



Meetings (3rd Sunday)
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Editor’s note

Thank you to this month’s contributors. It looks as though the border gathering is off as there have been no responses to last month’s call. The shift to email has resulted in 33% of every issue going out in this way. As John Wren-Lewis points out, it makes it harder to read in the bath but on the other hand it means you can save and re-cycle the bits you like with minimum inconvenience.

The last two Greville Street dialogues arrived by different routes at the matter of the significance of Now and the background ideas that we are either on our way to something better or that there is something missing from the condition in which we find ourselves. During the month I stumbled on to a couple of items relevant to this question: the first was the talk by Douglas to the Ramana organisation in London which is included in this issue and the second a videotape of Gangaji entitled ‘Time to Tell the Truth’. Both talks convey the ‘now or never’ message and both underline how important it is not to lie about it. I plan to run the introductory part of the videotape at our next meeting.

In the last issue Gary replied to my earlier query about what follows from a change of consciousness of the type he describes. His opening paragraph read Alan Mann is asking me, "since, as you have explained, only death is certain and the time of death uncertain, and since I am now claiming that 'shutting up' short of death is impossible, what shall I (Gary) do?" He then went on with his response which appeared under the heading 'The Santa Claus Effect'. In turn, I followed up with another question to which Gary replies below under the heading 'Freedom to be nothing'.

Dear Gary

Thanks for your reply to my question. On reflection it might have suited my purposes better to have asked, what do you do rather than what do I do. The self-idea drops away - what then? That is the question.

The physical organism, memory, personality persist and the phenomenon labelled Gary seems to an observer to be the same. As you explain, the conditioned world-view is replaced by an entirely new and ever-fresh perspective. But the change is a subjective shift, it is not apparent to the so-called outside world. You have to interact with a world, which doesn't share your new, truer world-view. You need to sustain relationships with people who are convinced of their selves and assume your self to be similar to theirs. So, in that situation what do you do? That is the angle I am coming from.

It seems to me that you have no choice but to continue in relationship as if it is a matter of the coming together and parting of separate selves and objects. Although the self is now revealed as a virtual self, a coordinating process for the flow of sensory impressions, memory, thoughts, feelings, etc., action continues as if the self is real.

It assume you have to carry on much as before but free of identification with an 'I' concept and not entrapped in its conceptual context. Then the question becomes "but what is the point of this freedom?" "Is it just a wider perspective with no major consequence or is there some practical outcome?" You say you have a truer view of reality but if you are compelled by consensus-reality to carry on as if there had been no significant change - what then?

Alan

Freedom to be nothing

The self-idea drops away – what then? This is a fascinating question and has many dimensions to it. However, the possibilities for life on this planet are now truly unlimited, because the individual has discovered the freedom to be nothing.

For about 4 billion years, life has been a struggle for survival, but has so far succeeded in branching into many species. Primitive life survived on instinct, and self-reproduction. Each individual life form had to battle for its daily food, and the fight or flight response to danger was in constant use. Life was a prisoner of its own copying processes and the '4F' cycle of desires that required continual attention – **F**eeding, **F**ighting, **F**leeing and **F**arnudeling. These desires, when fulfilled, did however, release lots of adrenalin and various hormones. There was an upside! But after a short time, that 4F 'itch' cycle started

all over again, and the poor animal had to go through the same routine to consummate the felt need. Life was a constant battle for survival. So there was not much real freedom for any particular individual!

Then along came the human animal with its ability to conceive **ideas** about life, and itself. What did it do with this new kind of freedom? Well, we simply ‘dressed up’ the 4F’s by dreaming about them, memorising them, and competing for them.

The Olympic Games in Sydney were a constant reminder of our insatiable appetite for dreaming about our 4F desires and worshipping heroes to make us feel better. Why do we feel better? Just like the winning athletes, we get an adrenalin rush. Is not this the fight or flight reaction to danger we see in the animals, but now captured by an idea (ourselves) and we imagine what it will be like when we win? Of course, there is a downside – most people lose, whether it be at sport, or business, or the lottery. But even when we lose, we still get some kind of adrenalin hit along the way, until finally we give up our dream and then we are meant to feel terrible. The sad fact is there are many more losers than winners. Then there is the mechanical nature of the athlete’s training regime, and the way they shut out the rest of the world. Many times, I heard the commentator say, ‘Oh, he is a machine!’ as though this was the best thing that a human being was capable of. The fact is that when we concentrate on specific goals, we must at the same time exclude everything else and become like a robot. This is obvious.

