womb four. "The more we get used to seeing, the more we feel at home," he says. "Seeing is the homeopathic remedy for death."

When I asked if seeing affected what happens to you after death, Douglas laughed and said, "I think I'll refer this technical question to Abbot John [the Zen abbot staying with us]." Evidently, Douglas doesn't know or

care about escaping a possible wheel of life and death. One glimpse of seeing is the whole experience and the real work is in living the truth of what you see.

The classic Indian metaphysical question of what happens to consciousness in dreamless sleep drew this response from Douglas, "Of course the Indians say that dreamless sleep is God consciousness. For me, however, consciousness is timeless, so the question of consciousness in dreamless sleep is a dead duck [since sleep occurs in time]."

Looking for inconsistencies in Douglas's philosophy, I asked for an explanation of what was doing this seeing. Douglas said, "Looking in is consciousness turning upon itself -- God self-aware courtesy of Shawn. It seems like there is a third-person consciousness that has to do something to see the first-person consciousness. It's kind of a working hypothesis. It seems that way, but it's not really."

I also wondered why we couldn't always see clearly; if the third person obscured the first person. "Well, I might say it does in a way, but I try not to get too complicated. I try to stick to this (pointing to his face)... We all dither instead of being resolute in our handing over to seeing." Douglas says it is good to doubt and question everything he says, but questioning is often a form of procrastination. It is better to act; to do the experiments and see. As for my line of questioning, he said, "I think the more we focus on the seeing, the more these big metaphysical questions we bellyache about, will either be answered non-verbally or cease to be of importance to us."

Still, some of Douglas's ideas I couldn't help but question. He lent me a recent paper of his titled *God*. One of the points was that our body is universal. Literally, that all things make up our body. This stems from an idea of his early years that tools are a literal extension of the body (his *Spectre in the Lake* deals in depth with this).

Douglas explained to me that there is much of our body we can't feel such as cells, or hair, or gastric juices, so feeling can't be the criteria for judging what is and is not us. He said modern science supported the idea that all things were connected and any pin that drops is felt in the farthest corners of the universe. He felt this was important to understand and later said, "As a little child, we were cosmic in nature. As we get older, we are shrunk into a box. I think there's a part of us that remembers this and needs to go home. I think it's important mentally and spiritually."

Despite my mind's continual objections (the dragon which guards the pearl, Douglas would say), my moments of seeing the light lengthened as the week progressed. Especially evident was the fact that, "We are built at center to give our lives for others." While many seem to interpret this as an excuse for much hugging and brotherly love, I tended toward the grey tones that Douglas emphasizes. It simply seemed that

whenever I faced another person, they were the only one there. They entered into an awareness and action took place in that awareness. Our awareness is filled with others.

For me, seeing is frightening at times. Often, I feel myself slipping away as if someone just took the core out of me. That is replaced, though, by a simple awareness that becomes my new core. It is liberation to see that I am not my mind or my body. Even at Douglas's, though, the seeing fades in and out, and I wonder how it will fare in the real world. I asked Douglas how to maintain this seeing while I'm in the States: "Well, the best is in this face to face meeting. You're always meeting people. Are you going to meet them like this (hitting his two fists together), or like this (hitting an open hand against a closed fist)? It's a constant reminder to see who you really are. Of course, you're always welcome here and there are friends in the States and you can always share this with others. This (again hitting open hand against closed fist), though, I think there's the real secret to keeping this up."

To me, as well, the daily reminder of the seeing is in our face to face meetings. When I meet another person, do I really see two faces or is there only one? As my head dissolves when I turn my awareness upon the seer, my side of the meeting dissolves. As I die, I see how my awareness contains the world. As my first personhood dawns, my third person joins its place beside the other contents of consciousness. Little Shawn becomes just another piece of mind stuff.

