



Issue 89 –April 2003

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

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Editors Note,

I thought we might avoid war-related input this month as there is so much around at the moment. However, a great deal of the pro and anti-war material is also about dialogue. So, what appears here is included as much for its value as dialogue commentary as examples of views on the conflict. Apologies to those of you who have already come across some of the content as email postings.

There is a bi-annual event held at Grafton called the Philosophy, Science and Theology Festival. It will be held from 24 - 29 June this year – it seems to be a well-kept secret and sounds very interesting, see www.pstf.com.au. Another June event, The Shared Earth Conference, will be held at Euston, near Mildura, from 6 - 9 June. More information from - Institute of Cultural Affairs Australia, 73 York St., Richmond, VIC 3121. Email: kogilvy@alphalink.com.au. I will try to make room for more information about these two gatherings in the next Nowletter.

Thanks to this month’s contributors and to Margot for her painstaking proof-reading which is occasionally marred by my last minute alterations and additions.

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

Letters and Comments on articles in past Nowletters

Dear Alan,

We shall be able to tell our grandchildren that we read it first in NOW, viz. one part of John Wren-Lewis' paper concerning the creative evolutionary paradigm. He writes: "I think it' s old hat, yesterday' s story, a ~~leaver~~ 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 marvellously in T.S. Eliot' s Four Quartets...."

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

For me the creative evolutionary paradigm has been a shibboleth for signing off from a specious argument when real thinking becomes too difficult. Sheer laziness!

However there is one point in John' s paper which requires comment, when he quotes Darryl Reannee as saying "We are our knowing". Purveyors of the evolutionary paradigm do not know that they are responding to nineteenth century worldviews and beyond. They are suffering from what the French would call *me'connaissance*. Reality is always and eternally greater than consciousness. Onesong sure! (or as I have it , One Shout of Love) but you can' t have Onesong without Singer and Composer.

Alex Reichel

Dear Alan

Your piece on First and Second Nature (Now 69 – December 2000). It can be seen that we are all in Second Nature and this is where the struggle begins. There is an inkling of something else. Intellectually one can understand that thoughts, conditioning, reactions etc., etc., etc. is just silly and to be in such a state cannot be correct. It is when one feels that in one' s bones then it all becomes clear. But that does not mean that all the rubbish will clear out of the mind or that the slate is wiped clean. So from being in a state of second nature I propose that we be in a state of first nature. Thoughts will occur, of course, but so what? We cannot declare that we will be enlightened (whatever that is) even though we can see and feel that to be in a state of no thoughts is the natural state. People refer to ' human nature' . They blame things on ' human nature' . I think that the second nature state where ' human nature' works in is not the natural state. Human nature, to me, is the First Nature State, so just be in it and operate from there.

Gerry Lee

Living for the moment – easier said than done!

I detected a common theme running through the February 2003 issue of the Nowletter – perhaps the name of the newsletter also sums up this focus – that being the possibility of living for the moment. What is this fascination for NOW? I sense that it has to do with who we really are, unburdened with memory, time, experience, knowledge and thought. Given that humans are in a no-win situation re certain death, life wants to know (in me, no-one else may be interested) if there can be an end to psychological suffering, or in other words, who or what is it that is going to die?

John Wren-Lewis quotes T.S. Eliot' s Four Quartets:

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

Donald Ingram Smith asks us to consider, 'Isn't the whole of LIFE openly visible and experienceable now?'...and "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.'

Katie Mann states that "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 is too often taken for granted."

Lynne Willmott explains that it all comes down to the fact. "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."

Francis Lucille via Warwick Wakefield – "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."

Gurdjieff via Ouspensky via Alan Mann – “This is a very important realization. People who know this already know a great deal...if a man really knows that he cannot remember himself, he is already near to the understanding of his being.” And, Ouspensky – “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*. (Ouspensky then describes the divided attention or two way observing that is required for this self-remembering to occur and Alan Mann makes the obvious connection with Douglas Harding’s ‘two-way looking’.)

Do we have a ‘fool-proof’ way for discovering who we really are? I am really interested in this question, and I really want the truth. There may not be a way out of my dilemma, but I really do not know who or what I am. How do I go about it? Well, there maybe some vital clues in the above material. However, I must be wary of intellectual answers based on knowledge, theories etc. I need to know who or what I am without any preconceived ideas. I must empty my head of all the past. What am I left with? At this moment?

