

Issue 88 –February 2003

Meetings (10.30am - 3rd Sunday)
81 Greville Street , Chatswood
Next Meetings – 16 March 2003
20 April 2003

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Editors Note,

I place high value on personal contributions to the Nowletter so thanks to contributors to this month's edition. I get quite a few of what I call 'grunts and snorts', these are one or two word expressions; grunts of approval or snorts of disapproval. It helps to receive at least a paragraph to put in the following issue. I ask grunTERS and snortERS to expand their responses.

The annual, NSW Krishnamurti Gathering will be held at Katoomba from 21-23 February. Details from Geoff & Shirley Miller ring 07 5533 5178 shirley@krishnamurtiaustralia.org or Terry O'Brien 02 9949 8379 terry@krishnamurtiaustralia.org. Maria Dolenc is organizing a Byron Katie weekend in March, see page 11.

I'd hoped to publish this issue on the website but I am having difficulty in mastering the technology. I hope to post the March issue to the site, which Simon Mann has designed, and is waiting for me to complete the content.

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

Scepticism and Love – The Essential Mystical Counterpoint – from John Wren-Lewis

Ruminating over some of the paradoxes raised in recent issues of the Nowletter, my mind went back to a paradox which confronted me personally about a decade ago, at the very time when this noble journal was being launched. The year was 1994 and I had the very odd experience of finding myself quoted in new books by two authors who both claimed me as an ally yet seemed to be in total disagreement with each other.

One of the books (Dying to Live: Science and the Near-Death Experience, 1993, by Susan Blackmore, PhD., a psychologist at the University of West of England who has often been quoted directly in the pages of Now*) was acclaimed by sceptics worldwide (including our own Phillip Adams, who introduced me to her by satellite on his Late Night Live radio programme), for insisting that near-death experiences (NDEs) can be scientifically explained in terms of the physics and chemistry of the brain, without recourse to any paranormal or other-worldly concepts. For the same reason, many spiritual writers and some NDE researchers cold-shouldered the book. She quoted the story of my 1983 NDE and its resultant ten-year altered state of consciousness in support of her claim because I denied that the wonder of the experience itself or my subsequent equanimity about death has anything to do with belief that I have a soul which will live on in another world or be reincarnated in this one.

Yet it was my account of precisely the same experience, on Peter Couchman's TV show in 1992, that inspired Melbourne scientist/author Darryl Reaney to take a serious interest in NDEs (much to the wry amusement of his long-time friend Phillip Adams). And in his book Music of the Mind: An Adventure into Consciousness he quotes my words, (along with those of other NDE accounts which he read later in the works of such researchers as Kenneth Ring, Raymond Moody, Margot Grey and Phyllis Atwater) in a passionate attempt to argue that consciousness transcends the workings of the physical brain. In his final chapter he explains that, for him, this was no mere academic exercise, but a personal search for meaning precipitated by a life-threatening illness (leukaemia) which befell him in 1993.

I knew nothing of this until later that year, when the book was already in press and he had become very ill indeed. Our personal acquaintance consisted of just a few phone conversations during his last days, but I felt a weird kind of intimacy between us. I heard from friends that before he died on February 5th, 1994 (just a few days before his book's publication) he'd been reading Ken Wilber's Grace and Grit which I'd recommended to him, and which tells the extraordinary story of Treya Wilber's NDE-like shift of consciousness prior to her death from cancer. And by my friend's account, Darryl eventually went *into that good night* with something like the same equanimity, total self-acceptance and relaxed anticipation of O.K.ness that Treya experienced.

Since it's clear from Darryl's book that he remained a controversialist to the end, I think I can do him best justice by trying to explain why I'm delighted to have been part of his search for meaning beyond scientific materialism, yet still feel no misgivings about being cited by Susan Blackmore in support of her doubts about the need for any paranormal, non-physical or other-worldly explanations for NDEs, as much because of her strict Buddhist practice as from any materialistic prejudice. (It's often forgotten that the founder of Buddhism listed speculation about other-worldly realities amongst the greatest obstacles to enlightenment.) An important part of her argument is that modern cognitive psychology undermines the ordinary personal perspective in very much the same way as Buddhism does, inasmuch as it demonstrates how the sense of separate personal selfhood is not the primary basis of human consciousness, as is commonly taken for granted both by popular opinion and by most schools of psychology.

The sense of self turns out to be a learned programme in the brain, just one of many programmes (but by no means the only or the most basic one) whereby the organism relates to its environment – but it often causes a great deal of unnecessary suffering, even in ordinary psychological terms. Susan accordingly attributes the positive life-changes that follow most NDEs to the fact that that self-programme comes unstuck when the brain gets very near to complete closedown, so that when someone is resuscitated from the brink, she/he re-enters life with less self-concern, less anxiety about individual survival or advancement, and more ability to relate positively to the flow of life as a whole. The self-programme resumes with resuscitation, of course, but it no longer rules the roost. And that has indeed been my experience in a nutshell, which is why she quoted me in support of her view.