Shawn Nevins

The Spiritual Ego

Human consciousness has reached a point of awareness which needs careful examination. People have followed many paths to reach a point of self awareness, inner peace and quietness. So it is not uncommon to meet individuals who have reached a state of consciousness where they can genuinely say that they are aware of a great sense of inner quietness. They can recognise when their minds are chattering and distracting them from the present moment. They can dissociate themselves from strong emotions and honestly recognise any inner reactions to external situations. They have reached a point of self realisation about themselves. This gives them a sense of contentment and a greater acceptance of their life as it is. This openness allows them the ability to flow much more spontaneously from moment to moment freer of their past conditioning. But with this awareness comes a very subtle state that needs careful enquiry. Many spiritual teachers have created an opportunity for a person to come upon this state of inner quietness and silence; however, along with this potential comes the sticky ground of self delusion.

Do we ever enquire into this state we have labelled as inner silence and awareness? Or, do we ever look into

our recognition of this state of being? If we want to use common language, this state is called the observer and the observed. Or the one who experiences and the experience itself. What is the entity that is aware of the state of its own existence? Intellectually I may know that it is simply the mind watching its own movements, but how can I come to actually see this within myself without consciously thinking about it?

My sense of awareness of being here and now, in my body, how I feel and what I am aware of is still attachment to the memory of myself. It is my sense of identity, and in a very subtle way, my ego. Spiritual concepts and teachers applaud and acknowledge this state of being aware, being present in the moment, of having self knowledge. Let's look at this state. How can you be talking to someone, working, sitting silently or walking, and at the same time be aware of the fact that you are silent, with no thoughts going through your mind? In itself it reflects a dualistic state. The very fact that someone can say that they feel sad or happy or are aware of a quietness or silence reflects that they still have sense of identity. A state of being is attachment to our ego. What you see and what you recognise is your content memory. This sense of recognition is your identity, your ego. The you when you speak of "my" or "I".

This conscious state of self awareness actually strengthens the observer: the "you" who is reading this page. You are not separate from the thoughts you see in your mind or the feelings you sense in your body. It is a subtle illusion to know that you are aware of something. What your mind is doing is just thinking about what it is aware of. What it is aware of is not the point; only the fact of it doing so.

The thought frame "I am aware, I am watching my emotions, I feel quiet" or "I am aware of being peaceful" or "I am happy, I am flowing, I sense a block of energy", shows that I have become attached to the awareness of myself.

All the new age, spiritual and human consciousness movements strengthen this form of conscious awareness. In essence, all we have achieved by practising self realising techniques is to modify our behaviour. We are now just more open, sensitive and peacefully aware of our state of existence, instead of being unaware of our thoughts, emotions and feelings. We seem to dissociate feelings and emotions from mind and thought and the processes of thinking as if they are two separate things. For example, if I am not aware of any thoughts in my mind but feel a sense of quietness, joy and emptiness then I have achieved the desired state of being silent within. This state of silent self-awareness is reinforced by spiritual leaders, their books and their philosophies. The emotions and feelings are not different or separate from the mind and thinking. They are one and the same thing. How can you be aware of anything without the mind? Any state of being you can recognise is sensory or else you

would not recognise it. So any recognition is based on memory, and therefore is within the realm of the mind and its movements called thought. There must be an experiencer to experience anything.

Recognising some sensation in myself and then expressing how I feel - expressing my awareness of the good or bad or quiet state of my being - can go on forever. In other words, observing the movements of your own mind. It is a subtle illusion to describe or label what you become aware of as Silence or Peacefulness or Stillness. You cannot be aware of silence. It is not conscious. you cannot touch it with the conscious mind. Silence is just there. Silence is silent. What you label as silence is merely the gap left when the mind is resting. Your mind can create a subtle state of watchful silence, quietness and a sense of being in the present moment. For example, how can you be aware of the present moment? To label it as so, you must be coming from a framework of knowing the past and the future. Each person is coming from what they themselves have learnt without realising that the mere expression of their point of view or idea of themselves or their concept of life, is the framework itself.

Thought can modify itself and investigate its own activities. You can change the feelings and emotions that you become aware of. For example you can just let thoughts come and go and not interfere with them. Just watch them ("like clouds in the sky" is the popular phrase). You can be a silent observer (thought stops itself and you hear no noise). Is this what you label as being silent? Are you playing the game of being aware, unknowingly?

There must be a point of self-reference to be able to explain any state of being.