We need some more clues:

Douglas Harding – ‘On Having No Head’ – “What actually happened was something absurdly simple and unspectacular: just for the moment I stopped thinking. Reason and imagination and all mental chatter died down. For once, words really failed me. I forgot my name, my humanness, my thingness, all that could be called me or mine. Past and future dropped away.”

Clue – Douglas Harding *just for the moment stopped thinking*.

Jiddu Krishnamurti – “When man becomes aware of the movement of his own thoughts he will see the division between the thinker and the thought, the observer and the observed, the experiencer and the experience. He will discover that this division is an illusion. Then only is there pure observation which is insight without the shadow of the past or of time. This timeless insight brings about a deep radical mutation in the mind.” (From ‘Krishnamurti; The Years of Fulfilment’ by Mary Lutyens)

Clue – “When man *becomes aware of the movement of his own thoughts*...he will discover that *this division is an illusion*.”

Albert Blackburn (a close friend of J. Krishnamurti who claims that he experienced a radical inner transformation – these quotes are from his book “Worlds beyond thought”).

‘Everything you know or can think about stems from the content of consciousness. The tendency to react in the old established ways is almost overwhelming, but the habit can be overcome, not by a conscious endeavour on your part, but by non-directional observation. This elicits the help of insight and Intelligence functioning through awareness.

I feel that many sincere followers of Krishnaji – in trying to follow his instructions – mistake their sudden awareness of what they have just been thinking for the observance of thought. The fundamental change of consciousness that Krishnaji speaks of is only possible through a non-directive awareness at the exact moment of occurrence. (my words here, I think he means the occurrence of thought).

If you carefully watch what happens, you will see that non-directive observation cannot occur at the same time as thought. There is either one or the other; the two cannot occur simultaneously.

You can expand your consciousness through education and by broadening your scope of activities, but it will remain what it is: the product of time and space. The only way out of this impasse is moment to moment awareness.

Do not get trapped into looking for any result or goal, as that is part of old habits of thought, and will prevent the actual regeneration from working.”

Clues: “the habit can be overcome...by non-directional observation” and “you will see that non-directional observation cannot occur at the same time as thought” and “the only way out of this impasse is moment to moment awareness” and “do not get trapped into looking for any result or goal”.

Summing up:

For me non-directional observation and two-way seeing are virtually the same thing. Here is the astonishing discovery – **THOUGHT CANNOT OCCUR AT THE SAME TIME AS TWO-WAY LOOKING OR NON-DIRECTIVE OBSERVATION.**

When thought stops, 'I' psychologically speaking am absent. The shock of this 'no -self' experiencing is the awakening of Intelligence. This may only be for a moment. So be it. Wanting more is the old thought process.

The good news is that anyone can experiment with this process of non-directed awareness moment to moment. The other good news is that it cannot be contained, or memorised, or organised for future use or personal benefit. It is truly free, without personal boundaries.

The bad news? If you want a result of any kind, you (thought/ the thinker) have already 'personalized' the experience. Your motive will colour the experiment. This can become a vicious circle. It's quite a paradox – stop seeking anything and the universe is yours. You simply have to be absent. (psychologically speaking)

Has the mystery been solved? ie who or what am I? On the contrary. The mystery of life, of identity, is forever just that and this 'knowing' makes it more so. As soon as I try to name it or know it or make a false image of it, it becomes a memory. The truth is NOW - without a shadow of the past. The past is knowledge, which is thought and the illusion of the thinker.

Gary Hipworth

A Brief Insight

I put out onto others what is going on in myself.
What else is there to put out, to express than what is going on in me,
my reaction to what I am seeing, hearing, experiencing?

No matter what triggered it,
Or what its source,
Such overt reactions
provoke responses producing other events, more problems;
never the ending of conflict in me.

Why do I continue to put out my feelings, my understanding
Onto another human being as though my experiencing
Is actually theirs? Not mine?

Donald Ingram Smith

Post Script to 'A Long Process Towards Detachment' (Nowletter 88) from Lynne Willmott

The ego-driven need for power pulsating at the centre of the present world conflict is indicative of why many of us - as teenagers – became ashamed of being human. The limited intelligence, the greed, and the inability of most of the human race to understand that psychically we are all connected continually increased my humiliation.