Moreover, precisely because I agree with her that the main significance of NDEs is liberation of consciousness from imprisonment within the illusion of separate selfhood, I'm quite happy to go along with her sceptical critique of NDE researchers and journalists who seize on these experiences as evidence that the separate personality programme can somehow exist apart from the brain and so survive the body's death. A main reason why her book has set the cat among so many pigeons in British and American NDE circles is that she blows the whistle on some of the most famous NDE stories often quoted to "prove" the personality's independence of the body. She's even extracted a shamed (but commendably honest) admission from a well-known American physician/author, that he made up a case (which others

have often since quoted in good faith) about a woman born blind who was supposed to have "seen" colours accurately in the operating -theatre during a heart-operation NDE. Parapsychologists and transpersonalists must be constantly wary of this kind of misplaced enthusiasm, for it serves only to discredit truly rigorous research in this area – research which is of the highest importance for human life in this world, irrespective of whether it does or does not, later on, yield real evidence of the paranormal.

Yet I think that Susan sells both Buddhism and NDEs short, not in her technical arguments as such, but by sticking to scientific materialist language which conveys the impression – no matter how much she denies any intention of doing so – that mystical expressions like “God”, “eternity”, “immortal diamond”, and so on, are only feelings, and somehow of less "reality" than biological concepts like "organism" and "environment". I'm prepared to agree with her that from the physiologist's viewpoint experiences in which the personal self seems to leave the body are just brain-produced pictures, but such statements create an entirely false impression unless qualified by saying that brains and other physical things are also just pictures produced by the brain. In other words, physiology has its meaning only in terms of human life, not vice-versa, and in practical human life there is ultimately only consciousness, wherein feeling statements are every bit as important as so-called factual ones, if not more so.

So, when cognitive psychologists reveal that the personal self is only a mental programme within the larger reality of life, the really honest thing for them to do would be to abandon impersonal language about organisms, environment and such like, and open themselves to transpersonal language. And this would mean considering absolutely seriously the fact that a large part of the human race has found it necessary, even in non-religious cultures, to use expressions like "underneath are the Everlasting Arms", or "The love that moves the sun and other stars", or "The many mansions or Eternity", in trying to do justice to their felt experience of life. NDEs and other mystical experiences would then be seen as vindications of humanity's age-old spiritual intuitions, made possible by relaxations of the self-programme, the reasons for which could be investigated in detail. And such transpersonal revaluation of science is what Darryl's book is about. Its core theme is summed up in his suggestion that alongside whatever statements astronomers, physicists, biologists and other scientists have to make about the universe, we should keep in mind that the word itself, universe, can also be read as "*onesong*".

(He seems, incidentally, to have coined this phrase himself, probably unaware that Dr Wayne Dyer uses the term, *Onesong*, in his book *You'll See It When You Believe It* and Ann Faraday also assures me she's heard it before somewhere. Perhaps it's one of those phrases that's been around in the New Age atmosphere, but I doubt if Darryl often read such books. For my private Trivial Pursuits collection, I'd appreciate hearing from any reader who has a pre-Dyer origin for this expression.)

Kenneth Ring, featured on the cover of Darryl's book, describes him as a "scientist with a poet's gift and a mystic's heart", who "has fashioned an irresistibly compelling book on the nature of consciousness and evolution". Darryl was, by his own admission, a seeker trying to catch the tune of the One-Song from the latest findings in such sciences as quantum physics and astro-cosmology. In my judgement, both as a former scientist and a born-again mystic (since my NDE), this is a risky enterprise. Scientifically speaking even the most impressive contemporary theories can be subject to revision or overturning, and from the mystical standpoint, the human mind's powers of picture-making, even on the grandest scale, are bound to fall far short of the richness (including the sheer quirkiness) of Infinity.

Nonetheless, I find Darryl's book a fascinating insight into a remarkable mind at work. Even before his argument calls upon NDE evidence from myself and others, his fascinating analysis of consciousness in the light of quantum brain-physics makes the best technical description I've yet found of the process I experienced in my close encounter with death. He writes:

We are our knowing. What happens when we die is that we change the way we access consciousness: we cease to make a picture of the world, we begin to know the essence of the world.

That is how it was for me in 1983. I experienced the "inside story" of myself and everything else, the One Consciousness of which we are all simply local focussings – and I've continued to experience this ever since. All my moment-by-moment pictures of the world emerge out of the Ground (or back-ground) of that One Consciousness. I've usually called it the Dazzling Dark of Infinity, but I'd have been very happy to have thought of One-Song. It defies verbal description, and even the greatest poetry, like Dante's "Love that moves the sun and other stars", is hopelessly inadequate for the feeling-quality of it. But it's certainly better than using terms like "space-time", or even saying nothing at all, for that "Nothing" is ultimate aliveness, fuller than full, joy beyond joy, peace past understanding. (People who assert, looking down their spiritual noses, "... He who speaks does not know", forget that Lao Tzu who originally said this, went on to write the Tao Te Ching, which is no mean statement!)

