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Editor's note

We have two contributions on Dialogue this month. It is a regularly recurring theme because the subject seems to evade clear definition. My interest in Dialogue arises from the fact that I find it one of the most direct routes to what Traherne calls 'capacitie' and what is revealed by the Harding experiments. Speaking of which, the latest details of Richard Lang's visit to Sydney are included in this issue (p11). And speaking of Traherne, I was delighted to find a fellow enthusiast in Jack Geddes on my recent visit to South Queensland. Jack has written a great deal on mystical matters and we include the first of what I hope will be a series of regular contributions from him.

I am looking for inspiration on how best to get the news out about the workshops with Richard, see page 11 and have already received some expert guidance from Barry Hora and Graeme Taylor. If anyone else has bright ideas which would contribute to the success of this enterprise please let me have them. Great merit will accrue to volunteers who step forward to help with promotion, administration and chores on the day.

The December issue will be dedicated to an essay by George Schloss, *The End of History*, which will include, if I can squeeze it in, a Q&A section in which George deals with a few things I didn't understand when I read his essay.

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 thoughts, experiences, discoveries and any responses to what you read here.

Open Dialogue - What it is and could be. – From Terry O'Brien

These notes are an attempt to summarize my understanding of Open Dialogue, drawing on eight or more year's involvement in exploring the practice.

Open Dialogue is a whole and creative way of communicating and relating. It begins with self-knowing - and moves through a process of enquiry, exploration, and shared meaning - to a unified state of fellowship and communion. 'Dialogue' comes from its Greek derivative *dialogos*. **Logos** means - 'the word', or as we are applying it - 'the meaning of the word'. **Dia** means 'through' - it doesn't mean two, thus —'through the word'. A dialogue can be among any number of people, not just two. This suggests a stream of meaning flowing among, through, and between the participants.

Communion is the ultimate communication. As we venture 'through' (dia) the 'meaning' (logos) - of our conditioned responses, we may experience communion as an unconditioned reality—a state of non- separation. For me this is no longer a proposition - it is a real. Traditionally, a dialogue is understood to mean a conversation between two or more persons aimed at finding an answer to a particular question, or arguing through a difference of opinion to try to reach agreement or compromise. Since the early 1980's, a different approach, based on a proposal by physicist David Bohm, has become more widespread and increasingly popular.

He experimented with the process of Open Dialogue, as a way to communicate **meaning** by exploring **thought**, in relation to **consciousness**. As he said –

"If we are to survive and lead meaningful lives, it is critical that we reach a better understanding of that question." - (the question of how we think, and create meaning) Together with his colleagues Donald Factor, and Peter Garrett, he stated in the paper: 'Dialogue, a Proposal' - *"We are proposing a kind of collective inquiry, not only into the content of what each of us says, thinks and feels, but also into the underlying motivations, assumptions and beliefs that lead us to do so."*

Open Dialogue is not an ideology, nor is it a debate. It is a process of enquiry to gain **insight**, rather than answers - into questions of relationship, conflict, intelligence, and the nature of human thinking. It is also an expression of art – **the art of creative change**.

Dialogue, as it stands at present, seems to have overlooked Bohm's original intention. Many individuals, and organisations now use Dialogue as a practical format to improve relations, within specific groups, by creating an environment for more effective communication. This introduction will look closely into what Bohm believed was a more serious priority—to explore the possibility of a fundamental transformation in human consciousness.

"...it is proposed that a form of free dialogue may well be one of the most effective ways of investigating the crisis which faces society, and indeed the whole human nature and consciousness today. Moreover, it may turn out that such a form of free exchange of ideas and information is of fundamental relevance for transforming culture, and freeing it of destructive misinformation, so that creativity can be liberated."

The form of dialogue suggested by David Bohm can bring about greater awareness of ourselves, and of each other, as we interact together. This in turn facilitates greater co-operation and understanding among people, living and working together in various communities. Significantly, it reveals underlying potential to change the very way we think—the nature of our consciousness.

If we are serious about exploring this potential, and if we see a need to, then what we talk about in dialogue has to be secondary to listening and questioning—to first discover what it is to be a conscious human being. From this common ground, we can move through this process to reach beyond our self-enclosing barriers to a new meaning - a shared meaning - as it unfolds in the living present. This could benefit a more creative and quite different culture – perhaps in every strata of society.

From a business perspective, open dialogue can provide a unique opportunity for those involved, to begin to appreciate their work as integral to a whole and creative life. It can also open a space for more genuine and productive relations among staff, and between staff and management.

As dialogue is less of the intellect and more of the heart, attempts to explain it range from very difficult to impossible. The following is an attempt to convey the spirit of dialogue, together with some of its more practical aspects. Experiencing the living process remains its own best instruction. (Having read these guidelines, perhaps then 'semi-forget' them – thus relaxing any expectations to conform to a particular standard).