The constant theme of the personal growth industry is to have goals, and focus on these goals as if nothing else in life mattered. We are conned into thinking that only this way lies truckloads of happiness, high personal esteem, and wealth beyond imagining. Go for gold! Along the way, the partner gets sick and dies (Gosh, I didn’t even realize how sick she/he was) or children grow up without one’s love, encouragement and support. We are prisoners of our own dreams and desires. Just like a goat tethered to a post and only able to move in a certain direction and distance, we are psychologically tethered to our pet dreams.

In this mental ‘half-asleep’ state, we are not aware that something miraculous is going on right under our noses. What is this miracle? The actuality, the suchness of life itself. When the hero wins, we all laugh and shout and jump with joy. What I would really like to see is a group of people jumping for joy simply because they are alive. Why is this actual reality that confronts us every moment of our existence so difficult to grasp or appreciate for its intrinsic value?

The main problem is our conditioning. In my experiencing, there are two totally different dimensions to living. One is the normal ‘time-haunted’ straight-line dimension that our dreaming minds normally inhabit. In this dimension, I set goals, and live a life based on measuring myself against others. I constantly struggle to earn a living, as my body functions gradually deteriorate, forever seeking pleasure and trying to avoid pain. I am the centre of my universe. Of course, with a moment’s reflection, I see the absurdity and the futility of being a dreamer – ‘he who dies with the most toys (ideas?) wins!’

If I am incredibly fortunate, I am shocked by this insight to the degree that the self-idea slips away quietly in the night. But now I find I am *totally* alone. I have left the safety of the dreaming herd, with their anthems, flags, medals and respectable positions in society. This is a very different reality.

How do I relate to a dreamer? I am nothing. I have no goals, no future, no past, no psychological existence. There is only now, but a very different now to the one that my conditioned mind used to frequent all the time. **I don't relate to the dreamer at all!** I see a being that is trapped in an illusion, *always* going on about their past experiences. This is where dreamer derive their pleasure. And it can be repeated *ad nauseam* with memory's support until they lose their marbles.

Because there is only now, I find myself looking at what is going on with stunned fresh appreciation. An inner peace comes from nowhere and gently touches every corner of life. I have stopped searching for 'the hero inside myself' because I have discovered that the hero is an idea, a phantom. I have no ambition or desire to compete with anyone, for any reason. My sexual desires no longer consume me. They are seen for what they are – a repetitive biological process that has kept me a prisoner of my genes, and made me a dishonest person. Sex is nice, but comes a distant last behind the bliss that comes from being nothing.

In a nutshell, when the self-idea dropped away, my inner battle also went with it. This inner war was consuming my every moment, and all my energy. I was literally fighting myself, to retain and build my identity in the world (at someone else's expense) and this inner war was also a movement in the outer world. The result of my inner war, were outer wars, misery, inequality, poverty, environmental destruction and incalculable psychological suffering.

I see the constant danger to my physical and mental health **and your physical and mental health** of believing in a self. This inner awareness never leaves for a second. This is the cost, if you like, of seeing the truth. But even more critically, I see the absolute futility of putting all my energy and thoughts into creating a future based on a false idea. There is no hope for me. I am going to die. If there is an eternity, it must logically be here and now, or nowhere. To discover the truth, I had to risk everything, and leave the world of ideas behind.

This change is a subjective one, but the subjective and the objective world are intimately related. I influence you and you influence me and we both influence nature and nature influences us. There is only one underlying fundamental reality and we will all experience this directly as our environment continues to deteriorate and species disappear forever. We are all in the same boat. There is only one Earth.

The greatest problem on Earth is inequality. Well, any person can experience this universal consciousness, irrespective of their wealth, race, age or gender. There is an extreme irony in this situation – whilst we continue to believe in a self, we continue to suffer. The idea of the self is the only barrier between experiencing

psychological suffering or eternal bliss. But most of us are afraid to give up this false idea because we are afraid of being nothing!

Have you ever experienced the ‘sweet spot’ of feeling psychologically weightless for a moment. **It makes life worth living.** Nothing else comes within a billion light years of this feeling. The freedom of being nothing – that sweet spot is always here. The 4F’s and memory have lost their robotic grip on us.

