

Meetings (10.30am - 3rd Sunday)

81 Greville Street , Chatswood

Next Meetings – 19 May 2002

16 June 2002

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Editor's note

The postage edition of the Nowletter carries a date on the address label. It is located just above the address itself. This indicates when the renewal subscription is due. When subscriptions become long overdue I take it as a sign that the subscriber has had enough and wants to drop off the list. It is more difficult with the email recipients. Because it doesn't cost anything to send by email there is no charge but then I have no way of telling when you've had enough unless you change your service provider without notification. So please don't hesitate to let me know if you want me to take your name off the list. The present circulation is exactly 100 with 53% now going out by email.

From time to time I get contributions in the form of quotations, which readers send for inclusion. These are handy gap fillers apart from whatever valuable content they carry. However, the important material is the articles, reviews of books, films, retreats, etc., which reveal your views on these matters so please consider sending me something.

Barry Hora is working with Richard Lang to organize a one-day workshop at Brisbane Theosophical Society Lodge, 335 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane, on Saturday 31st August 2002. Richard is then going from Brisbane to Newcastle NSW for another workshop before leaving Australia. Douglas broke a leg whilst running a workshop in Winchester and after a spell in Winchester Hospital is now in hospital in Ipswich. Last news was that he is making good progress and sharing Headlessness with patients and staff.

Penny Fenner reports that a retreat is being planned for June, see page 12 for details.

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.

Subscriptions: Postal \$15 per annum, Email – Free

***Fearless* - A movie masterpiece about transcendence—by John Wren-Lewis**

.....This knot intricate / Of life at once untie!
Shakespeare, *Anthony and Cleopatra*

' All changed changed utterly; / A terrible beauty is born.'
W. B. Yeats, *Easter 1916*

Perhaps the best evidence that Peter Weir's film *Fearless* was a masterpiece is that airline companies haven't got together to buy up and destroy all copies, lest the public be put off flying forever by its vivid re-enactment of a jetliner crash from a passenger's eye view.

This occurs not just once in the film but three times, as the hero, Max (superbly acted by Jeff Bridges), flashes back to the events that occurred when his flight home from Texas to San Francisco crashed somewhere in prairie-country. The wreckage we see in the film's opening shots is gruesome enough, but because Max is meant to be discovering progressively more in these flashbacks about what happened in the crash itself, each rerun shows progressively more of the howling destruction going on all around him as the plane breaks up, with no punches pulled and no detail spared. Yet far from aggravating fear of dying, the final effect is the absolute reverse. Weir has pulled off the incredible achievement of enabling viewers actually to feel for themselves how at such moments human consciousness can transcend fear, and indeed mortality itself, *by moving out of time*.

So effective is it, I even wonder if the film wouldn't be positively reassuring as in-flight entertainment on a bumpy run - or perhaps that would be going too far! The same cautionary thought makes me hesitate to press anyone with a really weak heart to see it, though I've not heard of any casualties in cinemas yet. But readers of this publication should be more prepared than most to envision what are, after all, well-known facts about death in air disasters—so, having entered my caveat, I'll go ahead and urge you to catch *Fearless* on the big screen if you still can when this article comes out. If that's impossible, get a video without delay, and sit as close to the screen as you comfortably can when you watch it—because to get the full 'feeling message' from the film's climax you need to be surrounded by the vision and sound.

Then, if you've really gone along with Weir's enormously skilful ~~leap~~ in the rest of the film, and can let yourself experience the roaring, screaming disintegration with Max himself, I believe you'll find a meaning you've never dreamed of in Shakespeare's now hackneyed statement that love 'looks on tempests and is never shaken'. I'll admit unashamedly that tears were streaming down my face as I watched it, for it recaptured for me the most important experience of my life, when I myself came to the brink in 1983 and discovered, in the moment of time-stop, that human consciousness is grounded in the same fundamental energy that moves the sun and other stars and tempests too—an energy for which 'love' is the only word we have, though its common sentimental associations are hopelessly misleading.

And from quizzing other viewers who have not had the experience personally, I believe Weir's artistic genius has succeeded in the almost impossible task of getting across even to 'outsiders' the fundamental feeling of Near-Death Experiences (NDEs), and why they change lives. Earlier movies on the subject, which have tried to re-enact scenes of people floating up out of their bodies and moving down tunnels to heavenly light, fall so far short of capturing the life-changing feeling that I think they deserve the Monty Python send-up in *The Meaning of Life*. (There, the middle-class couples who have died of food-poisoning float out of their bodies into 'astral' forms, drive down the tunnel in astral versions of their family cars, and find that the light at the tunnel's end is a luxury hotel, with a Hollywood-style Grand Christmas Cabaret perpetually in progress "especially for you!")

Moreover it's not just lack of feeling in those feeble re-enactment movies that sells the reality of NDEs short. The feeling they *do* convey actually does violence to what I believe to be the most significant feature of the experience, for they suggest going *away* from this world and this life to find the heavenly light and love in some other realm, whereas the life-changes that have impressed even hardnosed sceptics into taking NDEs seriously, happen because experiencers find their eyes have been opened to light and love *right here*, in the world to which they return on resuscitation. The genius of Weir's film is that he starts from this fact and makes it the main focus of his story; he builds up to the time-stopping climax as the explanation of the extraordinary way Max has been changed by what seems, at the beginning, like nothing more than the shock of relief at having survived.