I think NDEers whose brains translate that One Marvel of Non-Separation into pictures of meetings with long-lost loved ones (meetings notably lacking in the boring features of such loved ones in ordinary life!) are not deceived - unless they become attached to such pictures as purely personal experiences, which NDEers I know don't seem to have done, even when they've insisted on the total 'realness' of the ~~eting~~ ~~ing~~-experiences. I think that NDEers who have heavenly visions can relate to NDEers with very different visions because, unlike ordinary religious believers, their personal self-programme which produces the pictures comes to be taken far less seriously. What they know as real is the One Essence wherein we are all related, far more closely than in the very imperfect relationships of the personal self-world.

Darryl is clear that the main significance of NDEs is their transformative effects on consciousness rather than any possible evidence for personal survival. But I think even he sells the experience short, though in absolutely the opposite way to Susan. I would love to have had the chance to argue the point with him, since it's a similar problem I have with Kenneth Ring and with most transpersonal and popular New Age writers on the subject - namely, the obsession with the idea of creative evolution.

Specifically, Reanne and Ring maintain that we stand today on the brink of a new leap in planetary consciousness-evolution. They think this for many reasons, including the happenstance that medical progress has enabled increasing numbers of people to glimpse, through NDEs, a higher state of consciousness hitherto known only to a few great mystics who were exemplars for a new humanity. But for me, and I think for many other NDEers and mystics, the most essential and distinctive thing about mystical consciousness is that it's not high at all but utterly easy and natural, an equanimity 'more ordinary than ordinary'. My feeling is that it's really the common birthright of all humans at all times, something from which our species has been precluded by a kind of collective neurosis in the self-programme. I experience "God" or "Eternity" (or whatever you choose to call One Consciousness) as completely present in every grain of sand and every trivial event, quite as surely as in the grand sweep of galactic history. The full integrity of the One-Song is here and now for everyone in every moment, quite irrespective of whether the whole creation is headed towards some mighty Omega-climax or merely running to no particular goal.

Rupert Sheldrake thinks we need to take the creative evolutionary paradigm, which has transformed astrophysics, into biology and psychology. I think it's old hat, yesterday's story, a leftover from the personal self-programmes of societies given to empire-building and the work ethic. I think science needs a post-evolutionary paradigm, a play-paradigm which takes open-endedness really seriously, as expressed so marvellously in T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets which Darryl quotes near the end of his book:

*Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.*

And because that One End is always present, I don't have to wait until I die to meet up with the songline called Darryl in some other-world, nor wait until all individual human songlines come together in some Omega Point. Darryl Reanne, who used to be separate, has now joined us all in the Great Space at the back of all our heads, and we can acknowledge him there by reading even criticising his book, just as we can acknowledge Susan in the same way while she remains alive and well and living in England.

John Wren-Lewis

* Her essay Waking from the Meme Dream was published in Nowletter 45 in July 98

P.S. For an up-to-date study of the spiritual significance of near death experiences read religion, Spirituality and the Near Death Experience by British scholar Mark Fox (Routledge 2002)

Dying to Live: Science and the Near-Death Experience, 1993, by Susan Blackmore (PhD) HarperCollins/Grafton.

Music of the Mind: an Adventure into Consciousness, 1994, by Darryl Reanne (PhD) Hill of Content/Allen and Unwin.

Freedom? from Ingram Smith

Is there such a thing as a lasting state – as fulfilment, wholeness, happiness, enlightenment, freedom?

Whatever may be the final outcome, it will not come by waiting for it, nor by working for it. It is not a matter of saying ‘here it is’ or ‘there it is’. It is already spread out, openly visible and experienceable as things are. We live in the Realm of Life.

It is not a matter of attempting to change what is into what I would like it to be and so to see outside in the world and to feel and be inside my body. Isn’t the whole of LIFE openly visible and experienceable now?

So what is it that blocks such direct immediate perception? Perhaps it is our fascination with words and language. After all what I know to be truth is its verbal description. Truth does not come into consciousness naked. It comes clothed in words and images. And it is with these symbols we communicate.

Which raises the question: Is there any other means of social communication? So much of the information I know has come to me wrapped in verbal symbols, read or heard. Only when my mind is observing, silently, only then is there a halt in the confusion of thoughts, freedom from the chaos in the mind.

Understanding dwells in me as silence, in the mind as emptiness. Revelation comes to me; I do not go to it and I cannot contain it when it comes.

Ingram Smith

‘Not Knowing’ from Katie Mann

I read Gary Hipworth’s contribution to the NOW Newsletter (Issue 86, Over-engineered for its purpose) with some interest. He highlighted a point I have felt confident about since my late teens, when questions about life and its meaning first started raising their thorny heads.