For ease of expression I have listed my observations on Dialogue, interwoven with some of the original guidelines from David Bohm, Donald Factor, and Peter Garrett (of the U.K.), under the headings: **Purpose - Process - Awareness - People - Communion**

I have presented this summary in general terms so that my comments can be applied to all aspects of life - home, work, community, and society.

PURPOSE – to explore and communicate

Basically we live in a divided world of me and you, us and them, those kinds of people, our kind of people; ‘we’ - as separate from nature. Our differences are many in terms of lifestyles, beliefs, opinions, and views. So the importance of what we have in common is often overlooked in a struggle to reconcile ideology with actuality. We need a bridge – a point of crossing where we can put our differences aside and discover our common humanity. This is the place of Open Dialogue.

There are no specified objectives such as reaching consensus, a decision, or agreed action. It is an open-ended activity, which is ongoing and non-conclusive. Discovering the very nature of our condition, and our conditioning, is the essential quest. We are not aiming to be ‘non-judgmental’—we are judgmental. We want to discover how and why we judge, and the effect this action has on our relationships.

We do not engage in dialogue to achieve a direct result. We meet to experience a different way of ‘being’, and being together – a way of relating which can lead to harmony and trust. This is a very different expectation from a deliberate goal set endeavour. A relaxed and informal space like this, free of inhibiting expectations, is essential for a more grounded understanding of one another. Dialogue in the workplace, for instance, can serve as a preliminary activity, to help overcome personal barriers which obstruct practical decision making. Agreement on a decision can arise incidentally from a dialogue, but not as a direct intention.

PROCESS – discovering

Dialogue is firstly an enquiry into what leads us to think, feel, speak, and act as we do. Attention is more on the **process** of the interaction than the **content** of words spoken.

It is perhaps important to note that our minds are incredibly quick to interpret, and judge and to censor selectively what we hear. To be effectively open to **difference**, we have to be aware, and notice this process in action. The quality of our response may then be different from an immediate reaction. To share meaning together, we have to become aware of our otherwise unconscious assumptions, and suspend them in favour of greater understanding. This presents the biggest challenge in dialogue—to listen to others with tolerance and patience, and allow one another space for self-expression.

By engaging in dialogue without expecting a result, we can relax into its intensity. It requires a lightness of being – a gentle willingness to be vulnerable, impartial, and thus open to insight. It is impossible to learn ‘proactively’ about the essential nature of thought and consciousness. We have to approach it as passive witnesses – otherwise we defeat the purpose.

Dialogue points to a way of communicating which is never conclusive. Nor is it perfect - asserting, defending, and debating are inevitable. **Fundamental learning** arises from the greater awareness that highlights a dialogue. The communication may then culminate in communion – a fellowship of understanding, and an unfolding of shared meaning.

AWARENESS

Learning

Dialogue involves an inward awareness in balance with outward perceptions. Emphasis is on the intrinsic meaning of inner and outer perceptions, without analysing them – we are **learning from how things are**, rather than projecting how they should, could, or might be. Dialogue is as much about unlearning, as it is about learning – perhaps we are actually **learning to unlearn**. Like a return to innocence – with maturity in place of naivety. Uncertainty is not a cause for alarm. It is a positive aspect of learning which may indicate a movement closer to a new discovery.

Silence is another challenge – we needn’t be uncomfortable with it. When the group falls silent, it is an opportunity to reflect, to gather our thoughts, or just sit quietly. Participants are not dependent on the group, but are interdependent. We may discover in dialogue that we are an extension of the group, as the group is an extension of ourselves. In essence we are not separate. What one experiences, as the group, is an aspect of oneself – our **collective consciousness**. This is how we learn, communicate, and share meaning together.

Listening

Attention is a major key to awareness, as listening is to attention. Awareness is limited to how openly and objectively, we can listen – especially to ourselves. Discovering our own limitations in the light of the moment is essential for creative dialogue. We are not out to ‘get it right’ but to discover how it is. We do not need to be ‘good’ communicators, we need to be honest ones—good, bad, or indifferent. As a guide—open listening does not have a specific motive. When truly open, we can hear beyond words and opinions - to connect with the **person** who is speaking.

Each participant has the responsibility of listening to other speakers seriously, allowing them time and space to express their individuality. Care and respect are cornerstones of good dialogue. It is vital that we listen inwardly to our reactions, as well as outwardly to others, to sensitively detect our often hidden fears, prejudices, imaginings and uncertain beliefs. Yet our attention needs to remain light, as well as open. We are not out to whip ourselves, but simply to learn.