From interviews with Weir in the Australian media, I gather he hasn't himself had an NDE, and I know nothing about the author of the novel on which the screenplay was based, but between them the folk responsible for *Fearless*

have managed to capture the feelings of a Near-Death Experience in an extraordinary way. For starters, it's still not at all widely realised that all the classic experiences which make the headlines when people are resuscitated from the brink of clinical death - disappearance of fear and pain, feelings of blissful peace, slowing-down or total stoppage of time, even the famous tunnel and encounter with celestial beings and heavenly light - can also occur to people who, like Max, narrowly avoid death without being sick or damaged in any way.

In fact one of the very first serious studies in this whole area was made by a Swiss alpine climber named Albert Heim back in the 1890s, who fell off a cliff to what seemed like certain death, only to land on soft snow with very minor injuries. As he went down, time seemed to become infinitely extended, fear vanished, and he experienced wonderful colours and music, plus a panoramic review of his life right from childhood, with a sense that even his nastiest acts were now somehow accepted without being in any way whitewashed. He was moved to write a scientific paper about it when he found many other mountaineers had similar experiences, but this received little if any attention outside Switzerland, and wasn't translated into English until Professor Russell Noyes of the University of Iowa did so in the 1970s, after Raymond Moody had begun to draw attention to NDEs experienced in clinical situations.

Even then very little attention was paid to this kind of Near-Death Experience, because journalists - and for that matter most professional researchers - were concerned mainly with finding possible evidence of a soul that could survive the body's death, which meant concentrating attention on people who might actually have been dead for a short time, as in the movie *Flatliners*. Australian sociologist Allan Kellahear, now Professor of palliative care at La Trobe University, played a major role in drawing attention to the similarity between clinical NDEs and the experiences of people in crisis - situations like shipwrecks and air disasters. In *Fearless*, however, this is one of the major plotlines. The movie's climax is the revelation that Max's strange postcrash behaviour - an apparently total loss of fear, disappearance of a long-standing allergy, an aversion to lying even for 'good causes', estrangement from his wife and son while feeling great love for another crash survivor who is deranged at the loss of her baby - are due to his having experienced in the crash the same 'moment of death' that recurs weeks later when he comes close to clinical death through the return of his allergy.

The moral ambiguity of Max's postcrash behaviour, which is the film's main plotline, brings out another feature of NDEs that doesn't get much discussed. Here again, researchers in the 1970s and early 1980s had an agenda that led them to bypass important facts. They were anxious to establish that NDEs were not just hallucinations produced by disturbed brains, so they were at pains to demonstrate, by means of interviews and psychological tests, that experiencers showed no signs of mental sickness, but were actually living healthier, more creative lives than before. The impression created was one of 'all sweetness and light', until in 1988 housewife researcher Phyllis Atwater of Idaho blew the whistle in her book *Coming Back to Life*, by showing that healthier and more creative living often involved upsetting conventional domestic and social apperearts.

Yes, experiencers do indeed come back with new spiritual drive and urge towards a better world, but that often means preferring poverty to dull jobs that would keep families in the style to which they're accustomed, helping strangers rather than going to neighbourhood cocktail parties, and looking at scenery for hours instead of taking Junior to Little League. *Fearless* explores this issue with enormous sensitivity, showing how Max's changed behaviour sometimes generous beyond all expectation, but sometimes apparently foolhardy or even cruel—springs from his inability to countenance the compromises with fearful self-protection that are involved in even the 'happiest' marriages and the most 'regular guy' lifestyles.

In that timeless moment of the crash, he has experienced the wonder of infinite Aliveness which gets continually blocked out in so-called normal life by fearful evasion of any facts we've been taught to find unpleasant. As a consequence, he rescues several other passengers from the wreck in a way which they and observers consider heroic, though to him it really is, as he insists, nothing special. Yet the same 'fearlessness' later leads him to take risks that could harm people, both physical risks like crashing a car to jerk one of his fellow survivors out of irrational guilt about the fact that her baby was killed and she lived, and social risks like challenging the routine evasions practised by insurance agents getting the best pay-out for crash victims.

For Weir, however, the exploration of these moral ambiguities is more than just a human drama; what makes the film a work of genius rather than just a fine movie is the way he uses the story of Max's perplexing behaviour to introduce viewers gradually, step by step, to the experience of timelessness at the climax. First, he joins some of those earlier makers of NDE re-enactments in employing slow motion photography, just to get us used to the idea of time-sense being changed. In Max's first and second flashbacks to the crash, we see how his rescue of other passengers was indeed no heroic defiance of fear but something he can do quite naturally because time has slowed down for him, enabling him to see how to avoid falling debris, etc. For me, this echoes a story of my Queensland friend Jack, who

performed a similar rescue of a mate from a blazing tank in World War 2, and is equally anxious to repudiate any idea that he was heroic. Such experiences are by no means uncommon, even outside NDE literature.

