



Meetings (10.30am - 3rd Sunday)

81 Greville Street , Chatswood

Next Meeting – 21 September 2003

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NB: No October meeting at Greville Street

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Editors Note,

Thanks to the contributors to this issue, especially Michael Adamson who has a hand in several of this month's articles, and apologies to Jan Kersschot for spelling his name incorrectly and getting his various publications mixed up. (See page 10 for corrections).

The October Greville Street meeting is cancelled as Margot, Terry O'Brien and myself are joining Riche du Plessis for a dialogue on the Nile in early October. The November Springbrook gathering is longer this year, from 29 October to 5 November, making the trip even more worthwhile than usual. See Donald's introductory note on page 11.

Subscriptions for Postal Edition. Please do not send any renewals for subscriptions due up to the end of 2003. If we continue with a postal version I propose to annualize the payment in January of every year. Anyone who has paid ahead will get a pro-rata credit. The due month for subscriptions will continue to appear as the first line of the mailing address until the end of this year but please disregard until December. We'll discuss how best to continue the surface mail service in this space between now and the end of the year.

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

Enjoying the Perfection of Imperfection by Joan Tollifson

Meditation is so very simple. Reality is always right here, immediate. But the mind creates a web of complications that come to seem more real than the actual sounds and sensations and listening presence that is this moment. Apparent embodiment in a particular perishable form, with a complex brain, is undoubtedly at the root of our illusory sense of separation from the totality, and all our subsequent human problems, for it is in thinking about and identifying with the body that we seem to be vulnerable and alone. Paradoxically, the body also offers the way home, for it is in fully meeting whatever appears as pure sensation (without interpretation) that we discover the emptiness of form the undivided wholeness of being that has no solidity, no boundaries, no limits that which no word or image can capture, in which every thing is included. By going into the very core of whatever appears, we begin to turn our attention from the particular objects to the seeing. In that, no obstacles or problems remain. The appearance of the body has been a koan for me throughout my life. I was born without a right hand, so from early on I have been dealing with myriad reactions, internal and external, to ideas of “imperfection” and “abnormality.” When I was a toddler, people would stop my mother on the street and tell her we were being punished by God.

Children would stare and point and ask questions. Adults would hush them up. In high school, I was not a hot item with the boys. Growing up, the only cultural images I saw of disabled people were negative: captain Hook or the Easter Seal poster children seemed to be my choices. Understandably, I did not want to think of myself as disabled. As a young adult, I drank excessively, smoked cigarettes, took drugs, lived recklessly on the edge, and nearly died. I cultivated a kind of wild, rebellious, belligerent, tough identity. I understand, as a result of my own experience, that people don't wilfully choose to commit crimes or become addicts and abusers. And I understand from my own life the healing power of love, acceptance, and caring attention. Waking up, I went into therapy and began to discover that being disabled didn't have to mean that you were ugly, incompetent, pitiful, evil, or better off dead. I didn't have to be Captain Hook. I got involved in the disability rights movement, worked with other disabled people, and began to see my identity as a disabled person in a positive light. In the same vein, I became a proud lesbian-feminist. Certainly this was an improvement over self-hatred and self-destruction, and perhaps a very necessary step. But who am I really?

Delving seriously into Zen meditation several years later was another turn because Zen is the end of all identification. I resisted this emptiness tooth and nail. I clung to my identities, to the stories constructed by life-saving progressive politics: stories about the strength of the feminine, the virtues of being gay, the revolutionary potential of lesbianism, the righteousness of this or that cause, the suffering and oppression I'd been through. These were better than the old stories in which women were inferior, gays were mentally ill, and whatever troubles we had were the result of our own personal failures. However, these new stories were still fictitious abstractions. They had their usefulness, but many of us held on to them as reality itself. I didn't want to question this new picture of how the world was that made me feel righteous and superior. I was afraid that if I did, maybe I'd be back where I was before therapy, before women's liberation, before disability rights, back in the old story of worthlessness, the one that culminated in alcoholism and rage and near-death.

It was (and is) a slow, lifelong (yet always instantaneous) process, discovering that there can be a letting go into a deeper truth where there is no story at all, no identity, no “me” to protect, no “other” to blame, no history to cherish. In this new perspective, I don't know anymore why I became a drunk or why I sobered up. All stories, including the one I've just told, are recognized as fiction. Fiction and imagination are wonderful. We all enjoy stories, but we need to become entranced by them in ways that cause suffering to ourselves and others. That's what waking up is all about, as I see it. Not knowing anything. That anything is possible.