However, there is another side to this experiencing of being nothing. When I awoke from my dreaming self, I took stock of my new situation. I still had to earn a living in the world. I was in some relationships that were dishonest.

Here is the ultimate paradox - I wake up every morning with ‘eternity bliss’ but the world only pays me to use my mental skills that are based on greed, concentration, setting goals, sharing dreams and visions, and living in the past. I could exploit this new consciousness and con people into being my followers – but this way must end in a new round of corruption for everyone involved. So what do I do? I really don’t know. Perhaps there is another irony here too – the world is crying out for peace and reconciliation (all ideas) but the dreamer’s blind spot (the self-idea) renders him/ her incapable of seeing the only real solution.

The dishonest relationships simply ended, through lack of follow-up. Other relationships continue on, but with some significant changes. Trudi, my 28 year old daughter, said she initially felt cut-off from me. When she told me this a few years ago, I thought a lot about it. Was I being deliberately detached? No, I was at peace, and I was not trying to do anything! There was nothing for me to do. Today, Trudi is happy for me – she mentioned that I was always searching for something, whereas I now appear to be at peace. The apparent change in me has influenced Trudi to investigate her own conditioning.

Another close friend recently told me that I am more relaxed than I used to be. He noticed that I had changed from someone who was trying to change the outward world and ‘gone inward’. He still believes that I am trying to have an impact, by sharing my knowledge with others. This feedback made me reflect on my motive for writing the book and writing these articles – again there is a two-way mutual influence going on in these relationships. My understanding is that I am sharing my insights with anyone who is interested, simply because miracles don’t come along every day and there is a distinct possibility that this is a very big one.

The secret of eternal bliss is well and truly out in the open – or using other words - the freedom to be nothing. Whether we understand Douglas Harding’s ‘headlessness’ perspective, or the negative way of the mystics, or Krishnamurti’s ‘nothingness’ or John Wren-Lewis’ ‘dazzling dark’ or Ann Faraday’s ‘no -self’, we are dealing with something miraculous right now that binds us all together in a way that no amount of talking about peace or reconciliation will ever achieve.

That is why the world ‘as we know it’ has changed fundamentally. That is why nothing is impossible from this moment on. It just may not turn out the way that we would like. That is the price of real freedom – not knowing, moment-to-moment.

Gary Hipworth

De Mello and the Vatican – reply to Alex Reichel’s letter

(Extracts from Alex’s letter in italics.)

I’d like to comment on some statements in the Nowletter No. 66 article titled “de Mello and the Vatican”:

Eastern systems give me the impression that they involve an eternal round of intellectual mind games.

That is not my understanding of Zen, which I have been practising now for almost 30 years. In Zen, we are admonished to ‘Drop body and mind!’ And from ‘The Final Admonitions’ of Daito Kokushi (the founder of Daitokuji, where I had formal training for eight years): ‘The only thing you need to do during the twelve watches of the day (one ‘watch’ was two hours) is to turn toward the unfathomable, and keep it before you, coming and going.’

Christian life, on the other hand, is a simple and beautiful free gift requiring only an ‘I’ rearranged into a ‘C’;

I would say that the Zen life is a simple and beautiful free gift requiring only an ‘I’ rearranged into a ‘not I’ (as in ‘Not I, oh Lord?’).

I want to suggest that there is a third category of those who see this world and the next as made essentially of the same stuff; the heaven now which will be fully manifest as soon as the body drops off.

Well, yes. In Zen, as I mentioned above, we must drop off the body now, and heaven, or paradise, or nirvana (which is not, as is often misunderstood, just a void - it is a filled void) IS fully manifest now. There’s no need to wait for death to realize that you are now as close to heaven as you’re likely to get, since you’re standing in the midst of it right now.

Certainly we can never know what He is.

Hence, ‘turn toward the unfathomable’

God is certainly not a beautiful mountain lake

Why not? I would say that God is all things. Whatever I look at, I cannot help seeing God. When asked by a disciple ‘What is the nature of the origin of all things (i.e. God), an ancient Chinese Zen master replied, ‘A shit stick’. At that time, on finishing one’s toilet, one ‘wiped’ oneself not with paper, which was precious, but with a stick, and the master was trying to shock his disciple into realizing that God is all things.

These systems cannot handle the reality of evil

It seems to me that the author understands neither Zen nor the teachings of Douglas Harding.