In truth there is just watching. Not being aware that I am watching or knowing that I am watching myself, my feelings, my thoughts or what I see. Look carefully at this. What is the entity that can explain and express its own state? Don't just say "the mind" but see this now as it is happening. At what point do you recognise being silent, quiet or being present? Your attempts at awareness will just overlay your mental conditioning, and your actions - even though they may appear to have changed - are still based on your past sensory experiences. This state of being is your spiritual ego.

Peter Crook

Dead Alive

Each leaf on the tree is marching toward death.
Each person I see is marching toward death.
The sun in the sky is marching toward death.
How must I live as I march toward my death?

Am I a person on a march to death?
Is this object called me marching to death?
Is this single life a highway to death?
I only see no person here at all.

I die, I die right now to this someone.
 I perish as me in the light of day.
 I see no one here, just a world that lives.
 My death today means I cannot die twice.

I live as dead with the life of the whole.
 The world is my casket, bristling with life.
 The song of the universe celebrates
 A funeral that is everlasting life.

Virginia Parsell

Dialogue - Of not For the people.

Dialogue to me is the only forum that I personally know of which is representative of the people. The nature of dialogue is such that it can only be 'of the people' and but never 'for the people'.

What I draw from Christ's teachings is equality, fraternity and liberty. These qualities indicate the need for participation of people. Not the application of remedies for people through religions, governments, corporations and organizations. All of which now make up the greater part of our culture.

Barry Hora

Losing the Moon

We have included two reports by Warwick on his visits to the Byron Katie organisation and his meeting with Byron Katie herself. (Issues 59 & 60) Warwick lent me a small book - [Losing the Moon - Byron Katie Dialogues on Non-Duality, Truth and other Illusions.](#)

The book summarises her teaching and I have heard several tapes and read excerpts from the written records of exchanges between Katie and her students. I have been reading and listening to all this with the intention of getting a grasp of what the BK approach is all about.

Unlike most non-dual teachers BK provides a simple method of verifying whether what she is saying is also true for the listener or reader. I am beginning to think that this willingness to provide an experimental testing system is what separates the teachers from the philosophers.

I wrote these notes in two sections:

1 *The Work* - This was described in Warwick's first report in Nowletter 59 and I recommend you go back to his reports for a first hand account.

2 *The Philosophical aspect.*

1 The Work

To recapitulate, Byron Katie's transformation occurred when she awoke one day after a period of intense depression to find herself free of concepts, without thoughts or any internal story; just as awareness seeing itself as everything. Her basic approach in communicating her understanding to those of us who

don't see so clearly and who find obstacles or problems in our enquiry or in our life in general is to state the problem, belief or whatever and then subject it to four questions;

Is it true?

Can I really know it is true?

What do I gain from holding this belief?

What would I be without it?

This is well worth a try. And, like the headless experiments you have to do it not just think about what might happen if you did. I found that in going through the series there is a stripping of concept and the final question delivered the openness which is the consequence, for me, of the headless experiments. I wonder whether it would be equally effective for someone not familiar with the Harding approach.

She points out that this is not something that is resolved once and for all in time as a permanent 'state'. As she points out (page 23) - 'You don't wake up for ever. It's now, now, now.'

There is a further series of six supplementary questions which enable deeper analysis of particular problems particularly those that arise in relationships. They involve writing down the problem and turning it back on yourself - the turn around. And are an effective way of revealing what is actually going on rather than what I think is happening. I tried them out on my relationship with someone I had come to dislike because I thought he was always trying to make me do what he wanted rather than what I wanted. When I subjected this strong and long held belief to 'The Work' I discovered I was doing exactly the same to him.

So my conclusion about 'The Work' is that it definitely works.

2 The Philosophical aspect.

There are some statements she makes which I find hard to digest and I lay them out here as my unfinished business with 'The Work'. For reasons of space I cannot include the full context from which I have lifted the statements so I have included page references where possible.

Here is a list of some of the major claims:

The world is only the concept you are in at the moment. (p4), God is everything (p32) - The world is illusory (p83), There never has been evil (p39), we can't know anything.

I have difficulty with these broad claims. I can't expect BK to provide definitions every time she says anything so I have taken them at face value.