Assess the ugliness and violence threaded through many Internet reports both here and on other sites, and you too might come to the conclusion that it is not only Bush and his cohorts suffer from a poverty of intellect.

My despair was such that I found myself wishing that the crisis would escalate into a full scale world war exploding this human blemish from the planet. It was the only way of annihilating the imbedded belief system that to survive our ideals, our modes of existence, our rights, our lands must be defended. I could see no point in the compassionate efforts of people - such as James Twyman – who were attempting to bring about peace to a race that was so primitive. Why try to save the lives of a flawed humanity.

But I was wrong! The answer has just struck with blinding force. By using prayer, by creating positive images of peace, the state of the collective consciousness will alter. Such a subtle change may not be noticed for years, and we might continue to war with each other, yet gradually individual minds will begin to feel the effect of what is being put into place now. There are thousands of people around the world projecting this idea of peace into the pool of consciousness we all inhabit. This is how we are connected, via this collective vibrant consciousness. To inject the 'peace ideal' into

this flowing mass of energy may not combat the primitive war-like thought patterns that have dominated all of mankind's history, but change is upon us. Humanity is transmuting from its animalistic state.

My own theory - that by wiping out the people who think the thoughts, these dogmatic belief systems will be vanquished - was as negative as the violence I was protesting against. So now I am pleading for everyone to begin to envisage images of peaceful ways to settle world conflicts. The entire mess within the Middle East; the conflicts throughout both Africa and the Americas; China's aggression; Europe's in - fighting; the stupidity in Ireland; the level of danger India and Pakistan are bringing to the entire world; the game being played in North Korea. All of these areas involve mankind's violence against itself. It does not have to be this way. There are alternatives. Peaceful solutions can be found. Visualisations and prayers for such a change in human awareness is the best way to bring about a transfigured state of human awareness. Know that it may take time, but know also that the more of us who join this effort, the faster we will change. Peace to all!

Lynne Willmott

An Open Letter to President George W. Bush from Hal Stone, Ph.D. & Sidra Stone, Ph.D.

(The following article was sent to me by Maryan Klomp and Michael Adamson and seems to have been circulated widely on the internet. I wrote for permission to reprint as I think it offers a very interesting explanation of what is required for successful dialogue to take place in any situation. The Stones are the creators of Voice Dialogue and the authors of Embracing Our Selves and 6 other books." Their Email address is delos@mcn.org and website is <http://www.voicedialogue.org> Whilst the letter was written before the war started it has, at one level been overtaken by events but even at that level the comment on results seems very prescient. Ed.)

Dear President Bush. First, we would like to introduce ourselves to you. We are 75 and 65 years old and both of us are psychotherapists, writers, and consciousness teachers. We have over 90 years of combined experience working with people in many different settings and in many nations around the world. We have written five books together and one each separately. These have been translated into seven languages. We have five children, three grandchildren and a number of cats. We tell you all this simply to establish the fact that we are thoughtful, professional, competent people who have lived full lives and have experienced a great deal in this world - both separately and as partners. We are not usually alarmists, but as professionals who have worked with people all our lives, we are gravely concerned about the current world situation and we feel that this is a very special time. What happens now will carry consequences for many years to come. We have seen conflicts before in our lives; conflicts that looked extremely dangerous but now we observe a frighteningly intense degree of worldwide polarization that seems to be accelerating at an ever-increasing speed. It is to the issue of this polarization that we wish to speak. As the President of the United States you can feel this ever-intensifying polarization. The world leaders seem to be dividing into those who are with you and those who are against you. This letter is about what we feel can be done to begin to neutralize this polarization.

It takes immense courage to change one's consciousness or way of being in the world. It often requires a crisis of major proportions to push people into this kind of change process a major illness or accident that forces us to look at the possibility of dying; a threatened divorce; financial reverses; or serious trouble with the law. We each have a choice about how to respond to the crisis. We are challenged to separate from our usual way of being in the world, broadening our view, and embracing something new.

From what you have said about your life, you have already gone through one major change of consciousness. All those years ago when you stopped drinking and changed the way you lived your life, you actually changed your consciousness for the first time. We do not know what crisis precipitated your change then, but something did. You rose to the occasion and you met the challenge successfully. Now it seems that you are being challenged to change again.