This awakening is about coming alive to what is actually happening right now. In this aliveness, the body and the whole world of form is more vibrant and present than ever before, but it isn't solid anymore. Concepts and images don't stick. The stories (and the people we apply them to) are no longer fixed. In this openness that no longer knows what everything is, there is freedom. This not knowing is love. In this open being, every moment is devotion.

Flower, car horn, rain, contraction, headache, person, word, thought, wheelchair. What is it? Zen invited me to listen to each moment and wonder. The mind divides and evaluates. It provides answers. It imagines bondage and liberation, desirable and undesirable. In sitting quietly and listening without explanations or ideas, I discovered that there is no body. If there is just listening and experiencing, what is the body? Where is it? Where does it begin and end? Meditation reveals that the body is a painting that appears and disappears in imagination. It seems solid when we think about it, or if we look into a mirror (and think), or look at another person (and think), but in quiet sitting we can actually experience the body as permeable, borderless, empty space. And we can experience how nothing is separate from this space.

We can also see clearly how different bodies arise at every moment, not just physiologically or sub-atomically, but psychologically, image-wise. One moment I feel athletic, strong, beautiful, flexible. Another moment I feel clumsy, weak, unattractive, stiff. Whatever body image or sensation appears, there is always the possibility to see it, experience it, and not identify it as “me,” not take it too seriously. In high school I took a class in film-making. In the first class, I remember the teacher had us look at our thumbs. We sat there in silence, gazing at our thumbs. Minutes ticked by. We

shifted restlessly in our seats. Three minutes. Five minutes. Ten minutes. Finally the teacher asked how many of us were bored. A lot of us raised our hands. He told us that if we were really seeing, we wouldn't get bored. He gave us homework assignments that involved sitting in front of trees and looking at small sections of bark for an hour, or watching grass blow in the wind.

One night I was lying on the floor in our dining room in the dark, watching shadows move on the wall. My mother came in, a bit upset, and asked me if I had finished my homework. I told her I was doing it, lucky for me I could honestly say that. Otherwise I would have been told to get up and get to work. I'm not criticizing my mother; it was her job to do that. That's part of what parents and teachers have to do, they have to socialize little open beings into functional members of society. But in the process, we come to believe that the imaginary constructions of convention are reality.

Meditation is returning to that original seeing that is playful and interested in exploring. We turn from mental fantasy and story line and trying to figure things out, and open to this exact moment as unconceptualized sensate experience (smells, sounds, sensations, just as they are, without analysis or labels, without judgment). As we experience what is actually happening, we find that nothing is solid, nothing is bound or limited. By turning our attention to what is apparently most concrete, we discover that it is actually empty, spacious, and not even there.

In the mental stories, we appear to exist as substantial, discrete, continuous individuals, heroines or victims of our narratives, struggling with problems that seem very tangible and real. In simple, direct experiencing, we are not there anymore as separate entities. The drama is gone, our problems dissolve into thin air because only thought kept them going. There is pure listening, without meaning or purpose. The mind is uneasy with this lack of identity and drama, and we may discover a surprising reluctance to let our troubles go. Thought quickly begins weaving another Story. But there is always, in every moment, the possibility of seeing the story for what it is, and of waking up to bare presence, to just what is. This is very simple. It requires no particular body position, no especially quiet setting, no special costumes or decor, no hours of gruelling work. It is available every moment, everywhere.

But when spirituality gets institutionalized, often what tends to happen is that people begin inventing and sanctifying special costumes and correct postures to be in while "doing" it. I have no objections to formal meditation, nor to robes and rituals, but I wonder if these complicated systems may sometimes create an atmosphere where people who are different begin to feel that they are less than fully authentic. People with disabilities can't always get into the official costumes or the correct postures. Certainly if we imagine that waking up requires any particular circumstance we are missing the point.

I've lived for several years now at a meditation retreat center where all the traditional forms have been dropped, where sitting in an armchair is perfectly acceptable for anyone, where there are no particular postures or costumes to get into. I've learned here beyond any shadow of a doubt that real meditation can happen in any clothing, in any position, in any place, in any body. Even calling it "meditation" can be a step away. For me, this has been enormously freeing. It has helped me to see that meditation is every moment, not just something I do in a special place, in a particular form. It is simply being here.