Some Eastern mystics claim to reach a final stage of total abnegation of consciousness. Zen training is aimed at raising the consciousness to ever higher levels. In meditation, we may lose all thought, but consciousness is increased, and, on coming out of meditation, thought also works much better.

If Jesus is a "Master alongside others" how come his teaching is utterly other than that of the others?

If the author studied "the others" deeply, and at the same time had a deep understanding of Christianity, surely he would find that their teachings are not "utterly other" but are exactly the same, if, that is, the "others" that he studies are true masters. As it says in the Bible, "in the last days we will see many false prophets arise" (or something to that effect), and I think we are seeing that now.

Please do not think that I am trying to "put down" Christianity by the above. I began studying the Bible and Christianity at the age of seven, and took up Zen training, after reading a great deal about it, at the age of 41 (I am now 69). I took up Zen because it seemed to me to lead to the same pinnacle that Christianity does, but Zen does not proselytise. I've had zealous Christians come to my Zen temple and try to convert me, and ask me to read the Bible. I tell them, "But I've already read the entire Bible several times over!".

I know I'm very late with my comments, since No 67 is now out, but I've been extremely busy. I just performed a wedding ceremony yesterday (my eighth!). It was, if I do say so myself, a beautiful affair. The young couple seemed very much in love, and very suitable for each other. At the reception later, which was also held at my temple, we had about 60 guests and lots of very delicious food and drinks, and everybody had a roaring good time!

John Toler

John is the American Abbot of a Zen monastery in Kyoto.

Communication Tongued with Fire

A word of appreciation for the article on T.S.Eliot in the August edition of NOW. Quite often I find NOW articles are not on my wave length and I find difficulty in understanding them. The John Wren-Lewis piece, however, really hit the spot for me. The Four Quartets have been part of my 'inner life' since student days, so I found the article worth my year's subscription. Any more available on the same topic?

Marian Nisbett.

(Yes, there is more to come - not necessarily on the same topic but by the same author. Ed.)

Is there anything out there?

The recent discussion on the subject of whether the objective world is real had already been a focus for me. I noticed this response by Trungpa Rinpoche, in his book Transcending Madness, when he was asked about projections vs the existence of other people:

"...that is a very interesting point. And actually, to tell you the truth, nobody is quite certain whether it is one hundred percent projection or whether it is only partially a projection... Things do exist as they are, but we tend to see our version of them as they are, rather than things as they really are. That makes everything that we see projections. But one doesn't have to make a definite and absolute reassurance of that necessarily at all. You just go along with situations, go along with dealing with them. If you are going too far, they'll shake you. They'll beat you to death if you're going too far. If you're going well, if you are balanced, they will present hospitality and openness luxuriously to you. I mean, that much of a situation is there anyway; some kind of rapport between this and that goes on all the time. As long as a person is sensitive enough to experience it, that rapport goes on. That's the important point. One doesn't have to make it definite and clear cut as to which is not projection and which is projection. It is sort of a gradual understanding. Until the attainment of buddhahood, this experience goes on—and nobody is able to answer it because they themselves don't know." ...

When in doubt, I am tending to "stay with the projector

An email gem from Bryan Mayne.

(Another contributor to the discussion of whether there is anything out there referred me to a comment on the subject by Ramana Maharshi. It is on page 278 of Talks with Ramana . If anyone has the book I would appreciate a copy of the relevant section. I went to look it up at the Adyar Library. They don't have that title but as I was fumbling on the Ramana shelf I dropped a small book of short articles about him and the book fell open at a summary of a talk which Douglas Harding gave to the Ramana organisation in London in the '80s. As a secondary blast of synchronicity the article underlined the subject we had been discussing at the last Greville Street meeting. Ed.)

The Serious All-important Question

Article from Maharshi Ramana – His Relevance Today – Manas New Delhi 1990

The main reason for Maharshi's widespread and continued appeal in the West is his insistence on asking: *Who am I?* This is really the crucial question for the modern world. It crops up everywhere, not merely in philosophical and religious circles. Psychiatrists find their patients - dimly aware of the place where healing lies - obsessed with it. It is one of the chief themes of the more intelligent pop singers - Petula Clark, for instance, has a song actually entitled 'Who am I?' and though the answers are inconclusive, at least the question is relentlessly insisted upon. Young people are particularly concerned, as never before in history, with the problem of personal identity and the meaning of their own existence. It is not surprising, therefore, that Maharshi should interest them.