However, there's an added twist in Weir's presentation of the rescue scene which I wonder if I may perhaps be the only viewer to appreciate. As the plane breaks up all around, Max picks up a baby and then calls out, to the passengers who are still relatively unhurt, "Follow me towards the light!" This apparently straightforward directive about how they can get safely out of the wreckage takes on highly symbolic significance when, in the final climactic flashback to the scene, the long body of the plane through which Max leads them becomes identified with the tunnel of his allergy-NDE. Since he clearly wasn't asking the others to follow him to the light of heaven beyond the grave, but taking them back to life on earth, Weir seems to be anticipating my own hypothesis (which I've never seen advanced by anyone else, and haven't yet published outside Australia) that the tunnel-to-the-light-phenomenon in NDEs is a discovery of 'heavenliness' as the true nature of this world when it's perceived without the veil of fear. And since it is *timeless* heavenliness, the question of whether it continues after physical death is entirely secondary.

Weir keeps giving hints of Max's 'heavenly' experience of the world all through the film. For example, in the way he finds the buildings of San Francisco fascinating when others don't even notice them, and is truly at a loss to understand how his fellow-survivor (the girl whose baby was killed) fails to see what he sees. Another example is his description of being free from society's entanglement *because death brings freedom and he feels he's already dead*. Some notable statements to this effect have been made by real-life Near-Death Experiencers: One that comes most immediately to mind is the great pioneer of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, Abraham Maslow, who described the blissful calm he experienced, in the two years he lived on after his near-fatal heart attack in 1968, as 'my posthumous life'.

But here again, Weir introduces a twist which resonates with my own experience in a way I've not seen mentioned anywhere else in NDE literature. Max tells the girl survivor as they walk through the San Francisco streets that they're invisible to the crowds, 'because we're ghosts'. I dreamed exactly that on Good Friday of 1984, not long after I'd arrived in Sydney in the wake of the NDE; in the dream most people couldn't see me because I was a ghost. It was such a remarkable dream that I published a paper about it in an American psychological journal, but I can't imagine it was read by anyone involved in making *Fearless*.

The most interesting thing of all for me about the film as a whole, however, is the way it explores what I have come to see as the \$64,000 question - why is it that something like a close brush with death is normally needed for the heavenliness of the world to be experienced? (And even that only works in a minority of cases!) The film's answer, if I understand it right, seems to be that the natural biological fear-response seems to have gotten out of hand in the human species, to the point where it governs the whole organisation of social life down to the minutest detail, blocking out aliveness in the process. For a fortunate minority, coming close to death unravels the knot, but then we have the problem of finding out how to organise practical affairs with fear as life's servant rather than its master, a problem about which even the world's greatest mystics and religious teachers have left us only very partial blueprints.

NDEs are often spoken of as rebirths; mine felt more like a resurrection, because I was 'reconstructed' with all my past experience, but with the fear-response now operating 'to one side', as it were, so that for most of the time I can heed it rationally *but not be run by it*. For Max, however, the process seems to have been incomplete, in that he doesn't seem able to handle fear at all without it taking over and removing his pearl of great price, which of course he won't allow. I find in his story a quite uncanny parallel, in modern secular Western terms, to what happened in real-life history at the beginning of the last century to the South Indian sage Ramana Maharshi who is widely acknowledged as probably the most truly 'enlightened' mystic of recent centuries. Though not at all given to religious life, he came to recognise in his late teens that fear was in some fundamental way keeping him from really living, so he put himself through what might be described as an artificial NDE, by lying on the floor and imagining dying. He emerged from it completely aware of the heavenly aliveness in all being, but quite unable to cope with routine living along the line of time. Because he lived in Hindu culture, where such consciousness-changes are understood and catered for, he was promptly surrounded by devotees who looked after him almost like a child for seventeen years, simply for the privilege of being in his presence and hearing what few observations he chose to make about reality. Towards the end of that time he began to have anoxial fits, and after one of these he suddenly emerged fully able to cope with practical living, showing delightful ease and simplicity and astonishing efficiency - the state known in Hindu philosophy as *sahaj samadhi*. It was as if the resurrection-process had only gone halfway with his artificial NDE, but now had completed itself.

I can't help wondering if the film isn't saying that Max too experienced only a 'half-resurrection' process because in the crash he, like Ramana, didn't actually come to the point of real death. In the film's climax, his inability to cope with society's fear-organised conventions does indeed cause fear to overwhelm him, eventually making his allergy return and really take him to the dying-point - and when his wife saves him by mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, he comes

back out of that NDE tunnel saying, "I'm alive!" in an entirely new tone of voice, and with a new look of 'solid' aliveness which I find a triumph both of acting and direction. Are we to conclude that now the resurrection process has gone to term, leaving him able to be in the world of compromise without being compromised? And if so, will he stay with his wife and child or not?

I don't know, and maybe when you see the film you'll have your own views about what its ending means. Meantime, I hope I've said enough to make clear that it's not to be missed on any account.

John Wren-Lewis

Literary Footnote The remarkable story of Abraham Maslow and his 'postmortem life' is told in *The Right to be Human* by New York psychologist Ed Hoffman, one of the best biographies I've ever come across. Ramana Maharshi's story can be found in Sir Arthur Osborne's *The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi*. A good introduction to NDE research, which incidentally is very clear about the way they often disrupt marriages, is Cherie Sutherland's *Transformed by the Light*, and it gives all the necessary references for you to read further. Allan Kellahear's recent book of personal reflections *Eternity and Me*, makes delightful reading and is published in Australia by Hill of Content Publishing in Melbourne. My own book about what one person's 'resurrection life' feels like, *The 9.15 to Nirvana*, will hopefully be out sometime next year.