Babies and animals automatically live this way. They approach my arm, the one that ends just below the elbow, without ideas. They aren't frightened or repulsed by it. They don't feel sorry for me. They don't think I'm heroic or amazing. They see the actual shape of what's in front of them without concepts and labels. They don't see it this way because they're practising meditation or trying to be enlightened. It just happens. And the same simple seeing happens to us, too, every moment. The only problem is that for us it tends to get obscured by our belief in the reality of all the thoughts that arise, and particularly by our belief in the central thought of "me" as somebody separate from the totality, somebody who is somehow incomplete, not quite right and in need of fixing.

Disability is a problem if we want to fix it, if we think we should be other than how we are. It ceases to be a problem as soon as we see it simply, the way the baby sees it. The physical difficulties and discomforts may still be there, the social injustices and all the rest. But none of this has to be a problem. We do what we can to relieve pain, to improve physical functioning, to change oppressive social conditions: aspirin, acupuncture, surgery, wheelchair ramps, legislation, consciousness raising, whatever. But perhaps it can be done without expectations, without attachment to our personal ideas of how everything should be, without idealism and blame, with more openness and compassion. As we rest in what's actually happening, we discover the complete perfection of imperfect existence. Physical imperfections and limitations lose their sting, and the imperfections of society (the prejudices and bad attitudes, the flawed responses) become less bothersome as well. We do what it makes sense to do, but we don't feel personally attacked and victimized by life's injustices in the way we once did. We come to realize the impersonal nature of the whole thing. In meditation we quickly discover that all the behaviors and attitudes we hate "outside" of us are there in our minds as well; the same reactive, defensive, conditioned processes are going on in all of us. There is no "other" to blame. Everything is happening on its own.

Living with disability (like all forms of upset and disappointment) is a gift if we work with it intelligently, as an opportunity to see and question our images, ideas, expectations - our basic desire to be different than we are. As these mental constructions become more transparent and begin to unravel, beauty reveals itself right here and now where we least expected to find it. Meditation teaches me that perfection is life as it actually is from moment to moment. Asymmetrical. Messy. Unresolved. Out of control. Imperfect. Terrible. And miraculous.

Joan Tollifson

(This is an article from the book Being Bodies: Buddhist Women on the Paradox of Embodiment, Shambhala 1997, edited by Lenore Friedman and Susan Moon. Joan Tollifson has an affinity with Advaita and Zen, but belongs to no formal tradition. My thanks to Michael Adamson for introducing me to this article. It has a particular resonance for me as, early in my enquiry whilst I was polishing myself into the perfect person I had a powerful insight that the perfection required was to be read as completeness not as some ideal of personal flawlessness. I think this point is made most clearly in Joan's article. When I wrote for permission to reprint the article, Joan sent me a copy of her latest book Awake in the Heartland- The Ecstasy of What Is which I plan to review in the next Nowletter. For information about Joan and her writing see <http://www.joantollifson.com/>)

Desire

The etymological meaning of the word desire is from the Latin “desiderare” meaning “to cease to see; to regret the absence of, and hence the urge to seek, to desire (something else)”.

De= “away from” and Sidere = Sirius, originally the dogstar in the Canis Major constellation - the brightest star in the heavens beyond our own galaxy, our own sun and its planets.

And so desire = to cease to see.

To see the stars, (invisible during the day), to see the night sky, the heavens.

This absence of vision of seeing, of actually seeing (both the out-there physical universe and the inner psychological self-perceptions) awakens the desire to know what ‘I’ am, what “creation” is, what ‘being alive’, “evolving”, “every - changing”, really is.

Lacking such direct awareness, the thinking process takes over in an attempt by speculative imaginative thought to understand what Reality is: what exists out there and lives here in the perceiver, in my own body.

The etymological information comes from Eric Partridge’s “ORIGINS”, published by the Macmillan Company in 1958.