A fair proportion of these young people (and some older ones, too) are really serious about this all-important question: they feel it is not merely for asking, but for answering also. It is not for them a rhetorical question or incantation, or pious formula expressing

some vague aspiration, but a matter to be settled now. Life is short and precarious, and it would be negligent to die before one had made time to ask who it is that is alive. If this question isn't interesting and central and urgent, what question is? If I am serious about it, if I mean business, I shall demand a clear and prompt reply.

A clear and prompt reply as if I were answering the question, 'where am I?' Suppose I have lost my way in a strange city: I don't shut my eyes and ears and recite the words, 'where am I? till I die of hunger and exhaustion. I hurriedly consult a map and street-names and passers-by till I succeed in locating myself. I put my question clearly, expect a precise answer, take that answer seriously and act on it without delay.

'Who am I?' is a far more vital question than 'where am I?' Fortunately, the answer also is far more straightforward and simple and accessible - according to Ramana Maharshi and he's right.

There is no doubt about what I appear to be. Stationed out there, my observers see me as a man. But I'm stationed here and here also there's no doubt about What I am. Here I see myself as not a man, not an animal, not a plant, not a thing of any sort, but as this simple No-thing, or Clarity, or Void, or Essence, or Light - the names are many, the experience one and simplicity itself. What lies right here is for me brilliantly obvious and wholly accessible - accessible not to thought, but to direct introspection.

To the question 'When can I thus see who I am?' Maharshi answers: 'Now', I can find no record of his ever having said to anybody 'You aren't ready yet to see who you are. Go away and discipline yourself, practise this or that kind of meditation for so many years, and then come back to me.' Instead, and whatever the disciple's condition or problem, he says, 'The answer to your problem is to see who has it, now. What are you waiting for? You are the Self, and never have been anything else.

To the question 'How can I see who I am?' Maharshi answers: 'There is nothing to do but being you - not a something but Space for everything. The only reason you aren't enlightened about who you are is that you 'think yourself out of it' or words to that effect. If I have the sense to take Ramana Maharshi seriously, if I have any real respect for his teaching, if I attend to what he actually says rather than the human personality the message comes through, if I genuinely want to discover who I am and am not frightened to death of doing so, if I am at all sincere in this inquiry - then I shall just look in and see my true nature. And, once having seen, I shall not dishonestly pretend I don't see. Just as the lost traveller, having been shown exactly where he is, briefly expresses his thanks and goes his way, so I (if I am equally sensible) say, without embarrassment or mock - modesty, 'Thank you, I see', and get on with my seeing - that self-seeing which is from now on my true meditation.

Who is the true devotee: the one who in all simplicity sees within himself what his Master is pointing to, or the one who's so fascinated by that holy face that he sees neither the finger or nor what it is indicating?

Douglas Harding

Beyond Lucidity - a personal report by Ann Faraday

This article first appeared in Lucidity Letter, a journal devoted to the study of 'lucid' dreaming wherein the dreamer is actually conscious of dreaming in the dream itself.

In the December 1985 issue of Lucidity Letter John Wren-Lewis described a radical and continuing change of consciousness following upon a near-death experience (NDE) which gave him a new perspective for understanding dream-processes, including lucid dreaming. In the same issue Charles Tart, Harry Hunt, George Gillespie and Michael Grosso used John's observations as a basis for discussing a number of issues which have been prominent in Lucidity Letter since its inception, such as the range of meanings which can be attached to the term 'lucidity', and possible relationships between lucid dreaming and meditation. My purpose in writing this present note is to describe a very unusual sleep-experience of my own in October 1985 (shortly after John's article had been sent off but before I knew of the other comments) which casts new light on some of these issues.

We were staying in an old Christchurch manor during a very rushed working tour of New Zealand when I picked up Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's The Book of the Secrets and read the chapter on 'devices for transcending dreaming' before going to sleep one night. In it Rajneesh suggests that the famous self-remembering techniques used by Gurdjieff can be adapted to achieve dream lucidity by taking a clear sense of identity into sleep. So, as instructed, I dutifully repeated the words "I am, I am, I am..." only to wake up several hours later laughing because Rajneesh and Gurdjieff had got it all wrong; the truth was much more like "I am NOT". 'I' was emerging from a state of consciousness without any 'I', an experience without an experiencer - a condition that sounds like a total contradiction when described in ordinary words, yet had a reality that made 'Ann' seem like a mere figment of the imagination.