Krishnamurti on Seeing

A message from Alan Rowlands to the LookforYourself Email Conference – 15 March 2002

Dear All, For those who may be interested in Krishnamurti and how his work may connect with that of Douglas, I have recently come across something of interest - an unpublished interview with K. I have posted the relevant part as an attachment, with a few short extracts from K's writings.

It does seem that K, intense psychological investigator that he was, sometimes came extraordinarily close to formulating the headless perspective, even physically - though never with the final specificity of Douglas. I don't think he ever got to the point, in spite of his extraordinary experiences and far-reaching insights, of saying that the essence of a physical object (e.g. one's own head) is absolutely nothing.

I have the sense that the world of objects was to him a physical reality independent of our seeing. But he did come near to making that distinction (which solves so many problems) between the 1st person and the 3rd person:

"The outward manifestation of K appears to be a person, but at the centre there is no person" (Tradition and Revolution). Here we have the manifestation and the essence, the appearance and the reality. He just omitted to mention that it is true of every one of us, if we just take a good look!

Alan Rowlands

KRISHNAMURTI on SEEING

The following is from the end of Pupul Jayakar's interview with Krishnaji in Colombo, Ceylon, 5th November, 1980. Also present were Mary Zimbalist, Nandini, Devi, and Pama and Sunanda Patwardhan. The dialogue was taken down in shorthand by Sunanda. No tape exists.

Pupulji has asked a question about K's references in the Notebook and several other places to 'a structure of seeing which is totally different from seeing as we do it'. The interview ends as follows :

K: Look Pupul, let us make it clear. When watching the outer, that is the criteria, because from there you cannot deceive yourself—wars, nationalism etc. are all factors; that's a measure so that you don't deceive yourself when you are looking; and when you are looking inside you are creating illusions. Watch this very, very carefully. There, you are looking from this to that. That's very simple. And I go a little further and say: is there any seeing at all? There is nothing to see because I have tested this. The outer is my measure; from that outside I go inward. There, I can't deceive myself in my observation. Then from there I move in. Then, what is there to see? There is the wall, the tree. There is nothing to see, which means there is nothing.

P : Do you know the implications of this?

K : Brahman is nothing. Nothing is total order. Right? If there was anything in nothing, there is disorder. Therefore there is nothing; therefore it is complete order. That's how the Universe is.

Pupul's mentioning of Krishnamurti's Notebook may refer to such passages as (p 12):

"One was looking not with eyes only but with one's whole head, as though from the back of the head, with one's entire being. It was an odd experience. There was no centre from which observation was taking place".

Or this from p 18:

"Everywhere, there was solitude; it had great unfathomable richness; it had a beauty which is beyond thought and feeling.....It had no quality, shape or colour; these would make it something recognizable, measurable.....In it all creation takes place...".

Or this from p 32:

"..there was a seeing, not the superficial seeing with the eyes, but seeing through the eyes from behind the head. The eyes and from behind the head were only the instrument through which the immeasurable past was seeing into the immeasurable space that had no time."

Narayan, Krishnamurti's nephew, told me that K had several times in the 60's talked about "seeing from the back of the head"; sometimes making a simultaneous gesture with his hand around the back of his head (I can't help being reminded by this of John Wren-Lewis saying, after his life-changing near-death experience, that he often had to put up his hand to make sure the back of his head was still there!).

Pupul Jayakar also speaks in her biography of K of the latter's interactions with her 18 year -old daughter Radhika and 17 year-old nephew Asit Chandmal; she writes (p 214): 'He showed them how to walk, how to stand, how to see from the back of the head. This was to let seeing flow backwards and to see from depth..'. (when I asked Radhika about this some 25 years later she did not have a very clear memory of it, but thought it had something to do with seeing the width of the field of view). On p 299 Pupul J mentions discussing with K "the backward-flowing movement" without saying exactly what this means. And on p 335 she quotes from a dialogue with K in which she asks him; 'what is the inner nature of yourself?' He replies: "I have never asked myself what is the mind, the inner nature of K. If I reply 'nothing', which means 'not a thing', would that be acceptable? There is nothing. Would you comprehend the state of K's inner being, which is nothing, which is absolutely nothing?"

Alan Rowlands

Two Experiments—from George Schloss

(I asked George to describe two of the experiments referred to in his article [An essay into Headlessness and the End of History](#) which appeared as Nowletter 78 in December last. I didn't have space for his reply in the Q&A section of that issue so here they are. There has been a lot of activity on the Look for Yourself email conference recently to do with those old chestnuts 'Self and Other' and 'Is it all a Dream?' with the sub-plots 'how can we know' and 'why does it matter' thrown in for good measure. Coincidentally, George's reply to my original query covers these later issues quite comprehensively and thereby provides an added bonus for me and other readers involved in both the conference and this publication. Bear in mind, the full impact of the experiments depends on doing them not imagining your way through them. Ed.)