Donald Ingram Smith

After God – The Future of Religion – A Note on the book by Don Cupitt from Alan Mann

I was surprised to find Stephen Batchelor being interviewed on a recent ABC Compass programme reporting on the last New Zealand Sea of Faith gathering. Batchelor wrote the book Buddhism without Beliefs which I read with great interest about a year ago. When I put the book down I thought ‘I wish someone would write a companion ‘Christianity without Beliefs’. And then I wondered whether that might be what the Sea of Faith folk are on about. I had written to them in December 2000 to get permission to reprint some of their website articles which seemed to very much in line with Nowletter interests. This is part of my introductory note, which I’d lifted from their website and printed in the December 2000 Nowletter:

“Sea of Faith - SoF for short - had its small beginnings in the 1980s, in the wake of a BBC television series which examined the decline of institutional religion and asked what might replace it in our complex postmodern world, where the certainties of scriptures, clerical hierarchies and supernatural underpinnings no longer make sense. The Network, like the TV series, borrowed its name from Matthew Arnold’s classic 19th century poem Dover Beach which, famously likened the decline of organised religion to the outgoing tide of the “sea of faith”.

The ABC Compass programme stirred up quite a lot of local interest here in Sydney and we’ve attended a couple of the monthly meetings to find out more. The meetings are similar to dialogue groups in that they involve open-minded exchange between people representing a broad spectrum of spiritual interests, from atheists to ministers of religion.

After two meetings I was still unsure what it was that attracted me to this movement and then I read the following in an article entitled An Apologia for my Thinking by the founder of Sea of Faith Don Cupitt:

In Mysticism after Modernity I argued that mysticism should be seen, not as a special way of knowing, but simply as an embryonic form of radical theology. It was a kind of writing that was already trying to resolve the traditional ecclesiastical theology down into 'solar' or 'kingdom' religion.

More about 'solar' later but this quote made me realize that here at last was something arising from the Christian tradition which was more interested in Heaven Now rather than Heaven hereafter. In other words, the Anglican church has spawned an offspring which has finally caught up with Traherne.

I decided to read more and I have just finished reading After God –The Future of Religion. In this book Don Cupitt outlines the development of our ideas about God. In the opening chapters he traces the progression from animistic notions of spirits representing the collective aspects of what is encountered in the natural world and multiple Gods, representing human fears and drives, through to the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The latter involving an objective or other world reality to which we are or should be subservient.

If I understand Cupitt correctly he is not dismissing 'God' out of hand; the fact that the God of our forefathers is no longer relevant doesn't mean that what we mean by the word God is irrelevant. I was helped to explain what I am trying to say here by an extraordinary synchronous event. Heinz Rahn gave me a paper with a long title What sort of a thing is a religion? A view from Object –Relations Theory by David Black. The paper concludes with the following summary:

This paper suggests that a religion is not, as Freud proposed, a science-like thing, refutable by evidence. It is a socially constructed and maintained system of internal objects, analogous to those spoken of in psychoanalysis. Like analytic internal objects, religious objects have a heuristic function but no material existence. Unlike analytic objects, they are derived from a definite cultural tradition and are elaborated over time to meet the experience of practitioners. They may be understood to have a function of 'containing' the feelings, thoughts and fantasies arising in individual practitioners, and of making these experiences comprehensible. These objects then enable the believer to speak more truthfully of, and relate more fully to, the larger matrix within which the human world is situated. Finally, the suggestion is made that, as with analytic internal objects, religious objects may best be judged by their long-term effects on the lives of believers.

This strikes me as being almost identical to Cupitt's claim that we are the only makers of meaning and value and that the meaning and value we describe must be that value we ourselves have ascribed to it and projected into it. And I read this to apply at both the individual and community level. And by applying the blow-torch of Dialogue to this flow of meaning we have we find here the source of both Buddhist Sangha and Traherne's Fellowship of the Mystery.

At the end of chapter 12 *The Legacy of the Old Religions* Cupitt says:

These three themes – the Eye of God, the Blissful Void, and Solar Living – between them comprise what is most worth preserving from the old religions, and perhaps offer a starting point for the religion of the future. We give up the notion of religion as a system of reassuring supernatural beliefs; and we adopt instead the idea of religion as a toolkit.

This is an almost exact summary of what is made clear by successful application of the Harding programme. The *Eye of God* is exactly what the experiments reveal and Cupitt even uses one of Douglas's favourite Eckhart quotations about the eye with which we look at God being the same eye as the eye with which God looks at us. What is meant by *The Blissful Void* is another way of describing what is revealed by the experiments and what I understand by his term *Solar Living* is the ending of separation, integration with the totality of existence; identifying primarily with what, in Hardingspeak, is meant by First Person.