Attention

Our only source of insight is – **not knowing**. Our approach requires (ideally) a **choice-less** quality of attention, open to a fresh understanding. Suspending our assumptions is therefore critical for an original response. Humility – or at least prudence, in the face of what remains a mystery, is a helpful attitude to adopt.

It is not talk for talk’s sake (content), but talk in order to share common, and uncommon, meanings (process). Nor is it about who is right or wrong. It is about considering our similarities, questioning our differences, and acknowledging the place of both. Frustration is common, especially for beginners. Listening, and maintaining attention, is its only remedy. All our reactions and emotions, pleasant or unpleasant, provide an acute opportunity for self- knowing, and thus self- change. Subsequently, the group will also change.

Dialogue is a **here and now** activity. This is why attention is so crucial. We cannot fixate our minds in the present, but we can become aware of a significant difference between ‘here & now’ and ‘there & then’ —to notice the movement from ‘present’—to projected, or reflected, states of consciousness. Change (transformation) can only be realised in the present, via insight, which is not bound by time. Our minds are mostly caught in time.

Impartial awareness requires effortless yet broad attention, unlike concentration, which is deliberately focused. The quality of attention required for dialogue is as subtle as meditation - with a group, it can be a communal meditation.

PEOPLE – reaching out

Everyone has the right to his or her own perspective, no matter how different from anyone else’s. Diversity is helpful, with individuals participating from a range of backgrounds, beliefs, and sub-cultures. Surprisingly, the less in common among a group, the more there is to learn. Discretion is important – a dialogue is not meant to be invasive or obligating. There are few expectations other than co-operation and courtesy within your group.

It is an enquiry ‘with’ others, and not something which is ‘done’ to others. It is not to judge, classify, or condemn (though notice when you do), but to observe and discover without conclusion – then a dialogue can be vitally original. Dialogue will not work if only 2 or 3 people hold the floor. As a general suggestion - those who like to speak try to listen more; those who like to listen feel free to speak more. Dialogue can be fun and informal, in unison with serious intent, so long as we maintain a neutral space where people are always greater than the sum of their various identifications.

COMMUNION – coming together

Open Dialogue has no fixed topic, no set agenda, no leadership, no authority, and no (intended) lecturing – the group regulates its own unique direction. It is less a doing process, and more a happening experience. At its finest it becomes a communion.

Convenors may comment on procedure before commencing, but then become peers within the group. There are **no experts**. All participants are equally co-facilitators. The quality of the communication relates directly to the mutual co-responsibility of those involved. A group can include all ages, needs just 2 people to commence, and may number 20 or more. Dialogue with **oneself** is an important, ongoing continuum from the group experience. Personal transformation may thus become a continual way of life. Ideally meetings are held regularly (at least once a month). Organisations may require to meet weekly for the first few months to practically establish this different paradigm of interaction.

With the group seated in a circle for about 2 hours, a dialogue operates as **a single conversation**. The challenge is to listen ‘openly’ (without separation) —suspending our opinions in favour of detecting and reaching beyond our assumptions (be wary of a difference between suspending opinions, and suppressing them). No subject is prohibited,

including the challenge to anyone who attempts to dominate the group. It is not to assert or defend our views, but to consider how and why we have those views. Expression of dogma, as 'content', is inevitable. **Looking beyond the dogma** can create a breakthrough in the communication. We might then come into contact with the underlying desperation of the communicator – their concerns and difficulties. This then is the 'process'.

Dialogue is at first a difficult process. For our present culture it is a very different way of communicating and being together. For the world to change for the benefit of all, it has to begin with each one of us. Old ways give way to new, and we have to move with them. Change of this nature cannot be forced. We can only be open to its natural flow – a free flow of shared meaning.

TODAY

A considerable number of professional educators, organisational trainers and various group co-ordinators from within Australia, Great Britain, and the United States, have also written extensively on the Dialogue process. Developing on a more structured 'building blocks' approach, many are successfully introducing Dialogue to various corporate, educational, community, health and welfare organisations. Many of these groups are finding Dialogue to be an effective format for better, more honest communication, and more harmonious relations. For more information about contacts – please enquire via email to: opendialogue@optusnet.com.au

Current 'Open' Dialogue meetings:

Regular monthly meetings are operating throughout Sydney and in Nowra – they are mostly free of charge, but donations are helpful. Because these meetings are open to individuals from all walks of life, they tend to explore topics that affect people emotionally and spiritually. During the course of these exchanges there seems to be no specific direction, yet at the end one often experiences an unpredictable sense of intense fulfilment. Perhaps this indefinable satisfaction is the result of significant changes at the 'tacit' level of consciousness – the unknowable, yet tangible response to a shared coherent meaning.

Terry O'Brien

Dialogue - from Barry Hora

The major stumbling block is the context trap. After all these years dialoguing we still get caught up in the context.