A change in consciousness, as you already know, results in a change in all our relationships. It changes our relationship to ourselves, to our families, and to our God. The same is true with nations. On an international level we are now experiencing just such a major crisis. This can bring change or it can bring war and catastrophe. The question is whether we can use this crisis to develop real wisdom, or whether it must automatically polarize the world into war.

We do not think that war is always wrong: there are times when it is the only solution to a problem. But those times are few and far between. Our concern is that the movement into war should be a thoughtful one in which the alternative of peace is also carefully considered. Our concern is that in the current situation the world has become so intensely polarized (an old pattern of behavior that divides the world into good guys and bad guys

with ourselves always being the good guys) that we are being led to act in a way that we will regret later after the smoke clears and we see what we have done.

In our work, we call this 'the slap'. When we look at something from only one point of view - from one part of ourselves - we literally cannot see any other. Later, when we realize that there was an opposite point of view, when we see what it was that we overlooked, we feel as though an opposite part of us has slapped us.

President Bush, what is most worrisome to us about you and your staff is your contribution to this polarization. In the history of the world, this kind of thinking has led to the most horrific behavior. When the polarization was at its height, the behavior seemed quite reasonable. But when people looked back at what was done, and with the help of others viewed the behavior with different and wiser eyes, they could see the ways in which the passion of polarization had blinded them.

Every day that passes someone in your administration reminds us that some person or some other country is evil. Using language such as the 'axis of evil' comes from a part of us that sees us as being good and living lives of righteousness and all darkness as living 'out there' in the world. That part of us doesn't realize that each of us has darkness and evil as well as good - within. It doesn't realize that the battle on the outside is a reflection of the battle that we all must wage within our own souls.

We are less concerned about the issue of whether we go to war than we are about the issue of what parts of you and what parts of Mr. Rumsfeld are moving us towards this war. What we hear from your core administrative group is a constant barrage of emotionally charged judgments of others. In psychological terms, you are disowning your own evil and projecting it out onto the world around you. This makes us more and more distrustful of your judgment, and makes us wonder about which selves are operating in you in such an 'automatic pilot' kind of thinking and reacting.

This is having a terrible effect on much of the world. It pulls forth an equal and opposite reaction in others. The more they look evil to you, the more you look evil to them. It is a mathematical relationship. It is evenly balanced. It is a recipe for disaster!

Something happened to you on September 11, 2001 that we don't think you understand. Something that felt wonderful. On that day you were taken over by the hero archetype. Throughout history this archetype has operated in many people. This archetype acts like an infusion of super-powerful energy. It gives us the power to do very heroic things. It is a part of us, or a self, that comes from a different place in the psyche, from a different place in the brain. It is like a psychological instinct.

The hero archetype doesn't just operate in presidents and generals. It can help anyone behave heroically in life. It helped our fire-fighters and policemen on September 11th. It can help any of us get through a difficult time or help us work long hours for a new idea or cause. It can help us do things that go against our fears. These are the good sides of the hero archetype. Clearly after 9/11 you became stronger as you were carried more and more by this kind of archetypal energy. It made you stronger and it gave you the power to lead us. It was a wonderful gift to you and to our country!

The downside of this energy is that it isn't personal. It gives us the hero's strength but not always the wisdom to balance it. We often tend to run over people when this power is operating in us because we feel only the power and we no longer feel our own vulnerability. That is the key issue of the dark side of the hero archetype. We lose our vulnerability! We have to do things more and more heroically.

Being identified with the heroic energy is very heady stuff and it usually starts out well. But it often goes sour as time passes because we lose clarity when we are in the hands of this archetype and the super-hero energy continues to rush through us. Our colleagues get caught up in this as well; the same hero myth gets activated in them and serves their own power needs. It is to their advantage to support this archetype in you and they just add fuel to the fire.

There are many archetypes waiting to jump into the driver's seat of our 'psychological cars' and run our lives for us, especially when our situation is dangerous. It seemed to us that about a year after 9/11 a new energy began to take over in you and join with the energy of the existing hero system. This new archetype is 'The Savior'. It has a distinctly religious quality. The Savior must save the people from evil. There is evil and darkness in the world and some one or some group must save the world from this evil. This archetype would make you feel that you are the anointed and appointed son (or daughter) of God whose job it is to rectify this dangerous situation. This puts us back to the days of the crusades and a holy war.