Indeed the very process of re-entry felt much like being dreamed into existence, as all the personal bits and pieces - hopes, fears, loves, hates, achievements, goals, opinions - were gradually re-collected, not around any central core of Ann, but actually producing the entity known as Ann, who felt to be no more than a bundle of memories. And there was incredible liberation in realizing that this whole collection had no more permanent significance than a knot in a string or the inside of a clenched fist.

I feel sure this was the classic mystical Void experience which was also the core of John's NDE, though I can now confirm what he and many others have said, that until it happens any efforts to conceptualize it are totally wide of the mark. It was in no way a blissful or peak experience in any sense that I have ever understood or known, since these have always involved an 'I' who does the experiencing, even though this 'I' is imagined or felt to be bigger or better than the normal self. The phrase 'Only one sky', which was with me on waking, made sense for the first time - not an 'I' perceiving or even merging into the Clear Sky, but Only Clear Sky. I also realized that my efforts at spiritual growth

had merely produced a firmer knot, and that my battles with ego had been mere shadow-boxing exercises against a mirage with no real existence.

While the Void-experience undeniably fulfilled Rajneesh's promise of transcending dreaming, it was nothing like any lucid dream I have ever had or seen described in the literature, not even the Tart-style dream with full consciousness of the body in bed etc. In fact I have deliberately not called it a dream because it was de-void of all those cognitive qualities in terms of which dreaming is usually defined. George Gillespie writes of using the lucid dream state to perform a Tibetan-type meditative exercise of removing content in an attempt to reach a Void-experience, but as he describes it, the very process of removing content would seem to confirm the I who is doing the removing and therefore to lead in absolutely the opposite direction.

So I would confirm John's conclusion, affirmed in Michael Grosso's comment, that the altered state of consciousness which mystics speak of as liberation or awakening from the life-dream is something qualitatively different from witness-consciousness either waking or in lucid dreaming. And on the mundane level of lucid dream research, I would very much agree with Charles Tart about the need for fuller discussion of terminology, since even the apparently simple statement 'I knew I was dreaming' begs the question 'Just who is the 'I' knowing this?'

My reservations about the kind of lucid dream meditation described by Gillespie would apply just as much to any other kind of meditation. As Krishnamurti points out repeatedly in his writings, the very nature of meditation as an activity which I perform must confirm the 'I'. So I would plead with Hunt, Tart and others for much more critical caution about using the term meditation as if it could be simply equated with mystical awakening. While I do not doubt that meditators may come to such awakening, I wonder very much whether this is any straightforward result of their meditative efforts, any more than the Christchurch experience was a straightforward result of the Rajneesh exercise, which was actually intended to yield dream lucidity with a firmer sense of 'I'.

And this brings me to what is perhaps the most interesting conclusion to be drawn from the experience, a very encouraging one for dreamers generally, namely that in some curious way the sleeping brain or psyche seems to have known better than my conscious intention. In everything I have written about dreams, I have emphasized that the psyche can be even more creative in attempting to complete the day's unresolved problems while asleep than when awake (not at all in the very limited sense of a day-residue Zeigarnick effect, Freudian wish-fulfillment or Jungian compensation, as Hunt seems to think in his comment on John's article.) And the Christchurch experience confirms this even though it wasn't exactly a dream, for it shows the sleeping psyche picking up an unrecognized pre-sleep concern (Who exactly is this 'I' of the 'I am' exercise?) and completing it in a way my waking mind could never have conceived.

I cannot really believe that my brief and somewhat perfunctory repetition resulted directly in a transformation of consciousness, and I wonder whether Gurdjieff and Rajneesh, both tricksters *par excellence*, ever meant it to be a centering exercise, though

they knew it would have to sell itself to the ego in that guise. Perhaps they really meant it to function as a koan, hoping that on occasion at least it would so deeply confuse the mind's self-referencing habits that they would be transcended. Whether that was the intention or not, it certainly worked that way for me in Christchurch, possibly helped by endless discussions on the nature of the Void since John's NDE; and it has given me, as the NDE gave John, an entirely new basis both for daily living and for future work with dreams. I share the story here primarily in the hope of stimulating some of the new ways of thinking about consciousness emphasized by Tart as the major need for future research in the whole field of psychology.