1 The Foursome. The Foursome is a condensed version of the Circle but it addresses, I think, a somewhat different aspect, a variation on the theme. Four people, arms linked - let's say, you, Margot, Douglas and myself - form a circle to see what the structure of reality has to say for itSelf. Let's say Douglas and I, presumably "facing" one another north-south, form one axis and you and Margot the other at east-west. (Mindful, of course, that, as demonstrated in the Unclassified, the designations "latitude and longitude", though not purely arbitrary, make possible the fitness of the environment and so like everything else in this world are created for our convenience. As the Romans used to say and two-way looking confirms: "It's not necessary to live; it is, however, necessary to navigate.") In any case, coming from where I am at 1st Person free of memory and imagination, what do I or rather I AM see on present evidence? Well, I see two things. Looking straight at Douglas, I see that in order to see him at all I first have to get out of the way, not his way but my way. I have to disappear in his favor. I also see that this is not a question of choice but simply the way I'm built, the way things are. Dante calls it the love that makes the world go round, that moves the sun, moon and other stars, not as a feeling but a fact. And the same pertains when, looking left and/or right at you and/or Margot, I receive you singly or together in my field of vision whether or not you return the courtesy. But then a funny thing happens. I notice that, despite what may be going on interiorly in each of you - and at this stage I can only assume that the identical process is taking place in both of you since this disappearing act seems to be the only operation that works - you and Margot

looking at each other don't seem to be disappearing at all in one another's favor. On the contrary, from where I stand or sit it very much looks to me like you two are actually confronting each other.

What to make of it? Even more important, what to do about it? The first thing that comes to mind is to point out that though in this instance I've been referring to my own experience for the sake of clarity, this particular but by no means peculiar experience is not confined to me but is an absolutely universal phenomenon, equally applicable in one degree or other of awareness to every living creature on earth. Thus, although the content may vary and I in your line of sight replace you in mine, the container never does. Which would seem to indicate that, as the saints and sages have been insisting since time began, at bottom we're all one. Nevertheless, though it's now evident to all that somewhere in the region of the heart headless is where we begin, it's equally obvious we don't end there. There's still the stubborn fact - and there's no denying the world, too, is a fact; the philosopher Hobbes calls it the war of all against all - that regardless of where you, Alan and/or Margot, are really coming from (and this would equally apply to a fly on the wall), it very much looks like you two are confronting one another, even though, as we've already seen, that's not really the case at all.

Well, which is it, then, and how reconcile these two diametrically opposed yet seemingly legitimate views? Has my eye - the same eye with which I see God and, according to Eckhart, the same eye with which God sees me - deceived me? The most obvious answer, and it's been around for millennia, is the one adopted by, among others, the Vedanta which, on the strength of its indisputable familiarity with the 1st Person or what, in its impersonal way it was to acknowledge as the 1st Person, was to sweep it under the rug, to declare that the so-called confrontation was pure illusion - that yes, my eyes have deceived me. To which the more down-to-earth, like Hobbes for instance (and the Hindus have their share of the likes of him too), immediately respond that, aside from the social consequences, if confrontation is an illusion it's a helluva real one as even language testifies when it advises against rushing "head-long" into the lion's mouth in hot pursuit of its nature.

Now I don't know how far you want to go with this in our limited space - you ask for a few words - but it may help clarify a point I made in my paper to explore one more time the uses of "illusion" which is no illusion at all but, as the lion's mouth attests, merely a half-truth: how, for example, the "appearance" of history - what Douglas calls the "we" - has providentially affected not only our knowledge but also our experience of reality. If nothing else, it may help demonstrate my conviction that the logical ramifications of the experiments, of any experiment, are virtually infinite.

In one of his Discourses Rumi, one of the great precursors of two-way looking and meditation for the marketplace, begins by bemoaning the almost universal sway of what he calls Headlessness, the inattention to who we really, really are. But - and, of course, this is precisely where his greatness lies - he almost immediately catches himself up by recognizing, as Headlessness and particularly this experiment does, that one-way looking, whether devoted exclusively to this world or the "next", is, aside from a miscalculation, a physical impossibility, since, very much like the interplay between foundation and superstructure, a distinction Douglas makes, you don't get one without the other. A foundation alone is worth exactly what it looks like—nothing. It's certainly not habitable. And it would appear the Power behind the throne "wants" the world inhabited, at least for (and in) the moment. By the same token, a superstructure without foundation - and, as we've already seen, it's a foundation grounded in love - cannot stand. As we've known all along and even our pop tunes, especially our pop tunes, not to speak of a paper-bag, proclaim it - when it comes to reality it takes two to tango. Without that special one and its non-Other - and, no doubt about it, from a God's eye perspective we're all special since, as we see now, he counts on that for his very ex-istence - there'd be no world at all, just as this blank page would reveal nothing but silence were there no writing on it. As in the paper-bag, without you, where would I be? You guessed it. Nowhere.

How else, then, except under conditions which demand a foil - an object to love - where you and Margot have to seem to be confronting one another, could God - awareness, consciousness, love, call Him, Her, It anything you like - be said to ex-ist at all, be brought to birth as Eckhart puts it, a detail which any mother, practiced in the labor of love by means of separation, will corroborate? Even more important, how could it succeed in having its Presence not only felt but known? To quote Angelus Silesius again: "I know that without me, / the life of God were lost; / Were I destroyed, he must / perforce give up the ghost." It's no accident that, in Western thought especially, the human, by right of its body, a body that, as in the Resurrection, signifies the realization of all possibilities, of redemption as well as election, is raised higher than the angels. And like nothing else in this world or even out of it, the experiments, by making explicit what is implicit in the body, sing that certainty like nothing and no-one else ever has before.