Humans are indeed complex organisms, with an incredible brain that has worked in our favour in terms of evolution. We have the ability to ask the most difficult of questions, but I do not believe we have the capacity to answer them. Some may see this as a cruel contradiction, life’s mean joke. Ultimately though, if we can accept that we can never ‘know’ the answers, maybe it is indeed a blessing.

It seems to be a human characteristic to crave control, and perfect knowledge. And, therefore, I can see why we struggle to accept that life is a profound force beyond even our intellect’s ability to completely summarise and pigeon-hole. Maybe it is the way our brain has been set-up, ask a question, find the answer, a survival instinct, that works well regarding food and shelter, but is redundant when it comes to more philosophical concerns.

Humans are fascinating in how they structure their world, and try and create understanding. Because ultimately life for all its beauty, is equally as terrifying. And for many humans, the ‘not knowing’ is the scariest component that must be conquered somehow, life controlled, rather just accepting the experience.

I still remember dad saying to me when I was in my teens, and sad or scared about aspects of this new and overwhelming role of adulthood. He asked me what was so bad about sadness or fear? Could I embrace these emotions, as they were just as much a part of life, and equally as important, as happiness and joy? Hard to do...granted. But this approach helped, and it is this approach I suppose I also use when it comes to looking for answers to all my questions about life. Embrace that I am equipped to ask the questions, have ideas, but it’s OK not have the answers.

I am still a great advocate of intellectual discourse, probing, challenging, inspiring, after all this is an incredibly positive aspect of being human. But I will not despair that I can never ‘know’. Because the real beauty of life is about its unpredictability, its variety, depth and constant changes.. Living for the moment is the closest I feel I can get to any real understanding, or ‘knowing’. Because it is a process that allows appreciation for this amazing experience called life, that all too often I take for granted.

I will continue to ask questions, try and challenge hypotheses, learn from others, glean insights where I can. But I am happy to accept that I can never have the definitive answer to any of my questions. And maybe that’s a good thing.

Katie Mann

A Long Process Towards Detachment from Lynne Willmott

Having worked my way through the process of James Twyman's Spoonbending course: <http://www.emissarybooks.com> at the same time as re-reading Carl Jung's autobiography "Memories Dreams & Reflections" I have been able to consolidate previously vague thoughts on reality/consciousness.

Jung talks about 'god's world' as being both universally fearful and wonderful. Noting that in 'god's world' everything exists. Death, horror, wonder, creation - that any belief that separates the joy of life from the terror of evil is failing to understand the reality of 'god's world'.

Reading Jung at the same time as trying out the exercises of James Twyman - where he asks us to *know* that anything is possible because everything exists - has enabled me to crash through a barrier of awareness. It's not that these thoughts are new; they have been lurking in the back rooms of my mind for a long time, but now that I am able to understand fully, a feeling of detachment is beginning to creep in. The freedom is astounding!

I am sure Dr Phyllis Atwater's astounding experiences in her book "Future Memory" also helped me grasp the idea that everything is possible because *'everything'* sits within the vast, collective, pool of consciousness, awaiting recognition.

I need to interrupt to explain that a few years ago I had an all-engulfing visualisation that gave me - by placing it in my mind - a picture of existence before we become aware of being a separate entity. I talk about this in my biographical notes at www.theawakeningproject.org but I will include a small excerpt here:

One night I saw the movement of life as a continual process in a majestic sea of energy. Example: If I look at my hand as simply a conglomerate of cells, constantly awash with energy, then like all matter, my hand consists of a myriad of separate cells adrift in the emptiness of space. So suppose all matter lived in this ocean of energy? Suppose the same cosmic energy was activating consciousness? Suddenly I was seeing this mysterious eternal-consciousness as a body of still water. It had no boundaries, no limits to depth or size, and within this body of limitless consciousness - spreading across the stillness - lay clumps of 'stuff', like a foamy white residue floating silently on a depthless dark. I knew this 'stuff' was almost superfluous to the over-all scheme of things, even though I instantly knew this 'stuff' to be human. Also I was being informed that attached to this 'stuff' - this human identity - came the perception of separation, but I must recognize that it was only a perception. I was told emphatically that each particle of the individual mind remained in the eternal pool of consciousness, with no division, no movement, no change. It was the actual ego process that created the illusion of separateness.

So everything in existence sits within the vast, collective, pool of consciousness, it is our recognition of a particular theory, system, science, doctrine, lore, culture, experience, insight, or perception that gives it life. It is our recognition of that 'thing' as we move it away from 'everything else' which gives it life! For in reality 'everything' simply exists! When our mind seeks out a particular thought within this vast pool, the electrical energy within the mind switches it through to our personal reality. Often, to begin with, the information relates only to the thinker of the thought, then between the thought and the attempt to relay the explanation to the minds of others misunderstanding develops. (take the very words being relayed now as a good example!) Thus we create in this existence the outline of the idea we discovered in the pool of consciousness, usually expanding and spreading the idea until such time as it may become accepted.