Chapter 3 of the book takes the story of a concentration camp in which babies were torn from the arms of newly arrived mothers and tossed into a

bonfire. I consider that evil but somehow I am required to see it as an aspect of God and therefore sacred and good. If I am not allowed to call it evil why am I allowed to call it good or anything at all? It is interesting that this chapter opens with a disclaimer that what is written in it is not to be read as condoning violence or any other sort of activity. I cannot see how the complete rejection of discrimination allows any labelling at all.

'Everything is illusory'. The examples in the book which throw some light on what is intended by this are:

'The whole world is only the concept you are in at the moment' (p4), the 'outside world' is a projection of internal concepts. (p83) Your foot, before you paid attention to it, did not exist. (p85). On pages 160/161 she seems to be saying that because there is no me there can not be a separate object of my observation, all is one. If that is a correct interpretation it seems that what is intended is that *every thing* is illusory rather than everything is illusory.

It is implied if not actually stated that 'there is no objective reality' and, if so, what happens when this claim undergoes the four question test (above). And what is in it for Byron Katie or anyone else in holding these beliefs?

Whatever takes us to the denial of our existence must also take us to the denial of our non-existence. That is the inescapable perception of the four question analysis.

These notes are my reaction to reading the book and watching and listening to some tapes and are all about me and what I think is true. I have no way of knowing how Byron Katie herself would respond to my reactions. Warwick told me that he or someone challenged her about her 'God is everything' statement by asking 'isn't that just another concept'. Yes, of course it is she said and it is up to you to work out for yourself what is and what isn't.

I read this as acknowledgement of the conceptual world providing it is clearly understood as concept. This is similar to the Harding 'as is' and 'as if' perspectives. The troubles arise when we adopt one or

other of the positions to the exclusion of the other. My overall feeling about her work and her method is very positive - it works - and she nearly undermines all my objections with this conclusion to a meeting or seminar when someone says:

I remember saying to you, Katie, 'Everything I know can be summarised in this one sentence; God alone is 'the doer' and you said, "Well leave out 'the doer' it's more true. Leave out 'alone', It's more true. Leave out 'God' it's more true. Leave out 'is' and you really have the truth...."

Alan Mann

Apology

The following poem appeared in the last issue. I described it as one of the poems which were transcreated by Anne but it is, in fact, one of her own creations.

Letter from Babylon circa 2000 BC

Master, your slave girl Dabitum,
sends you this message, your warrior seal,
an eagle sejant, stamped on clay.
Through gaunt nights swollen by moons,
with infinite tenderness I could feel
our child growing close to my heart.
Despoiled by lack of sustenance
your son died in my womb today.
What fires will feed his spirit soul?
The wars have torn us all apart;
nobody cares for me in this place,
shielding their own with savage concern.

Anne Fairbairn

BLUE MOUNTAINS - KRISHNAMURTI WEEKEND GATHERING 26th & 27th February 2000 REGISTRATION

FORM: To: The Treasurer, Krishnamurti Australia, C/- PO Box 458, Burleigh Heads, 4220.

Name:.....

Street:.....**Suburb:**.....**Code:**.....**Tel:**.....

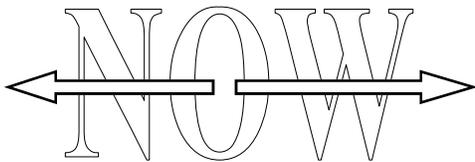
Enclosed: Cheque / Money Order - \$50 Deposit \$...../ Full Payment * \$.....

Full payment - Fri night to Sun \$145, Sat & Sun \$110, Day visitors \$40 (incl. lunch)

Satsang with John David.

Thursdays - ongoing - From 7-9pm. Friends Meeting House - 119 Devonshire St., Surry Hills (3min from central station) Call Open Sky 93000234 for details.

Joanne reports that a representative of Dr Javad Nurbakhsh the master of the Nimatullahi Sufi order is in Sydney, from 7th to 25th of this month. More information from (02) 95557546



If unable to deliver please return to:

81 Greville Street, Chatswood 2067

DIALOGUE MEETINGS SYDNEY AREA				
LOCATION	DAY OF MONTH	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
City	Third Saturday	Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Clontarf	Fourth Sunday (No meeting in February)	49 Peronne Avenue Clontarf	11am Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127