Ann Faraday

Ann, who is the author of the international best selling books on dreaming - Dream Power and The Dream Game, told me that the sense of self has never returned.

Are the mystics and sages insane?

(From A Brief History Of Everything - pp 42-43)

(We recently had an exchange on the Nohead email conference prompted by a question from Eric Best, a reader of and occasional contributor to the Nowletter. I've lost Eric's original question but it lead to an expression of views on Ken Wilber's systemization of the transpersonal. This drew out both favourable and unfavourable comment and Chris contributed the following extract from the Wilber web site at:

www.khandro.com/kenwilber/ which I thought provided a view of the less widely acknowledged side of Wilber. Ed.)

Are the mystics and sages insane? Because they all tell variations on the same story, don't they? The story of awakening one morning and discovering you are one with the All, in a timeless and eternal and infinite fashion.

Yes, maybe they are crazy, these divine fools. Maybe they are mumbling idiots in the face of the Abyss. Maybe they need a nice, understanding therapist. Yes, I'm sure that would help.

But then, I wonder. Maybe the evolutionary sequence really is from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit, each transcending and including, each with a greater depth and greater consciousness and wider embrace. And in the highest reaches of evolution, maybe, just maybe, an individual's consciousness does indeed touch infinity—a total embrace of the entire Kosmos—a Kosmic consciousness that is Spirit awakened to its own true nature.

It's at least plausible. And tell me: is that story, sung by mystics and sages the world over, any crazier than the scientific materialism story, which is that the entire sequence is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying absolutely nothing? Listen very carefully: just which of those two stories actually sounds totally insane?

I'll tell you what I think. I think the sages are the growing tip of the secret impulse of evolution. I think they are the leading edge of the self-transcending drive that always

goes beyond what went before. I think they embody the very drive of the Kosmos toward greater depth and expanding consciousness. I think they are riding the edge of a light beam racing toward a rendezvous with God.

And I think they point to the same depth in you, and in me, and in all of us. I think they are plugged into the All, and the Kosmos sings through their voices, and the Spirit shines through their eyes. And I think they disclose the face of tomorrow, they open us to the heart of our own destiny, which is already right now in the timelessness of this very moment, and in that startling recognition the voice of the sage becomes your voice, the eyes of the sage become your eyes, you speak with the tongues of angels and are alight with the fire of a realization that never dawns nor ceases, you recognize your own true Face in the mirror of the Kosmos itself: your identity is indeed the All unfolding not around you but in you. The stars no longer shine out there, but in here. Supernovas come into being within your heart, and the sun shines inside your awareness. Because you transcend all, you embrace all. There is no final Whole here, only an endless process, and you are the opening or the clearing or the pure Emptiness in which the entire process unfolds—ceaselessly, miraculously, everlastingly, lightly.

The whole game is undone, this nightmare of evolution, and you are exactly where you were prior to the beginning of the whole show. With a sudden shock of the utterly obvious, you recognize your own Original Face, the face you had prior to the Big Bang, the face of utter Emptiness that smiles as all creation and sings as the entire Kosmos—and it is all undone in that primal glance, and all that is left is the smile, and the reflection of the moon on a quiet pond, late on a crystal clear night.”

Ken Wilber

DIALOGUE MEETINGS SYDNEY AREA				
	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	49 Peronne Avenue Clontarf	11am Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127

Meetings**Sydney**

Academy of the Word Seminar Programme –
Under St Peter's, Devonshire St., Surry Hills
Second Tuesdays 6.15pm - Healing & Well-being
Fourth Tuesdays 6.15pm - State of the World
Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504

Satsang with John David. Tuesday & Friday - ongoing - From 7.15 - 9.15pm.
Theosophy House, 484 Kent Street, City - Near Town Hall Station
Call Open Sky (02) 9388 8344 for details.

Nowra

Dialogue Group meets the first Saturday of the month from 4-6pm
The Tea Club, Berry Street, Nowra - Opposite Roxy Cinema - Call Riche 4421 5947

Lectures etc.

Wayne Liquorman is visiting Australia and will be in Melbourne 17-19 Nov and Sydney 24-26 Nov. Ring 0414 409 179 (David) There is a talk on Friday night at Randwick followed by a weekend Intensive.