Even though we say that process is what it is all about we shift almost automatically into our comfort zone which is the expression and defence of our views about the subject under consideration.

So dialogue becomes just another tool for finding out what is right or wrong – instead of – instead of what? What would be 'right operation' as ~~far~~ dialogue is concerned?

Is it possible for the process to be more important than the content? If we follow this question carefully we see how the question can become an example of the problem. The question about process becomes content, the subject of the enquiry. And, yet again we fall out of process into a focus on content.

Can we enquire without turning what we enquire about into content. Is looking for answers the problem? I think the sharing process slips away when I'm forced back into thoughts about what is being tabled by way of further statements or answers. This only maintains my separateness from the group.

Barry Hora

Note 1 on Coming Home by Jan Kersschot from *Eric Best*

(Eric's note first appeared as a contribution to the Look for Yourself email conference. Ed.)

I have just read Jan Kersschot's 'Coming Home' and Tony Parson's 'As It Is'. Firstly, I must say that as pointers to the Absolute they have been really helpful to me in that both have assisted me deepen my relaxation into, and trust of, the Absolute.

Nevertheless, I am writing this because I have some strong reservations about both these books. Indeed, my deeply positive responses to these books gives more sting to my negative feelings. My purpose in writing is to help clarify the issues so I can internalise what is genuinely insightful in these writings and discard the dross. So here are my thoughts, and I look forward to the feedback from others in this group.

My concern is that these writers seem to let their vision of the Absolute distort their vision of the Relative. Here are some statements from Parson's book (all on page 98) that I find disturbing: "there never was a "chooser" or a doer" "There is no longer any question of right or wrong at all." "There is no question of there being free will" Somewhere in his book, Jan Kersschot wrote (from memory) that "the ego is an illusion created by the ego"!?!"

What is wrong with these statements? Rather than transcend and include the Relative, as one would expect of a philosophy that was genuinely non-dual, they trample all over the relative, repressing its truths and values.

Firstly, the person is real. The real question is "a real what?" The answer would be something like "a real hierarchically arranged set of processes embedded in and alongside and interacting with other sets of processes". It is true that my *ownership* of these processes is an illusion. I do not do me, the Kosmos (Being/Consciousness) does me. The me that stands outside looking in and saying "this is me/mine and this isn't" is a creation of the mind. But that does not mean that I don't exist at all, any less than any other process. The issue is not "do we exist?" but "what is the manner of our existence?" The fact is that if there were no overarching self there would be no organising principle for the biological and mental processes that form our being. Life would be impossible. Furthermore, the development of the self as an organising principle for mental and physical life is well and truly researched and documented. The ego is real; it is just not a real 'thing', it is a real 'activity'.

I think that one problem these writers have is that they do not clarify the notion of freedom or doer-ship they wish to reject. It is true that I as consciousness am not this isolated, finite set of structured activities named Eric. But that does not mean that Eric has no freedom. Eric responds to his environment in ways that a rock can simply not. Now, if you are going to bring determinism into the picture by saying that I could not have done anything other than what I actually did do, then I would say you are going way beyond the experience of the First Person and buying into an external philosophical idea. If I am an expression of Being / Consciousness then why should this expression not have freedom?

Finally I would say that morality is also an expression of Being / Consciousness. Consciousness is doing it in and through us as an essential part of us.

In 'Coming Home' there is a warning that the information in this book could be dangerous to people with mental disorders. I tend to agree; but I do not think that this need have been the case if the Relative had been genuinely honoured. Indeed, in the hands of a theorist like Ken Wilber, the Absolute can indeed be good medicine to the troubled (see, for instance, 'No Boundary') To sacrifice or repress the Relative for the sake of the Absolute is dualism.

Eric Best

Note 2 on Coming Home by Jan Keresshot from Alan Mann

The author gives his work the subtitle *An Invitation to Discover our True Nature* and the book describes in some detail the various insights and obstacles which I assumed to be the footsteps of his own particular journey. The book is presented in two sections, the first analyses the various aspects of 'coming home' and the second is a series of interviews with seven people who are regarded as leaders in what could be called the 'Contemporary Western School'.

I am always interested to discover how other people go about this enquiry and how it affects their lives so I find these books quite fascinating. I think I would have found this one more so if Jan had given us more personal detail about the background to his insights and conclusions, they sometimes come across as abstract generalizations rather than the deep insights, arising from personal experience and crisis, which I am sure they are. However, whilst this element is missing from the first section it is remedied in the frank exchanges with the people Jan interviews in the second section.