As a young man Jung expressed his feelings about the fearfulness of god. He knew God was not human, indeed this was the greatness of God because nothing could impinge upon such an entity. To Jung, God's world was kind yet terrible. At a very early age he was brought to the realisation that in the one moment God was both an annihilating fire and an indescribable grace. Reading these musings - coupled with my own understanding of the Pool of Consciousness - has reinforced awareness that the process of finding one's individual truth consists of detaching from all doctrine and opening oneself to another way of 'seeing the world'. This sudden understanding of Jung's 'raw power of god's world' offers vital data as I attempt to understand my own existence.

But back to the two pronged thrust of this new understanding. Along with Jung's insights I have been very aware of the tremendous work of James Twyman as he advocates peace. On his website he has included a Spoonbending Course and using this training he intends enlisting thousands of people all over the world in a prayer vigil that will alter the determinations of those masters of war who want to invade Iraq. It is his belief that mankind must have peace. So in James's mind light has been thrown on an entire scenario which will bring about peace. He knows he is right because peace is what he believes God wants! To support this edict he has discovered a group of very special psychic children who are able to deliver messages that reinforce this need for world peace. On the other hand if we talk to American

Intelligence they will tell us President Bush is right, that we must declare war on Saddam because God wants to protect the 'free world' from weapons of mass destruction. Advocates for both schools of thought - peace for mankind, and saving mankind - decide on ideas which suit their state of awareness from the collective pool of consciousness, transferring them to their own reality in the name of truth. Of course people who try to pick their way through the emotional confusion of such debate often do not find the same truth. Messages from similar dialogues echo through the halls of history telling us nothing really changes.

Not that I am saying war is right or peace is right. Indeed I have another belief altogether. But it's only mine and has no more credence than any of the others. In my scenario this impending war needs to take place because it is in fact the forerunner to the total change predicted for mankind's future. In my belief we have reached the limit of our greed, selfishness and lack of self-worth, and it is time for mankind to take on a set of beliefs that will recognize the wonder of who we really are. The change needed to install this new understanding of mankind's identity is so colossal that it will take the devastation of entire populations of thought throughout the world to bring it about. To me this war heralds another next step in mankind's journey of self-discovery. But that is only my belief and I accept it is simply a collection of thoughts that I have gathered from the pool of consciousness that has formed into a pattern now being woven into other minds via these words.

I know those who originally received their inspiration from the pool consciousness have influenced many of my beliefs, therefore maybe I should forget the present state of world history and to retract to my original statement: That always, all things remain in existence. They are neither true nor untrue; they simply exist, and what we do with them becomes a reflection of who we are. Self-discovery is part of what life on this planet is about. We have access to a pool of consciousness that constantly creates and moulds us. Many people simply follow a pattern already well formed and laid down for countless generations to follow, but always there are those who gather and process information differently thus expanding the human possibility. Thus we proceed down the road of creation, with the aliveness of this pool of consciousness seeding our minds. These flashes of electrical inspiration constantly enlighten and reform who we are.

This information changes nothing, but detachment from emotional disturbance sometimes aids understanding, increasing compassion for all life, especially our own.

Lynne Willmott

Mountains are mountains, etc. from Francis Lucille via Warwick Wakefield

Warwick emailed the following to me some months ago. I thought it a helpful contribution to understanding this traditional Zen conundrum about reality: *When you first study Zen mountains are mountains. Then mountains are no longer mountains. Finally mountains are mountains again.*

Warwick writes: I was listening to a tape from the retreat at Ottawa and I heard a beautifully lucid dissertation from Francis which just might resolve all our disagreements. (Warwick and I have occasional disagreements!)

Here it is:

Q: I have a question about the nature of the witnessing consciousness. Am I correct in thinking that the witnessing consciousness is just our normal consciousness; that there's nothing exotic about it; that it's something that's quite familiar?

FRANCIS: Yes.

Q: But at the same time it seems that there is depth to it; there are almost layers to it.

FRANCIS: The reason why we use the term, "witnessing consciousness", is pedagogical. It is because people usually think of themselves as being an object, as being a bodymind. In order to remove this identification we take them through a two-step process. In the first step this person is told, "You are not the bodymind, which is an object, but you are the witness of it. You are the witness of the body, of the mind and of the world; see that to be the truth." And that removes the identification with the bodymind because you cannot be both at the same time; you see?

This one had thought, "I am this body, and not the rest of the world; if I am this I cannot be that." That was his position. Then he is told, "Well, you say you are this and not that. Let's examine the implications of this line of reasoning: are you the bodymind, or are you the witness?"

He replies, "Well, I am the witness." and he is caught in his own logic.

According to his own logic, "If I am the witness, I cannot be that. Because the witness has become the 'this' and the bodymind that I thought I was has become the 'that'."

In the this/that dichotomy I am always the this, never the that, according to this logic.