All the colors and 'feels' of things are our own feelings, projected out. Ethics therefore must be solar. We no longer have any metaphysical reason or excuse for withholding ourselves. We should pour ourselves out as the sun does, identifying ourselves completely with the outpouring flux of all existence.

I like this image but when I have used it in the past I have found it more helpful to apply it in reverse. That is, in my normal mode I am recognizing, naming, applying 'my' meaning to all that arises; I am forming the world as he proposes. However, if I get out of the way and let the world arise in consciousness I find that the world informs me, it paints me, it arises as what I am.

Even the reference to toolkit is intriguing. I have always thought of the LookforYourself experiments, not only as an end in themselves but also as a way of testing the validity of all approaches.

The article Unblocking a malfunction in consciousness by John Wren-Lewis, which was reprinted in the last Newsletter also provides another clear window on what Cupitt is trying to communicate. As if that wasn't enough by way of links and connections: Traherne, Cupitt, Harding, Bohm, Wren-Lewis – it was beginning to read like some cosmic practical joke with my world turning into a mirror image of our new website. The final straw was the mention of the book Honest to God by John Robinson. A participant at the first Sea of Faith meeting I attended, talking about Sea of Faith origins, told us that Don Cupitt had been influenced by this book and the ideas of John Robinson who, in turn, had been

influenced by John Wren-Lewis who is widely quoted in the book – full circle in forty years. So, why I am finding so many strands intertwining? Are things really changing or is it something to do with me looking only in places where I know I'll find what is sought? I don't know – perhaps both! I'll conclude with another extract from that old Newsletter article in which I first drew attention to Sea of Faith;

Sea of Faith recognises that a huge and fundamental shift has taken place in the last thirty years: a shift not only in what we believe but in how we believe. We have entered a time of unprecedented thinking and rethinking, building and rebuilding, in which beliefs about belief are shaken as never before. We are exposed to other cultures, other paradigms, other religions, other politics, other ways of making art, other ways of doing science, other ways of building moral and ethical frameworks. We can no longer convince ourselves, let alone others, that our religion story is the "true" one, or that our political ism is the "correct" one - and we marvel that our culture ever had the arrogance to make such plainly nonsensical assumptions. In this sense, Sea of Faith embraces postmodernity and is postmodernist."

In conclusion, he points to the fact that this is a very difficult religion to explain and that even close friends and allies are unable to recognize it as religion. (That sounds like a very personal note about his own experience and I think I know how he feels). He says this may lead to the conclusion that 'no entirely new framing or conceptualization of religion can hope to be understood until the decay of the old faiths has gone much further than it has yet'. He doesn't agree and thinks there is an urgent need to get something going before the process of postmodernization takes everything over the edge with it.

So, whilst I was hoping to find someone to satisfy my requirement for a Christian equivalent to Batchelor's Buddhism Without Beliefs I didn't quite find what I was hoping for. There are similarities and it is not surprising that Batchelor was at the New Zealand Sea of Faith conference and also perhaps that both books were published in 1997. Whilst Batchelor seems to be interested in getting at what is left after belief is stripped away; to expose essence as it were, I think that Cupitt, rather transcending belief altogether, is seeking to establish a better, improved belief system. I am far from fully grasping what Cupitt is trying to get across and as I do my preliminary reading I feel a see-saw effect between the importance of seeing and believing. My present view is that Cupitt is more interested in a meaningful belief system than 'essence'. It is an interesting challenge to my preference for seeing and strikes what for me is the only false note in Cupitt's otherwise refreshing analysis. That is, an alarming faith in one aspect of postmodernism. He states (p26) that the world that we know least about and one that has only recently come into view is the world of linguistic meaning, that this is the real supernatural world, formerly the province of religious belief, that wraps around and clothes the whole of the empirical world. He says that everything in the empirical world is prefigured and formed by this strange invisible world of language. There is an implication that, in some way, the word is primary and that all that is required is a new 'word order' rather than a shift in being.