Now we know that there are some very dark forces in the world today and we feel you are being completely honest and sincere in your desire to do good and chase away evil. Here, though, we have a problem and a very big problem at that. We have been psychotherapists and teachers for 90 years between us. Both of us led complex lives before we met and they have become even more complex during the past 30 years of our time together.

We have had the opportunity - the profound privilege - of working with the human soul in hundreds upon hundreds of clients. We have worked with their dreams, with their fantasies, with their depressions and rage and anger and love and lust and heroism and greed and warlike nature and loving sensitivity. I wish we could share with you, President Bush, some of these dreams and inner realities.

Do you know what our conclusion has been to all this? Our conclusion is that it is all inside as it is all outside. Each human being is a microcosm of the macrocosm. Just as in our world there is good and evil and light and dark, so it is within the human psyche. Our conclusion is that each one of us lives with a most amazing combination of good and evil. And each one of us is challenged to deal with this on an inner level as best we can, so that we do not add our disowned evil to the very real evils outside of us, causing them to spiral out of control. That is the work we are challenged to do and that is the work you are challenged to do.

Saddam Hussein is a man ruled by dark forces. We have no issue with that. Our deepest concern however is not the Saddam Hussein that lives in the world. It is the Saddam Hussein that lives in the hidden recesses of your own heart, of our own heart, in everyone's heart. If we don't ultimately recognize that this kind of energy lives in each of us, we keep projecting it on the outer Husseins and this makes it impossible to deal with the darkness in the world in any way other than war.

We are afraid of what is happening now! But we are not afraid primarily because of the prospect of war. We lived through World War II and the Korean conflict where Hal was a psychologist treating casualties from this war. Sidra worked in the VA, treating veterans from as far back as WW I. We lived through the Cold War, the Chinese intervention during the Korean conflict, the Cuban missile crisis, Russia exploding the 50-megaton bomb, Vietnam, and Desert Storm. We lived through 9/11. We have seen many frightening times. We are much less afraid of war than we are afraid of the total projection of darkness and a narrowing of perspective.

We are concerned that the Savior and Hero archetypes are increasingly dominating your life and that our world is being led into a holy war that we don't want and that we fear will end very badly.

We are concerned that you have lost contact with your vulnerability and that you are unable to feel the consequences of what is being unleashed. We are concerned that you listen only to people who agree with your way of looking at things and that you are becoming increasingly unable to feel other possibilities. We are concerned that a savior mentality is becoming ever more deeply involved in your decision-making process and perhaps - that of your administration.

What can any of us do? What do we ask of you? What do we ask of ourselves? One of the strongest indications of a mature personality is the ability to stand between the opposite viewpoints in conflict situations and to be able to hold both when making decisions. This doesn't mean that we become passive in the way we conduct our life. This doesn't mean that we don't have an ethical or moral sense! It means that we are able to feel the two sides of a situation. We must still ultimately make a decision about the situation. But the decisions we make are not made on 'automatic pilot', the decisions we make come from a deeper and wiser place within.

This is the reason - at least theoretically the reason - why executives have a board of directors and an advisory board. The idea is to get a broad range of differing (often intensely opposing) input from people. Then, after assimilating this information, the executive is better prepared to act and make the best decision possible.

This works in personal relationships as well. We have learned in our own lives that when one of us has a negative reaction to the other person we must stop and take that seriously. It is essential that I (Hal) feel the feelings that Sidra has and it is essential that I (Sidra) feel the feelings that Hal has. Either of us might still do what we originally intended to do, but by feeling the reality of the other person's point of view, our decision to act is made in relation to the other person.

Your decisions recently have moved farther and farther away from what we are recommending. You sound increasingly black and white on all issues. Not only don't you seem to care how other people feel but, instead, you seem to thrive on how tough you are and how little you do care.

This is why you are alienating so many people. People feel that you don't care, that you are going through the motions of debate with no awareness whatsoever as to what others are feeling. We honestly believe that if you took a vote, even amongst the non-Muslims of the world, you would find that more people are worried about your warlike tendencies than about Saddam Hussein's. This does not have to do with your clear desire to go to war. It is because people feel that you do not give serious consideration to other points of view. And so they react to you as though you are a bully rather than a wise leader of a great nation.

If we must go to war, let it not be an action dictated by the archetype of a hero living out a John Wayne fantasy. Let the decision come from a wisdom, a depth, and a maturity that the world can respect.