Paradoxically (which in itself says something about the nature of reality), it's only when, thanks to modernity, all seems lost and, finding ourSelf fallen so deep into what used to be called the abyss, we're finally in position to heed the wake-up call—it's only then we can confirm the fact that "the same eye with which I as subject see God as 'object' is the same eye with which God as subject sees me as object" is the absolute truth, the immemorial words promising

heavenly harmony and re-union finally set to the music of the spheres. Eckhart and St. Teresa and Angelus Silesius (who belied his name) and the rest weren't just bumping their gums.

2 The Storehouse. Just above I mentioned "the Power behind the throne" and it's precisely this aspect that the Storehouse relates to. Interesting isn't it? We have experiments which, like the Paper-bag and the Magic Wand, can and must be performed singly and those which like the Foursome or the Classified or the Circle address the nature of groups. We even have some in-between. A haircut to fit every face. In this instance, the Storehouse requires two people. #1 sits in a chair looking directly ahead; #2 stands silently behind and, beginning at one side, either left or right, slowly, very slowly and in a semi-circular motion, passes one by one a series of objects for inspection through #1's field of vision. These objects can be anything that comes to hand: if performed outside, a stick, a stone, a leaf, a flower; if inside, a pencil, a coin, a wrist-watch, a handkerchief, a piece of paper, whatever.

I suppose if we have to talk about it - and apparently we do - aside from reminding us of the primacy of the senses when unhindered by memory and imagination, its purpose is to point us to the ways of God and man. As the dying Lear says to his dear Cordelia, "we take upon us the mystery of things/ As if we were God's spies." We can now see how everything arising out of Nowhere, it reaches apotheosis at center, and then returns to where, Nowhere, it began. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust and so forth. And yet, and yet, if we want to survive, no less live, we still have to navigate the Meanwhile. Why don't you have Margot, standing behind you, slowly dangle a wrist-watch in front of you? See how at dead-center, at the high-noon of your life, the moving hand of time and, by extension, its surrogate, history, is contained within Your space and so in its coming to be and passing away acquires meaning, not in the order of cause, of course, but of value, how without that time ticking away Your empty space would have no meaning, right down to the realization that possibly in-and-for itSelf it really does have none. And what Good would that do, no less be? In two of his greatest plays, Hamlet and King Lear, the Earl of Oxford (a.k.a. Shakespeare) comes to almost identical conclusions: in the one that "readiness is all," in the other, "ripeness."

Half-way across the great globe, the Zen people, who knew a thing or two, too, about such matters (and I dare say still do), announced, and acted on it, that, aside from food and water, the one thing necessary to living the good life - a life of benevolence without purpose - is to pay attention. I suggest, as befits two-way looking, the experiments meet all these requirements, get it coming and going. If ripeness is all, then the "purpose" of history satisfied by their very Presence, we're now ready to fit the bill by paying it. Whether we're willing to do so is another matter but it's certainly possible that, thanks to the joint venture of history in the service of providence - the Power behind the throne - for the first time ever we're now able to.

Become aware, finally, of the capacity, not only do we see we have it, we have where-with-all, we see that that awareness is the capacity. Of course, as with any of the experiments, we're free to read and interpret them anyway we want so long as we remember that if God helps those who help themselves, God help those who, lapsing into license, get caught helping themselves. I think it was St. Augustine who said, "Do what you like. Do what you like - and pay for it." What I get from this one is the "backness" of things, that I really and truly am backed, in this case, by death itself if needs be and, of course, as we all know, it needs be. They say we don't have eyes in the back of our heads. And as far as it goes that's true. But does it go as far as it can go? Does it go all the way and tell the whole story? Because, courtesy of two-way looking, I now know of one eye that does see into the back of my no-head and beyond and what it finds is reassuring. And it's reassuring because it's trust -worthy which, as it happens, is the original meaning of "true" - that in life as in death we've been given all we need. Whether the goods of this world get fairly distributed is at once a matter for politics and economics and at the same time the matter with politics and economics and, as again in two-way looking, it's necessary to remember that. But that the Good of this world (and the "next") is there or rather here, at least in potentia, and not so much for the taking as for the asking and receiving, is unquestionable. Like the song says or should have: "The best things in life really really are free." It's as simple as the paradox that dictates it: that all we have to do to make our way home, the place we never left, is to move out, disappear in our Own favor.

George Schloss

Now you see it!

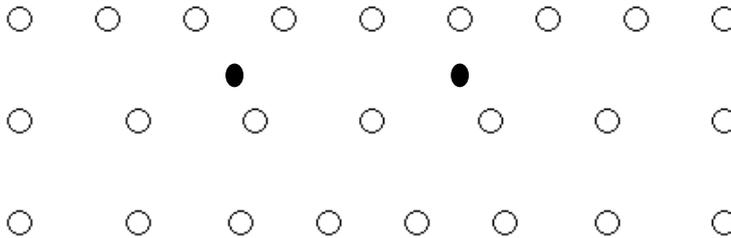
All that prevents us seeing what is already on view is our determination to overlook it.