In the case of the Sea of Faith, this new word order involves a Christianity with God as the religious ideal and unifying symbol of common values and a recognition of God as love with the agapeic, disinterested or 'solar' love the highest value and recognizing this love as taking human form in Jesus and the Jesus story.

Alan Mann

¹After God – The Future of Religion by Don Cupitt – A Phoenix Paperback. Published by Weidenfeld & Nicholson, Orion Books Ltd., Orion House, 5 Upper St. Martin' s Lane, London WC2H 9EA

From the book "Ts'ao Chih" translated by Hugh Dunn

In 'Bitter Thoughts' Ts'ao Chih refers to having gone:

To the Western craggy peak,

With books and a staff

To a stone house

He would wander with me

with green plants up to the sky

And teach me the importance of forgetting to speak.

Wherein was a sixty year old hermit

Whose hair was gleaming white.

Ts'ao Chih (191 to 232)

Awareness from Michael Adamson & Warwick Wakefield

The following exchange between Michael Adamson and Warwick Wakefield, reprinted here with their permission, arose from a question Warwick sent to the LookforYourself Conference a few weeks ago. He asked, "Someone, I think it was Michael, sent a contribution to this forum a little while ago in which he pointed out that there is really no separation between this formless consciousness and the forms which arise within it. I remember being very pleased, finding it very helpful. Now I can't find it. Can you find it?"

From Michael 3 Aug, '03.

Hi Warwick. I'm not sure if you should necessarily be giving me credit for saying what you referred to above. I think what you may be recalling is something I wrote along the lines of "all arisings appear to, within, and as a modification of awareness." Sort of like water forming into waves (i.e., takes form and stands out, as in "a wave is born"), and these forms (i.e., formings) are distinguishable from "one another" but distinction is NOT the same as, nor does it mean, "separation". The waves aren't "on" the water, "they" (a non-plural "they") IS the water...so "they" aren't separate from "one another" or even the water itself either, simply distinguishable as differing (yet non-separate and non-separable) forms and that which has (and is) no-form. Merely distinctions as permutations of a singular essence that is invisible to itself. In short, all there is is water.

When we say that a wave is "born" it means that an appearance arises or shows up on the scene/seen, having (or rather "is" the) shape, form, substance, movement, etc. In short, "things" appear out of "no-thing(ness)". When a wave "dies", it means that the dissolution of appearance, shape, form, substance, and movement takes place. In other words, "thing(ness) dissolves back into "no-thing(ness)". But "that" (the water) which in and as it's moving(ness) "births" and "dies" does not and cannot die or be born. To me, birthing and dying are of (and refer to) the forms and both take place from moment to moment as ever changing configurations of Life AS successive moments of the eternal Now which neither dies nor is born....or, if one prefers, is continuously being born and dying as the now. What a slippery matter this is to try and capture in words! Yikes!

Just a thought, if one is trying to "recapture" a certain pleasing feeling or memorable experience, like I have attempted to do many times, it's never been successful. Perhaps "similar", but never ever the same. After all, how could it be? "That" was then and "this" is now!

I think the fundamental reason for this is because when the "original" (virginal) experience or insight took place, there was no intention or desire involved whatsoever. In a way, "I" was being the "open space" within which that experience had the room or permission to arise and be noticed. But when the "me" gets involved AS the intention or desire to have or make it happen again, it won't and can't happen because the "me" activity fills up the space, so to speak. Attention is fixated on and kidnapped by the "content" of awareness rather than resting on and as choice-free awareness. To put it differently, I think what we truly enjoy and seek is the state of "desirelessness"...not so much the temporary and fleeting satisfaction that comes from getting what we desire. In fact, when we do get what we want, desire fades away and that great open feeling we delight in comes from dissolving back into and being desireless, our true and original (and always already our present condition but it's overlooked). So, it seems we usually fail to notice that desirelessness is our native condition and disposition because we're fixated on seeking and possessing various "objects" of desire such as certain sensations, a person, samadhi, drug fix, money, sexual release, fame, etc.)

Perhaps another way of saying this is that "one can't take heaven by storm." It seems to me that a certain kind of impotency or impossibility is required that emerges naturally out of the clarity of understanding the source and dynamics of effort and attention in order to establish (or at least favor) the conditions for the so-called "other" to happen and function (knowingly) in daily life. It's sort of like realizing that shouting at an echo to go away is futile (as well as unnecessary), not to mention extremely hilarious when seen from a certain perspective.