We would like to make the following recommendations to you to help slow down this polarization process:

1. Spend some time alone. Try to get away from the constant pressure of the same voices that you listen to day in and day out.
2. Spend some quiet time with your wife. Listen to her. We suspect that she would have some interesting things to say.
3. Bring in some advisors that are different from the ones you have. Listen to this other feedback in addition to what you already have received.
4. Put a moratorium on public statements that are inflammatory in nature from any of your administration people. This would be particularly true of Secretary Rumsfeld who is one of the most polarizing politicians we have ever known. And this would include you because you have become increasingly polarized. Please think before you make any more inflammatory statements.
5. Pay attention to your dreams. What are they saying to you?
6. Pray for wisdom! Being wise is as important as being heroic. Being wise means that you are able to live with ambiguity; that you are able to feel the opposites in all the issues and conflicts that come your way.
7. Please catch hold of the hero/savior archetypal drama that is playing out within you. If you want to really be truly wise, you will begin to recognize that the war between good and evil is playing out inside you and inside all of us all the time. The inner Saddam Hussein, the inner anti-Christ, is an archetypal energy that we must all deal with from the day we are born until the day we die. It is all inside you and us. Shooting the bad guy outside doesn't make it go away on the inside.
8. Please recognize that a 51-49 percent split doesn't mean that you win. It simply means that you have split the country in two and the polarization you have created will haunt you forever. We trust that there is a way for you to make this a win/win situation for the two sides.

These are the things that we ask you to do. Here is what we will do from our side:

1. We will do our best not to polarize against you, but will use any differences of perspective as a way of learning more about ourselves.
2. Whenever we begin to polarize against you we will try to understand what it is that you are carrying that is disowned in us. We will 'step into your shoes' and stay there until we see your viewpoint. For instance, since you so desperately want to go to war, we will find that part of us that wants war and would like to eliminate Saddam Hussein from the face of the earth.
3. When we find ourselves polarizing against the fundamentalist nature of your administration, we will examine this issue and try to make contact with our own fundamentalist nature. We will look at the world through the eyes of the fundamentalist part of ourselves.
4. When we find ourselves polarizing against the way in which you manipulate people by making them more vulnerable, we will examine our own manipulative selves. We will see how they operate in the world, and particularly how they operate in relationship to vulnerability.

5. We will continue to watch our own dreams and see what they have to say to us.
6. We, too, will pray for wisdom.

We are realists and we have no serious expectation that you will read this letter or answer it, but it was important for us to write it. If, by any chance, you should care to respond to this letter we want to make ourselves available to you or to anyone in your administration you would think appropriate. We would like to do whatever we personally can at this pivotal point in history. Sincerely yours,

Hal Stone, Ph.D. & Sidra Stone, Ph.D.

To Iraq or not to Iraq? That is the question - from Riche du Plessis

(We cancelled the February Dialogue meeting at Greville Street so that regulars could join the walk against war which was programmed for the same day. I emailed a cancellation notice which prompted a number of replies both for and against the walk and what it was about including the following from Riche du Plessis who coordinates the Nowra Dialogue meetings. Ed.)

The subject of Iraq has been a constant at our dialogues in Nowra, and probably elsewhere too. Opinions vary, as should be expected. I must admit that I have mixed and confused thoughts and emotions on the issue. I feel that, as civilized, rational humans we should all resist and avoid war, and protest against it. After all, war does not prove which side is right or which side is wrong. War merely proves which side has the most resources to wage war successfully. The question, for me, is this. As rational, civilized humans living in countries such as GB, USA, AUS, Europe, where a great deal of freedom is permitted and enjoyed, do we or do we not have the right to encourage other countries to grant their population the same freedoms? Do we, or do we not, have the right to insist on this. Do we have the right to compel other societies to accept our values? Probably not.

Here, in Australia, in the USA, and generally in ' the West' , we have the freedom to march in ~~peot~~ to war. Great, isn' t it? The people of Iraq, and many other countries, do not have this freedom. During the past 4 years I have visited Iraq twice. The first time for a week, driving in from Jordan, the second time for only 4 days, driving in from Syria. These short visits have given me an idea of the lifestyle there, but I am not an expert. During both visits I had many conversations with ordinary, Joe Blow Iraqis. What generally occurred, when speaking to these people in public, was that they praised Saddam and told me what a great leader he is, and thank you, Allah, for giving him to us, etc.