So we engage with him from his own point of view, and using this point of view we take him away from the body, downgrading the status of the bodymind from this to that, and upgrading him from being a bodymind to being this, the witnessing presence.

That' s the first step.

He says, "Yes, that' s true." And this realization already gives him a sense of freedom. Then he is told, "This witnessing presence, because it is no longer attached to the bodymind, is impersonal. The bodymind is personal, the bodymind has limitations, but at this level where you are now, see that there are no longer any limitations. Because there is nothing objective about it. Now you can be open to the possibility that this witnessing presence that you now know you are is not personal."

That is a very important point, because when this happens the last residue that prevents a glimpse of truth gets removed.

This last barrier is the last superimposition of something personal or limited, even on this witnessing presence. The truth-seeker is told, "See that there is no valid reason to believe that this witnessing presence is personal, rather than universal, and be open to that possibility. And at that moment, when he goes to it, he goes to it naked, without any superimposition, and he realizes his true nature. And at that point he already finds his freedom.

Going back, the world of objects is still present and the objects still seem to be separate.

So then he' s told, "Since this presence is universal and not personal, and since the objects arise in it, exist in it and vanish back into it - they must be made out of it. Besides, this presence is that which you find at your very core, which is your substance.

Your substance is the substance of this universe. At your very core, the experience that you have must be the experience of the substance itself."

So, consciousness being the substance of the universe, he' s now open to seeing all beings and everything that arises as being made of consciousness. So then there is no more separation. Then there is no more a this and a that, a witness and a witnessed.

It was a pedagogical step which still has an apparent separation between the 'this' and the 'that', the observer and the observed. It has the advantage of temporarily granting validity to the point of view of the ignorant. It uses his point of view in order to liberate him from this point of view.

Warwick Wakefield

Responses to Agnes Petocz paper Is psychology in danger of losing consciousness? Nowletter 87

Louise Joy

Dear Nowletter Ed., Thank you for putting in full the excellent article on consciousness by Agnes Petocz. I have had some difficulty in grasping the meaning of previous articles in Nowletter but I could not put down Agnes Petocz's article. It was most clarifying. Thank you,

Louise Joy

Carien McGuin

This is just a little feedback Alan...my reaction to Agnes Petocz. I like Neville Symington' s approach in the recent Nowletter, but Agnes left me a little in the air.

What I wrote on first reading: First reading: a wonderfully intellectual paper, in true academic (in-house) jargon in which Agnes indicates her personal preference based on "like" with no experiential back-up, or evidence. Half the paper outlines the problem and whets our interest, and she presents a question of great interest, which she doesn' t answer or explore: "How can technicolour phenomenology arise from soggy grey matter?"

She presents an interesting and innovative scale of consciousness and sensibly discusses the influences on the scientific "looking" at consciousness, these influences being the handicaps and limitations for instance of a foot wanting to know the whole body. Her scale of consciousness she itemises as: "1) the need to know (cognition) and the need not to know (mystery); 2) the difference between things and their relations; 3) necessary versus necessary and sufficient (not only right functioning but also right potentiality); 4) and the limitation of language." These are original, not relating to any other scales of consciousness that I' ve read. Having opened up the ' conceptual minefield Agnes outlines her scientific approach – "look to what is empirically verifiable and testable, apply our best available error-detection mechanisms and stop when we reach the limit".

Disappointingly Agnes denies us the journey of this verification and testing of her four platforms of consciousness and in three short sentences tells us her results: that the bottom step (platform) is unacceptable because it is logically incoherent (is it?) and empirically cannot support the relational nature of consciousness (?); and 2) that the next step is where we stop because there is no good reason to move on. But what good reason is there to stop?

It seems at this point that Agnes goes into her partiality, her "like", which she supports by quoting other scientists, Hopkin, Torey, and mentioning Anaximander and Freud. Her paper concludes not with any reasoned answer to its title, nor with an answer to other questions raised in the abstract, nor with a summation of psychological perspectives – only

with perspectives of the study of psychology as a science in relation to consciousness. And like a true fairy godmother she assures us that no matter what, we can still have our mystery.

It' s all a bit unsatisfactory, though full of interesting statements. Perhaps Agnes will discover the excitement of exploring her two quotes in greater depth : Hopkins..."consciousness seems inexplicable by reference to the brain...".; and McGinn...."what we see in the PET scan is nothing like what it feels like for the person whose brain we are scanning.....not the consciousness as it exists for the person whose consciousness it is.".....or she may have done so, and this paper was the introductory? Thanks anyhow.

Carien McGuin

Alan Mann

I thought Agnes's article a brilliant summary of the various attempts to explain consciousness. When she concluded by locating herself in category two of her range from Skinner at 1 and Berkeley at 6, saying she thought there was no need to go further, I wondered why some people would select a category further along the spectrum? I found that if I had to put myself in one of her categories I would be at the opposite end to Agnes, one short of Berkeley in the box with Whitehead & Co. Why?