Ten years ago, before stereograms became popular, Gladney Oakley handed me an example of the art. I planned to copy his version directly into this issue but it soaked up far too much memory for reliable email transmission so I've had to make do with the simple example below. Gladney showed me how to use the stereogram and suggested I play around with it for a while. I realized at the time he had some ulterior motive but took it me some time to fathom exactly what it was. Nearly ten years later I have prepared this note as a summary of my dealings with stereographic images and why I find them interesting.

For those not familiar with stereographic images, they are pictures of apparently chaotic markings which, when looked at in a particular way, reveal a three dimensional image. There are some helpful websites listed below for anybody wanting to find out how they are made.

The three-dimensional aspect is revealed by focusing not on the surface of the page as in normal reading but in looking through the image as if watching something behind the diagram and holding a deliberate 'diffused-focus', gazing at infinity, as it were. Alternatively, if you look at it in a cross-eyed way so that the eyes focus in front of the paper you may see a 'negative' version of the three-dimensional image. The recommended beginners option, is to try to soft-focus on the two black dots until they become three and then attend patiently to the 'central' dot until the image appears. If you persist with the 'three dot' approach, all will be revealed.

When the experiment is successful, what appears at first to be a chaotic mass of formless marks will change. If I focus on the page in the way I usually look at a picture, nothing changes and the confused pattern persists. But, if I'm prepared to look in a different way and cope with the discomfort and apparent chaos long enough, I find that the full story includes form as well as chaos and three-dimensional form at that. This new way of looking can be difficult. Some people have great difficulty, others manage it quite quickly, and most get the break-through after a few minutes of struggle. It is unusual to see the images without some initial eyestrain and frustration.



When the three dimensional image becomes clearly visible the strain disappears and it is possible to look quite naturally at the image and allow the eyes to relax. Attention can then be directed at any part of the page without loss of the image. The brain has worked out which of its repertoire of 'ways of looking' works in this situation. What happens could be likened to an inversion where the apparently chaotic mass of markings has turned into a coherent whole. The simple example above will not reveal an image, as in the more complex stereograms, but it demonstrates the principle—the dots appear to be at different levels when the change occurs.

I think that Gladney offered his gift as a multiple metaphor. First, as a habit breaker; a demonstration of the benefits of making an effort to look and see differently. Secondly, as a parable for meditation, altered or unusual states of consciousness and thirdly as a recommendation of a more comprehensive consciousness.

In the case of meditation, the constant struggle to 'still the mind' ends when the habit of constantly 'doing' drops away. The stereogram exercise provides a razor-sharp criterion for knowing when I've done enough and the point from which nothing further except patience is necessary. I'm not a great meditator myself and I'm not sure how closely the metaphor reflects what happens in meditation. In my experience observation of the content of consciousness, arising thoughts and so on, usually results, in my case anyway, in attachment to a particular thought and a consequent imaginary journey of association as one thought leads to another. However, if I persist I usually arrive at a point where simple observation takes over and the thoughts and images arise and fall away without turning into an epic. What at first is quite a struggle becomes effortless and natural.

On occasions, when overtaken by the wholeness of being, sometimes referred to as oceanic experiencing, epiphanies or magic moments, there is no attempt to analyse the situation or to hold on to it. It comes as a truer understanding of how the world really is—attempts to sustain it would be both absurd and unnecessary. Whatever the effort expended at arriving at this experiencing, it is apprehended not as a result of that effort but, more likely, in spite of it. The similarity with the stereogram experience is the revelation of what is already present and the ending or absence of effort.

In both examples, meditation and the ‘magic moment’ experience, there is often strain and misapplied effort involved in arriving at what is already the case. My conditioned interpretation of what is going on surrenders to a broader perception of what is actually happening. In both cases this surrender to *what is* involves a transition from effort to ease. And in both cases the more complete picture includes the previous or ‘lower’ interpretation of what is happening. In the stereogram, the chaotic jumble of marks is still evident even though I can now see the three-dimensional images as well. In meditation, the movement of the self is still evident but now seen as just another aspect of what appears and disappears.

As I was pulling these notes together I chanced to read Hare Brain Tortoise Mind by Guy Claxton, a book about why intelligence increases when you think less. When I got to page 174 I found he’d pinched my metaphor, he says:Hermann Hesse wrote in his essay ‘Concerning the soul’ in 1917: *The eye of desire dirties and distorts. Only when we desire nothing, only when our gaze becomes pure contemplation, does the soul of things (which is beauty) open itself to us.* And then, Claxton goes on:

By its very nature, this more dispassionate, yet more intimate, way of knowing cannot be brought, about by an effort of will. It arises, if it does at all, spontaneously. The experience is like that of seeing the three-dimensional form in a ‘Magic Eye’ image. If you look intently at such an image with the normal high-focus gaze, scanning it for its ‘meaning’, all you will see, for as long as you look, is a flat field of squiggly shapes. You see plenty of detail, but it does not cohere. However, if you give up ‘trying to see what’s there’, relax your eyes so that they gaze softly through the image, and for a while in this state of patient incomprehension, then the details begin to dissolve and melt into one another, and a new kind of seeing spontaneously emerges, one which reveals the ‘hidden depths’ in the picture. There is no doubt when this revelation has occurred: it has a visceral impact which cannot be forced or feigned – just as the ‘getting’ of a joke is a spontaneous, bodily occurrence that cannot be engineered. Someone who ‘thinks’ they see the image, like someone who ‘understands’ a joke, simply has not got it.