But as soon as I was alone in, say a private car, with just one person, then the completely opposite story would be told to me; that Saddam was a tyrant, a monster, that they wished for his death. This even emerged when I spoke to a father and teenage son, together, and later separately. The fact is that, under the rule of Saddam, the Iraqi people have no freedom and no longer trust each other, not even within a closely knit family. The result of speaking against Saddam in Iraq is a report to the Revolutionary Guards or the Baath party's secret police (perhaps by your own father or son), and the penalty is death without trial, usually of the entire family. Driving through the streets of Baghdad we had to steer around bodies lying in the road as a warning to neighbours, the bodies of men, women, babies – the families of people suspected of not supporting Saddam. This is the reality. Tens of thousands of people have died in this way. I have seen the bodies in the street, the graves of some of them. I have spoken to some of the survivors.

I have also walked through the streets of cities such as Kurkuk, in north-western Iraq. In a city with approximately one million inhabitants, I cried as I saw almost every second person with the huge and ugly white scars left after exposure to mustard gas. Young and beautiful teenagers, both male and female, scarred for life by their own government. And they are the lucky ones. Almost half a million Kurds have already been killed by Saddam's government.

To compare the USA and UK governments with that of Nazi Germany, as the some people have done, is in my view ridiculous and weakens the anti-war argument. Saddam' s Baath regime in Iraq is very much closer to Nazi Germany, or actually to Stalin' s Russia, than is any western government, where a great many checks and balances ensure responsible government. The exaggerated claims of ' millions of people dead' are also unrealistic and do not further the anti-war argument. I agree that even the death of one innocent will be one too many, but, if/when the war occurs it will be a relatively short one. And I must say that innocent Kurdish children in northern Iraq have already, for almost 15 years now, experienced Saddam's bombs falling on their heads. Is it not time to put a stop to this?

I have often heard the argument, 'It is not Australia's war. The Iraqis pose no direct threat to this country' No, they probably do not. But neither did the Germans or Turks during WW1, neither did the South African Republicans during the Boer War, neither did the Germans and Italians during WW11, neither did the Koreans during the Peninsula War, neither did the Vietnamese. There is no precedent for this argument. The world is becoming a smaller and more globalized place each day. Even today, there is a huge amount of inter-dependence amongst nations, and amongst people. So it should be. We are all in this together. In a shrinking world such as this, can any country afford to take an isolationist position? I think not.

My next question is, as a rational human, one who abhors war, do I have the right to ignore the plight of the Iraqi people? They are after all, in this small world, my neighbours. If I have an orderly garden in the suburbs, and my neighbours are hoons who throw their beer cans over the fence, and I have been speaking to them about this for 12 years without result, should I now merely take a protest march down the high street, or should I suggest to them that we continue to talk about the problem for a few more years, or should I report them/take action through the authorities, or should I start to throw the empty tins back across the fence? I know that, after 12 years of UN attempts, Saddam is not interested in dialogue, has paid no attention to protests and has ignored the authorities. The only remaining response is to throw the beer cans back over the fence. This question does not only apply to Saddam. It applies equally to every brutal and/or dictatorial government, Kim in North Korea, Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Sharon in Israel, and I have no doubt there are many others.

The challenge with Iraq is that it would probably not survive without very strong leadership. Bush Senior probably realized this and therefore left Saddam in charge after the first Gulf War. The Kurds in the north would prefer to be autonomous. They are, after all, a very different people. But granting them independence would create havoc amongst the Kurds in both Turkey and Iran. The Shiite Muslims in the south, comprising 60% of the Iraqi population, would prefer closer ties with fundamentalist, Shiite Iran, rather than secular, Sunni Iraq. The Assyrians, although small in number, still regard all of Iraq as their homeland and part of geographical Syria. They resent the later Arab invasions of some 1200 years ago. The Turks, who controlled most of the region during the Ottoman period, still unofficially claim part of northern Iraq as being Turkish. It takes a strong and, regrettably, ruthless government to keep this lot together. But should we condone a ruthless government in return for relative internal stability?