I think there are two possible reasons. The first is some personal, direct experiencing of the various states of consciousness which fit more comfortably with the 'broader', non-dual explanations. The second is to do with difficulties which arise from the attempt to deal in an objective way with what is essentially subjective, a point she makes in the paper. The question of consciousness seems to require the recognition that what we know about it and how it is experienced provide two quite different perspectives. If I want explanations about it, consciousness becomes the 'object' of my exploration – that is the world of explanation. If, however, it is to be apprehended then I discover consciousness to be no different from what I am. So the category 1 explanation is a dualistic highly subject-object approach and as we travel towards category six we find ourselves moving closer to the non-dual, experiential perspective. I found the paper very helpful in the way it presents this shift.

It occurred to me that as consciousness embraces all explanations and is, consequently, the context for them all do I have to choose a particular category? I thought it might be more useful to see whether it is possible to adopt, for a moment or two at least, the perspective from which a particular category seems most reasonable. It then becomes a matter of finding out where I have positioned myself in the overall picture, in truth as it were, rather than trying to work out which category is true.

I also thought Agnes's presentation very relevant to our recent exchanges on consciousness, whether it is the icing on the cake of creation or fundamental. Where you position yourself on Agnes's spectrum will largely determine the answer. However, experientially, it seems undeniable that consciousness is primary and I think that any attempt to resolve my question, as opposed to Agnes's, must be from within consciousness rather than from the viewpoint of an imagined observer.

Alan Mann

Self-remembering and Two-way-looking from Alan Mann.

(I have never felt comfortable with Gurdjieff. I resisted the performer in him and dismissed him as a bit of a charlatan, a trickster. On the other hand, I have friends who speak highly of their contacts with his work and I've been impressed by books written by people who knew him and thought highly of his teaching. The first was Hubert Benoit's Let Go which I read many years ago and I recently read The Taste of Things that are True by Henri Tracol. The Tracol book prompted me to try Ouspensky where I found the following passage. It explains what Gurdjieff meant by self-remembering of which I've never been able to get a satisfactory explanation before. It also provides graphic confirmation that self-remembering is the same, or very similar, to what Douglas Harding describes as two-way-looking. Ed)

Extracted from pages 117 to 119 of In Search of the Miraculous by P D Ouspensky. Ouspensky is recollecting some of the talks by Gurdjieff he has attended.

I cannot say that what was said about consciousness became clear to me at once. But one of the subsequent talks explained to me the principles on which these arguments were based. On one occasion at the beginning of a ' meeting G. put a question to which all those present had to answer in turn. The question was: "' What is the most important thing that we notice during self observation?"

Some of those present said that during, attempts at self-observation. what they had felt particularly strongly was an incessant flow of thoughts which they had found impossible to stop. Others spoke of the difficulty of distinguishing the work of one centre from the work of another. I had evidently not altogether understood the question, or I answered my own thoughts, because I said that what struck me most was the connectedness of one thing with another in the system, the wholeness of the system, as if it were an "organism," and the entirely new significance of the word to know which included not only the idea of knowing this thing or that, but the connection between this thing and everything else.

G. was obviously dissatisfied with our replies. I had already begun to understand him in such circumstances and I saw that he expected from us indications of something definite that we had either missed or failed to understand.

"Not one of you has noticed the most important thing that I have pointed out to you," he said. "That is to say, not one of you has noticed that *you do not remember yourselves*." (He gave particular emphasis these words.) "You do not feel *yourselves* ; you are not conscious of *yourselves*. With you 'it observes' just as 'it speaks' , 'it thinks' , 'it laughs.' You do not feel: I observe, I notice, I see*. Everything still 'is noticed' , 'is see'In order really to observe oneself one must first of all *remember oneself*. (He again emphasized these words.) "Try to *remember yourselves* when you observe yourselves and later on tell me the results. Only those results will have any value that are accompanied by self-remembering. Otherwise you yourselves do not exist in your observations. In which case what are all your observations worth?"

These words of G.' s made me think a great deal. It seemed to me at once that they were the key to what he had said before about consciousness. But I decided to draw no conclusions whatever, but to try to remember myself while observing myself. The very first attempts showed me how difficult it was. Attempts at self-remembering failed to give any results except to show me that in actual fact we never remember ourselves.

"What else do you want?" said Gurdjieff. "This is a very important realization. People who know this" (he emphasized these words) "already know a great deal. The whole trouble is that nobody knows it. If you ask a man whether he can remember himself, he will of course answer that he can. If you tell him that he cannot remember himself, he will either be angry with you, or he will think you an utter fool. The whole of life is based on this, the whole of human existence, the whole of human blindness. If a man really knows that he cannot remember himself, he is already near to the understanding of his being."

All that G. said, all that I myself thought, and especially all that my attempts at self-remembering had shown me, very soon convinced me that I was faced with an entirely new problem which science and philosophy had not, so far, come across.

But before making deductions, I will try to describe my attempts to remember myself.