The book deals with questions of: what are we looking for, is the journey really necessary, is there a path, is there anything we can do and what is it all about anyway, in a very accessible and orderly format with a few practical experiments thrown in to test the validity of some of the claims and conclusions. I found a number of boosts to some personal prejudices: Jan is the only other person I have come across who shares my view that this business is to do with the ending and not just the improvement of relationships, he also underlines the danger of getting bogged down in ego notions of personal enlightenment and reincarnation (being inclined as I am to an impersonal resolution of such questions). His views on the ordinariness and obviousness of 'awakening' should have set the seal on my full and perfect agreement but there were a few areas where I couldn't quite meet him.

All I can do with a book like this is to approach it as I would a conversation with an interested friend and that is what I'm doing here. I am recording what resonates for me and what jars. I have a strong dislike of the popular blank screen analogy which is used to explain pure consciousness and which Jan uses here. I have never experienced consciousness free of some content, the 'content' seems an inseparable aspect of whatever consciousness is, The "everything is perfect as it is" conclusion also riles me as it seems to me to be just as much an assessment or interpretation of what is happening as saying "something is missing". Why not settle for "everything is as it is" which the author does use himself from time to time in spite of a preference for the everything is fine option. My really big gripe is with the illusionist view, which I understand to derive from Advaita Vedanta teaching. That is, the "everything is illusory—it's

all a dream—no good or bad—sit back and enjoy the ride” school of spiritual enquiry. I have never been able to grasp this notion or the need for or value of it. It seems to be based on the fact that everything that arises in consciousness is a mental process irrespective of whether or not there is some “external” object or activity from which it arises. If so, there seems to be confusion between the use of the words phenomena and illusion.

Jan knows a number of contemporary leaders in the field and the book concludes with a series of interviews with Tony Parsons, Douglas Harding, Mira Pagal, Nathan Gill, Chuck Hillig, Wayne Liquorman and Francis Lucille. I am very well disposed to most of these ‘specialists’ but as many of them seem to be convinced that illusionism is fundamental I acknowledge a gap in understanding which perhaps one of our readers might volunteer to fill?

So, how does this book stand up as guide to the rediscovery of our True Nature. Well, I think it does an excellent job of presenting the contemporary view, the no-nonsense approach to the perennial philosophy. I share Eric’s reservations about the relegation of the relative and I wish, when people say ‘everything is perfect’, they would explain that they are using the word ‘perfect’ in the sense of complete or whole rather than ‘without flaw’.

The fact that I don’ t agree with everything I found in the book is probably a strong recommendation in itself. I imagine someone fairly new to the field would find it a very helpful introduction and, if the message of the book really hit home, the reader might find there was no need to look further.

Alan Mann

Response from the Author - Jan Kersschot

Dear Alan, Thank you for your reply. As you point out, there are always individual perspectives. And these do not always match. But that is OK. What I am trying to point at in this book is not what is different between you and me, but what is common. I know I have been unsuccessful to describe this common good, but the pointers I propose may lead the reader to discover that which is beyond words.

I have to confess you are right about the ‘ everything is perfect’ sentence. It was a wrong way of putting it, meant for those who are always complaining and judging. In the next book, it will be erased. Thank you for pointing it out to me.

I want to continue our discussion, if you like. Please, mention the website address at the end of the article.

Regarding Eric’ s comments:

Here again, there are differences in individual perspectives. And that these do not always match is interesting, but not important. You see, what I am pointing at is not logical, and must give rise to contradictions and paradoxes.

You know that what I am trying to point at in this book is not what is different between seeker A and seeker B, but what is common, what is shared. And all I write down is indeed coming from memory. Where else could it come from, if I write it down in a book?

I understand Eric when he wants to prove that the person is real. A real activity. When it seems real to him, then it is real to him. I don’ t care. And it seems real to Jan as long as Jan ‘ needs’ it for practical reasons. But I know there is a knowing - that it is only an image talking to itself. It is clear to me (to who?) and that clarity can never be taking away any more. I can’ t help it. And the joke is that I can’ t claim this ‘ clarity’ either. And I don’ t see anyone around who is not seeing.

Further discussions about all this seem to me a bit away from what I was trying to point at in the book. Reading the book a second time may give new perspectives, but words and concepts are always quite tricky, especially in this matter. Forget about it all, forget about all the books, including mine. So, sincerely, I wish Eric Best all the best.
Jan

Here is Jan’s website where you can find out where to get the book and read extensive summaries of chapter content as well as write directly to Jan himself. www.inspiration.yucom.be/cominghome.htm

Jan Kersschot

Birders - By Mark Cocker - Jonathan Cape, 228 pp, \$49.90

(The following is an extract from a review by Paul Sheehan in the SMH, Saturday 29 September 2001)

“And there, amongst the heather, witnessed only by the smiling heavens above, these two young adult men, sound of mind and body, proceed to punch the air, screaming and whooping in demented exultation.” Welcome to the bird of birdwatching. It may be a quiet activity, but not dull. The inner life of the birdwatcher is captured by Mark Cocker

in this ic book when he describes “those sensations of liberty and clarity that are so much more difficult to find in ordinary life”. But a good pair of binoculars is crucial:

“They convert life into something else, something almost abstract, something purer, clearer, usually more beautiful and almost always something you’ve never really seen that way before. That’s what birders are hooked on not the physical object ... but their wondrous alchemical power to transform you and your state of being.”