I discover what the mathematician has concealed in the squiggles of the stereogram, by focusing on ‘infinity’. Is it also possible to bring out what is concealed in the ‘squiggles’ of everyday experiencing by including infinity/eternity in my gaze? That, of course, is what the recent Sydney workshops with Richard were about.

In other words, taking into account what one is looking out of as well as what one is looking at and thereby becoming open to the capacity of awareness. This is referred to as *Two-Way Looking* and is the essence of Headlessness. “*Till we see our nothing we cannot understand the value of our Being*” which is how Traherne speaks about the wider view and both Traherne and Douglas Harding claim that this wider perspective is there for the looking now, not only as a result of some arduous spiritual journey, and all that prevents us seeing what is already on view is our determination to overlook it. We can, for example, insist on regarding the stereogram with our normal focus and thereby ensure the failure of the exercise.

What all these things have in common is that the usual perspective is integrated in a more complete view. I was tempted to say that, in every case, the partial is replaced by the whole but that closes off the possibility of an even wider viewing. And does it matter? At the Springbrook Krishnamurti Gathering, after I’d introduced a small headless experiment, someone asked “do we have to play games?” A good question and although I didn’t have the answer ready at the time, I have pondered upon it and I think the answer is a definite Yes! I certainly find them a great help. I suppose the trick is to find the right game. A game to replace the one I’m so used to that I no longer realize I am playing a game at all.

Alan Mann

PS As the time of writing these notes approached I became aware of how my every-day consciousness was rather two-dimensional. I found that in the same way as I watch a film and enhance its reality by accepting its perspective and assuming depth—I tend to look at my every-day surroundings in a very superficial way, which assumes depth without

actually engaging it. I reduce my world to a cinematic version by compressing it to silver-screen thickness—I'm literally out of my depth. This is easily remedied by attention to the space in which things appear. I've made a nuisance of myself recently by pulling people aside and asking them to look at objects at different distances and look at the space in which they appear rather than the objects themselves and then to tell me whether it makes a difference. (The best place to try this is in a grove of trees.)

PPS Whilst taking full responsibility for the above I thank Gladney for some constructive comment and suggestions which were incorporated in this final version.

Kondo's Stereogram Workshop <http://www.kondo3d.com/stereo/why-3d/why-3d-e.html>

How Stereograms Work <http://web.mit.edu/~fwolf/www/9.00/stereograms.pdf>

Stereograms and how they work <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/pagrosse/StereoExp.htm>

Crib

Place the tip of your nose in the middle of the diagram and in contact with the paper. Then, very, very slowly increase the gap between nose and paper whilst maintaining the original focus, i.e., the focus established when your nose was in contact with the paper.

Quotes

From Joan Didion's The White Album

We tell ourselves stories in order to live... We look for the sermon in the suicide, for the social or moral lesson in the murder of five. We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.

From Mark Epstein's thoughts without a thinker

The Buddha's realization of nirvana was actually a discovery of that which had been present at the time. The Buddha did not enter some new territory; he saw things the way they were. What was extinguished was only the false view of self. What had always been illusory was understood as such. Nothing was changed but the perspective of the observer. When asked, "What are you?" by an awestruck would-be follower, the Buddha responded only, I am awake." As one important Mahayana Sutra put it, If we are not hampered by our confused subjectivity, this our worldly life is an activity of Nirvana itself." (page 83)

Four day residential retreat

Penny Fenner, is planning a four day residential retreat from early evening Thursday June 27 through Sunday late afternoon June 30. The venue will be an hour or so from Melbourne in a beautiful tranquil setting, mainly shared accommodation. Some doubles and some singles also will be available for the first bookings. The venue will be confirmed when numbers are known, as there are currently two venue possibilities. For those travelling from interstate transport will be available from the airport. Full cost to be confirmed, but we promise it will be affordable.

Further information from:

Skilful Action/Timeless Wisdom, 23a Britten Street, Glen Iris, 3146, Victoria, Australia

Tel: +61 3 9885 0119 - E: penny@fenner.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.

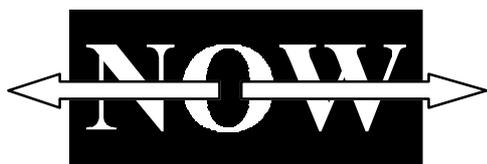
Second Tuesdays 6.15pm - Healing & Well-being - **Fourth** Tuesdays 6pm - State of the World

Blavatsky Lodge of The 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>



**If unable to deliver please return to:
81 Greville Street, Chatswood 2067
amann@bigpond.net.au**

DIALOGUE MEETINGS				
LOCATION	DAY	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
Melbourne	Third Saturday	St Stephens Anglican Church Church St., Richmond	12 Noon to 3pm Gary Hipworth	0352 581119
Sydney 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 Riche du Plessis	4423 4774
Nowra	Third Sunday	3/117 Berry Street Nowra	10.30 am Riche du Plessis	4423 4774