The first impression was that attempts to remember myself or to be conscious of myself, to say to myself, I am walking, I am doing, and continually to feel this I, *stopped thought*. When I was feeling I, I could neither think nor speak. even sensations became dimmed. Also, one could only remember oneself in this way for a very short time.

I had previously made certain experiments in stopping thought which are mentioned in books on Yoga practices. For example there is such a description in Edward Carpenter' s book *From Adam' s Peak to Elephant* although it is a very general one. And my first attempts to self-remember reminded me exactly of these, my first experiments. Actually it was almost the same thing with the one difference that in stopping thoughts attention is wholly directed towards the effort of not admitting thoughts, while in self-remembering attention becomes divided, one part of it is directed towards the same effort, and the other part to the feeling of self.

This last realization enabled me to come to a certain, possibly a very incomplete, definition of "self-remembering," which nevertheless proved to be very useful in practice. I am speaking of the division of attention which is the characteristic feature of self-remembering.

I represented it to myself in the following way:

When I observe something, my attention is directed towards what I observe – a line with one arrowhead:

I  **the observed phenomenon.**

When at the same time, I try to remember myself, my attention is directed both towards the object observed and towards myself. A second arrowhead appears on the line:

I  **the observed phenomenon.**

Having defined this I saw that the problem consisted in directing attention to oneself without weakening or obliterating the attention directed on something else. Moreover this "something else" could as well be within me as outside me.

The very first attempts at such a division of attention showed me its possibility. At the same time I saw two things clearly.

In the first place I saw that self-remembering resulting from this method had nothing in common with "self-feeling," or "self-analysis." It was a new and very interesting state with a strangely familiar flavour.

And secondly I realized that moments of self-remembering do occur in life, although rarely. Only the deliberate production of these moments created the sensation of novelty. Actually I had been familiar with them from early childhood. They came either in new and unexpected surroundings, in a new place, among new people while travelling, for instance, when suddenly one looks about one and says: *How strange! I and in this place*; or in very emotional moments, in moments of danger, in moments when it is necessary to keep one's head, when one hears one's own voice and sees and observes oneself from the outside.

I saw quite clearly that my first recollections of life, in my own case very early ones, were moments of self-remembering. This last realization revealed much else to me. That is, I saw that I really only remember those moments of the past in which I remembered myself. Of the others I know only that they took place. I am not able wholly to revive them, to experience them again. But the moments when I had remembered myself were alive and were in no way different from the present. I was still afraid to come to conclusions. But I already saw that I stood upon the threshold of a very great discovery. I had always been astonished at the weakness and the insufficiency of our memory. So many things disappear. For some reason or other the chief absurdity of life for me consisted in this. Why experience so much in order to forget it afterwards? Besides there was something degrading in this. A man feels something which seems to him very big, he thinks he will never forget it; one or two years pass by – and nothing remains of it.

P D Ouspensky on Gurdjieff

(* I think it helps at this point to substitute "You do not feel ' I am observation' , ' I am ' Seeing' for Ouspensky' s You do not feel: I observe, I notice, I see*. Ed.)

Opening to Truth And Loving What Is

An experiential workshop organized by Maria Dolenc
Based on the work of Byron Katie and facilitated by Rosie Stave

Rosie has been facilitating and presenting workshops and trainings in The Work since 1996 when she lived and worked closely with Byron Katie. She is a certified practitioner of The Work, and brings a depth of wisdom and truth, honesty, compassion, love and laughter as she shares this gift.

When: MARCH 2003. Friday 28th to Sunday 30th
Where: Maria Tal Cottages. 2 Victoria rd. Wentworth Falls
Cost: \$350 - includes Accommodation and Meals
Bring: Linen (sheets, pillowcase, towel), toiletries

For Information about the workshop and bookings
Maria Dolenc: 02 9949 5017 Mobile: 0402 037 904
Email: mariad@mydesk.net.au
Byron Katie: www.thework.org

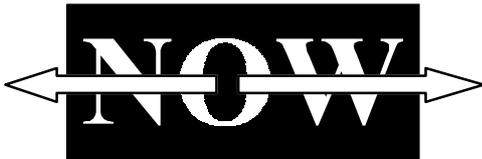
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Dialogue Meetings				
<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>DAY</i>	<i>MEETING PLACE</i>	<i>TIME & CONTACT</i>	<i>Phone Nos.</i>
<i>Dialogue Sydney City</i>	Third Saturday	Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379
<i>Dialogue Chatswood</i>	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
<i>Dialogue Clontarf</i>	Fourth Sunday	49 Peronne Avenue Clontarf	11am Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379
<i>Dialogue Nowra</i>	First Saturday	The Tea Club, Berry Street, Opposite Roxy Cinema	4-6pm –Riche Riche du Plessis	4423 4774
<i>Dialogue Nowra</i>	Third Sunday	3/117 Berry Street Nowra	10.30 am Riche du Plessis	4423 4774