Geographically, economically and politically Iraq is in a unique situation. Most countries in the Middle East have either oil or water. Iraq is unique because it has both. This means that it has incredible wealth in oil and the ability to feed the region. It is a very valuable piece of real estate. Both the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers originate in Turkey and flow across Iraq. Whoever controls this water controls about 80% of all the fresh water in the Middle East. This is much more valuable, in human terms, than the oil is.

I feel that both sides in this debate, USA, GB, Spain, Australia on the one side and Germany, France, Russia on the other, have taken political positions to safeguard their economic positions. The USA and GB probably want assurance of oil supplies and political influence (read water control) in the region; France and Germany have massive trade arrangements with the region – practically every car on the streets of Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Iran is of either French or German manufacture. Russia has a huge investment in the oil wells of Iraq. Both France and Germany have very beneficial oil contracts with the present Iraqi government. Australia stands to gain a lucrative free trade agreement. Neither side is taking a simple moral position. Regrettably, morality has little influence on any international political decision. It has all to do with trade and economic benefits.

So, the question is, do we march for peace or don't we? As civilized humans we have the moral obligation to resist and, if we can, prevent war. As rational humans we have the moral obligation to assist and/or ensure that all people of the world live in freedom and without fear. Considering my personal experiences in the country, I won't be marching. I believe that the world will be a better place without the likes of Saddam and my conscience will not allow me to take any action that may prolong a government such as his.

To march or not, a just war or not. To me the problem is not the war, abhorrent as war is. I have no doubt that the greater majority of Iraqis will be singing and dancing in the street, waving the USA flag as the Americans enter Baghdad. This will be followed by a period during which Iraqi citizens lynch all those who they consider to be supporters of the now deposed Baath regime. But after this period, 3 to 12 months down the track, the real problem will emerge when the Iraqis, and all other Middle East residents, start to ask themselves the question, ' What are the

Americans doing here' . This question could result in a great deal of disruption and uncertainty in the region. But even this could be countered by American involvement in finding a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli situation.

Riche du Plessis.

Man of Peace from Osho, "*Zen: The Path of Paradox.*"

A man of peace is not a pacifist; a man of peace is simply a pool of silence.
 He pulsates a new kind of energy into the world, he sings a new song.
 He lives in a totally new way, his very way of life is that of grace, that of prayer, that of compassion.
 Whomsoever he touches, he creates more love-energy.
 The man of peace is creative. He is not against war, because to be against anything is to be at war. He is not against war; he simply understands why war exists.
 And out of that understanding, he becomes peaceful.
 Only when there are many people who are pools of peace, silence, understanding will the war disappear.

With thanks to Robin Mouldsdale

Reading Thomas Traherne – a poem by Judith Wright

Can I then lose myself,
 and losing find one word
 that, in the face of what you were,
 needs to be said or heard?

--Or speak of what has come
 to your sad race
 that to your clear rejoicing
 we turn with such a face?

With such a face, Traherne,
 as might make dumb
 any but you, the man who knew
 how simply truth may come:

who saw the depth of darkness
 shake, part and move,
 and from death' s centre the light' s ladder
 go up from love to Love.

Taken from "A Human Pattern" by Judith Wright and sent to us by Maria Bakas-Booker

What Birds Plunge Through Is Not The Intimate Space

What birds plunge through is not the intimate space
 in which you see all forms intensified.
 (Out in the Open, you would be denied
 your self would disappear into that vastness.)

Space reaches from us and construes the world:
 to know a tree, in its true element,
 throw inner space around it, from that pure
 abundance in you. Surround it with restraint.
 It has no limits. Not till it is held
 in your renouncing is it truly there.

Rainer Maria Rilke

At a recent poetry weekend organized by Ted Myers & Caroline Davis we had gone for a bit of a wander by the river and I was practising the 'observing the space in which objects appear' rather than the objects themselves. (Nowletter 80). The next session started with the random selection of a poem. As I riffled through the piles of poetry books one 'fell open' at the above, a poem I'd never read before.

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

Second Tuesday 6.15pm - Healing & Well-being - **Fourth** Tuesday 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://www.matra.com.au/~hpb/index.html>

Melbourne Evening dialogues with **Penny Fenner**: are the last Sunday each month. To register and for more information on weekends, etc., please contact **03 9885 0119** - E: penny@fenner.org W: www.skilfulaction.com

Also first Monday of the month – next: MONDAY APRIL 7 – 7-30 to 9-30PM



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

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