(I included this extract because I found in the last paragraph the only example I have found of somebody describing the ' binocular effect' which I have long realized as one of the major reasons for my lifelong interest in birdwatching. Shortly after inserting this extract I read the following in V. S. Naipaul's novel Half a Life. Ed.)

Seeing - through the sights!

That was when I learned to use a gun. Word came to us and our neighbours, discreetly, that we could get instruction at the police shooting range in the town. The little garrison didn't have that facility, so unready was it for a war. Our neighbours were eager, but I didn't particularly want to go to the police range. I had never wanted to handle guns. There hadn't been anything like a cadet corps at the mission school; and my worry - greater than my worry about Africans - was that I was going to make a fool of myself before important people. But then, to my great surprise, I was entranced the first time I looked down a gun-sight with a finger on the trigger. It seemed to me the most private, the most intense moment of conversation with oneself, so to speak, with that split-second of right decision coming and going all the time, answering the movements of one's mind. It wasn't at all what I was expecting. I feel that the religious excitement that is supposed to come to people who meditate on the flame of a single candle in an otherwise dark room was no greater than the pleasure I felt when I looked down a gun-sight and became very close to my own mind and consciousness. In a second the scale of things could alter and I could be lost in something like a private universe. It was strange, being on the shooting range in Africa and thinking in a new way of my father and his brahmin ancestors, starveling servants of the great temple. I bought a gun. I set up targets in the grounds of Ana's grandfather's house and practised whenever I could.

Shadows

Dark shadows move across the land.
Our valiant men, with sword in hand
Go forth to fight across the sea.
Oh God of Battle, hear our plea:
'We come in peace, our hearts are pure'.
It's not revenge, of that we're sure
We're all agreed they're black as night,
Their cause is evil, ours is right.

Don't tell us please, as Jung revealed,
Man's darkest motives are concealed,
And all we ego-driven men
Project our shadows onto 'Them',
It's not like that - we're fair-go mates,
Not xenophobic reprobates!
The demons that we fight aren't ours
They're villains from those foreign powers.

We'll watch it all on CNN
TV being mightier than the pen.
We're well aware that some may cry
To see those Afghans starve and die.
But 'c'est la guerre' 'twas ever thus,
We'll soldier on, our cause is just.

Some psychobabblers indicate
Our motives are just fear and hate.
Well, count me out, I'm feeling fine
The shadows in the world aren't mine!

Marian Nisbett

From Your Driveway You Can See the Moon

Remember when that comet was here? You could see it from my driveway! A part of me thought everyone in the world would be piling into my driveway.

That's kind of how spiritual teachers work. They prepare a nice driveway with lots of flowers, beautiful music and incense, only to point to what anyone can see from their own driveway.

I can see the moon from my driveway! I suggest everyone rush to Nova Scotia as soon as possible if they want to see the moon. Quick, before all the hotels are booked!

From: The Nondualism of Jerry Katz, at: <http://www3.ns.sympatico.ca/umbada/index.html>

Touching the Sublime from Jack Geddes

Do infants touch the sublime prior to becoming self conscious? Do they lose a sense of wonder, of eternity, and of things being ever-present? Do they bring these senses with them into the world, to lose them too soon? Do they experience a vision inspired by the wonderful newly presented world of colour and beauty? Such a vision as we might expect someone born blind to experience if their vision was suddenly restored.

The poet Henry Vaughan, referred to those early days when he ‘Shin’d in his Angel Infancy’. He recalls in shadows of eternity:

*When on some gilded cloud or flower
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity. (1)*

All those who love the poetry of William Wordsworth will know the ‘vision splendid’ in his poem *Intimations of Immortality*:

*Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy.
But he beholds the light and whence it flows
He sees it in his joy.
The Youth, who daily, farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature’s Priest.
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended:
At length the Man perceives it die away.
And fade into the light of common day. (2)*

But nearly lost for ever for us, were surely the greatest of all writing in the English language concerning this infant vision, the *Centuries of Meditation*, by the Welsh mystic and poet, the Reverend Thomas Traherne (3), a seventeenth century contemporary of Henry Vaughan. His original Folios of writings, were discovered only in 1895 on a second-hand book barrow in Farringdon Road, London.

‘Will you see the Infancy of this sublime and celestial greatness? Those pure and Virgin Apprehensions I had from the Womb, and that Divine Light wherewith I was born, are the best unto this day, wherein I can see the Universe ... All Time was Eternity and a Perpetual Sabbath. Is it not strange, that an Infant should be Heir of the World, and see those Mysteries which the Books of the Learned never unfold.

The Corn was Orient and Immortal Wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sewn. I thought it had stood from Everlasting to Everlasting. The Dust and the Stones of the Street were as Precious as Gold. The Gates were at first the End of the World, the Green Trees when I saw them first through one of the Gates Transported and Ravished me, their sweetness and their Beauty made my Heart to leap, and almost mad with extasie, they were such strange and Wonderful Things: The Men! O what Venerable and Reverend Creatures did the Aged seem. Immortal Cherubims! And young Men Glittering and Sparkling Angels and Maids, strange Seraphick Pieces of Life and Beauty. Boys and Girls tumbling in the Street, and Playing were moving Jewels. I knew not that they were Born or should Die.....”

However, Traherne, in his sadly rather short lifetime, also left us his adult vision, which he thought was a return to his lost infant vision but further enriched by his adult experience:

So that with much adoe I was corrupted, and made to learn the Dirty Devices of this World, which I now unlearn and become as it were a little Child, that I may enter into the Kingdom of God.

The message of Thomas Traherne, so fortunately regained, is that the sublime is everywhere about us and that we should awake each morning knowing that we are, each single one of us, heirs to the whole world, so gloriously created. (Traherne’s Doctrine of Felicity).

Behind the mundane world the mystic and the poet, the writer, the painter, the great composer, the architect and indeed the nature lover, at times perceives a world of infinite wonder, permeated by love and beauty which he or she knows with absolute certainty is not a world that has been invented personally, but is eternally there, as solid as a rock, only more so! - a reality, never to be capable of adequate description, even by such poets as John Milton or Dante Alighieri.

Plato discovered this, over two thousand years ago, when he included love and beauty in his world of fixed and eternal ideas(4). If survival is simply a matter of tooth and claw, as the behaviourists and reductionists would have us think, then this other world is useless to our survival. In a broader sense, if we are not to self-destruct, we need increasingly to reach for this experience, and bring this sublime world down into our lives. This would surely have more relevance for our survival than a possibly useless quest to find the ultimate equation to explain all phenomena. Whence cometh this love and this beauty and our yearning for it? When did the truly sublime enter this world of ours and why? Was it before the coming of the dinosaurs? It must have been! For it is surely timeless.

Nature Mysticism

This is not the mysticism of the cell of St Theresa, St John of the Cross or other saints. The cell for this mysticism is much vaster, the living cathedral of nature, unspoiled wilderness and green pastures.

In addition to the creative arts of mankind, there is a world of wonder to be found amidst the scenery of living plants and creatures, away from suburban streets, factories, brick houses and noise. The beauty of Earth's scenery, often, seems to exceed its component parts, and to strike suddenly silently and inexplicably into the human heart. Every lover, painter and poet knows this.

At night too, we should often look upward to the moon and the stars, which have their own strange beauty. Do you remember John Masefield's poem on the moonlight that turns everything to silver? Do you remember what Lorenzo said to his beloved Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*? (5)

Sit, Jessica Look how the floor of heaven Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.

There not the smallest orb which thou beholdst

But in his motion like an angel sings,

Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubims

Such harmony is in immortal souls,

But whilst this muddy vesture of decay

Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it so.

Evidently, it is not usually given to sceptics to experience these moments, if they did then scepticism might suddenly vanish with the experience, as Professor John Wren Lewis's, Ann Faraday's and countless others' testaments reveal! Indeed the Near-Death Experience is often an encounter with the sublime as John has discussed in his own case.

The Sublime in fiction and nonfiction

I may have used the term sublime a little loosely but I like the expression and use it in its highest sense. Some who try to write about the ineffable have used fiction as well as fact. I can think of wonderful moments in fiction when the dramatist, writer or poet has conveyed a sense of the sublime.

For instance, in the Irish playwright Sean O'Casey's play *Red Roses for Me*, seen in London's West End there were unforgettable moments, when the hero of this drama about the Troubles is standing beside a 'river' flowing past drab tenements in Dublin. Suddenly a transformation takes place and he sees everything invested with great beauty, and the whole scene is magically changed as he tries to come to grips with this experience. I left the Theatre intensely moved by these moments.

To conclude, I have chosen the vision of two great poets. They offer us sublime moments in fiction and nonfiction. I hope that you will love these personal selections as much as I do! The first are words that the poet, John Masefield, put into the mouth of the converted drunkard in *Everlasting Mercy* (6):

The station brook to my new eye

Was babbling out of Paradise,

The waters rushing from the rain

Were singing Christ is risen again.

I thought all earthly creatures knelt

For rapture of the joy I felt

The narrow station wall's brick ledge

The wild hop withering in the hedge

The lights in huntsman's upper story

Were parts of an eternal glory.

Finally, I quote the great Hindu poet, Sir Rabindranath Tagore (7). He said that at the time of this experience he was standing on a verandah in Calcutta and watching the sun rise above the trees:

'As I was watching it, suddenly, in a moment, a veil seemed to be lifted from my eyes. I found the world wrapt in an inexpressible glory with waves of joy and beauty bursting and breaking on all sides. The thick shroud of sorrow

that lay on my heart in many folds, pierced through and through by the light of the world which was everywhere radiant That very day, the poem known as The Fountain Awakened from the Dream flowed on like a fountain itself. When it was finished, still the curtain did not fall on that strange vision of beauty and joy There was nothing and none whom I did not love at that moment. I stood on that verandah and watched the coolies as they tramped down the road. Their movements, their forms, their countenances, seemed to be strangely wonderful to me, as if they were all moving like waves in the great ocean of the world When one young man placed his hand upon the shoulder of another and passed laughingly by, it was an event to me.. I seemed to witness, in the wholeness of my vision, the movements of the body of all humanity and to feel the beat of the music and the rhythm of a mystic dance."

Jack Geddes

1) & 2) William Wordsworth & Henry Vaughan from The Oxford Book of Verse Oxford University Press.
 3) Thomas Traherne Centuries Mowbray London & Oxford, 1985 Edition. The Third Century P. 109. (Quoted also in The Pelican Book of Prose, Vol 2 Penguin Books, 1970 P.487 Vision of Childhood London. 1963 P.275. 4) Plato, see for instance, the Speech of Socrates in the Symposium - The Dialogues of Plato 5) W Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice -Act 5, 1. 6) John Masefield, Everlasting Mercy, quoted in F.C. Happold Mysticism, Pelican Books, P.92. 7) Sir Rabindranath Tagore, from C.F. Andrews Letters to a Friend pp 25-26 George Allen & Unwin 1923.

(This article first appeared in the Winter 1995 issue of Consciousness Magazine)

Visit of Richard Lang

The advertisement below is what we are using to spread the news of Richard's visit. I would appreciate feedback on possible targets for this message and any other ideas you might have as to how best to get the word around. There is no charge for the Wednesday evening which is by donation to Theosophical Society expenses. There are costs arising from hire of hall for the Saturday workshop, etc., so there will be a modest charge to recover as much of our expenses as possible.

Seeing Who You Really Are with Richard Lang

Wednesday 27 Feb 2002 – 7pm Evening Workshop at The Theosophical Society – Level 2, 484 Kent St., Sydney

This talk has been included as part of the Theosophical Society's programme of talks and seminars and will provide an introduction to the method described below and an opportunity, for those unable to attend the full workshop, to meet and hear Richard.

Saturday 2 March 2002 – 9am to 5pm - North Sydney Community Centre, 2 Ernest Place, Crows Nest

The all-day workshop is an opportunity for you to experience a contemporary method of spiritual awakening that is refreshingly direct, accessible, and down-to-earth. Richard Lang, long-time friend of the English philosopher Douglas Harding, author of this method, has been conducting these workshops for nearly thirty years. Often people who attend these workshops come away astonished for the simple reason that they actually do discover who they really are. This workshop will point you home to who you really are – an awakening that is at the same time profound, simple, and applicable in everyday situations.

You are warmly invited to attend this workshop. Since Richard is only here for a few days, it is a unique opportunity to experience this method of Awakening.

One day only, limited attendance. Cost \$25 - 30

To reserve a place ring Alan Mann (02) 9419 7394 and for more info check
www.headless.org

Meetings Sydney -

Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504 – 2nd & 4th Tuesdays Academy of the Word Seminar Programme – Under St Peter’s Church, Devonshire St., Surry Hills.

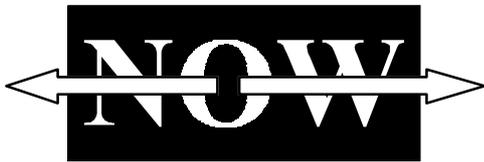
Second Tuesdays 6.15pm - Healing & Well-being - **Fourth** Tuesdays 6pm - State of the World

Last talk before the Christmas break - 27 November...”Love” Speaker - Simon Reynolds

Theosophical Society

Level 2, 484 Kent St., Sydney (near Town Hall Station) Talks Programme

Every Wednesday at 2.30pm and 7pm – Printed programme available 02 9267 6955 and at.....<http://qmtech.com/blavatsky/index.html>



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DIALOGUE MEETINGS				
LOCATION	DAY	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
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
Nowra	First Saturday	The Tea Club, Berry Street, Opposite Roxy Cinema	4-6pm -Riche	4423 4774