Enough of my stuff. I'm boring myself!

Michael

From Warwick 4 August, '03

Hi Michael, thank you so much for this message. I will print it out and go over it from time to time. It is beautifully clear. And it addresses a real problem: if "I" is formless consciousness then what to make of the forms? Are they simply a distraction to be somehow "overcome"?

Are they "not I", are they the wretched "other"?

"All arisings appear to, and within, and as a modification of, awareness." "As a modification of", that's the illuminating phrase. That's what brings the appearances back home.

You know, I've heard others talk about the essential unity of perceiver and perceptions, of "me" and "the world", and some of them are very big-time gurus for whom I have a lot of respect, but this is the best account of it that I've come across.

As for trying to repeat an original experience, trying to take heaven by storm, well, we all know that in our hearts but we keep trying to do it anyway. Isn't that what Blake was referring to when he wrote his most quoted lines:

*He who binds to himself a joy
doth the winged life destroy.
He who kisses the joy as it flies
lives in eternity's sunrise.*

Thanks again, Michael,

Warwick

From Michael 4 August, '03

I'm glad that in spite of my fumbling words you found (created for yourself) something of benefit. When I read my own stuff, it seems woefully inadequate, boring, and even embarrassingly pretentious. I wonder what the hell I'm trying to accomplish. So I usually end up figuring that's the nature of the beast and a good reminder that "my will" is impotent which I think then turns into a wonderful ticket for returning home...as Douglas says, "back to the place you never really left except in imagination."

I don't think the "distractions are to be somehow 'overcome'", as you mentioned above. (Shadows exist only because the light is shining. (Note: Light doesn't shine. It IS the shining itself! Only verb, no noun.) Take the focus off the shadows and light stands out as obvious thereby negating (via understanding rather than effort) the felt "need" to overcome or struggle with the so-called obstacles, distractions, etc.)

If they are seen as "distracti ons" then of course the usual reaction is to think they must be overcome, transcended, eliminated, are in the way, etc. In other words, a "problem" is created where there is in essence none. This is what keeps the whirlpool of chasing one's own tail going. Perhaps, however, this is the "me's" way of attempting to maintain a sense of solidity or separate existence in the midst of non-permanence. In other words "contraction". The "effort" of trying to hold onto oneself creates (and IS) the very sense that there is a separate "me." The "activity of contraction" IS the "me". There isn't a "me" separate or distinguishable from the "activity" of contracting, or tensing. "Seeking" is another form of the contraction. This seekingness IS the me. No seeking = no me, no sense of existing in a particular locality = aware space/formlessness that is arising moment to moment with and as form.

Resistance, hope, fear, worry, repression, indulgence, desire, and so on can also be seen as forms of "seeking." Neither good or bad. Simply happening. I think it may be useful to realize that "seeking" stands out (is distinguishable) over and against a "background" of no -seeking. The seeking is therefore seen as just another arising, one of millions upon millions such as hiccups, bird chirps, my ramblings, tastes, smells, thoughts, "spiritual experiences", orgasms, wars, floods, etc.

I think the difficulty (so to speak) comes in when (as Da Free John) pointed out many years ago, that one or more of the three following factors are in operation regarding what's arising in awareness, namely; 1) Identification with, 2) Differentiation from, and/or 3) Desire relative to. Any and all of these create a sense of there being an independently existing "me" separate from what is arising. ..when such is not the case. It also gives rise to the assumption (presumed to be a fact) that there is another moment other than or in addition to NOW which "I" can get into or create that is better or more preferable than (this) NOW. But there is now only...period! It's impossible to step outside of now or outside of infinity! There is no "elsewhere" or "elsewhen" ..except in imagination.

My sense is that this doesn't mean that the so-called "future" cannot be better than the so-called "past" or even the "present." It's simply that I have to be clear about "how" it can become better. In short, meddling, interfering, trying to manipulate and exploit, use "will power", and so on is not the way to "make" improvement happen. In fact, it seems that "trying" to "make" things happen creates (and IS) the very discord the apparent "me" is experiencing. In short, I always only experience my own psychophysical activity.

When the insight occurs (to use familiar words), "Thy will be done, not mine" then there's an "allowingness" for order to appear or manifest itself. But to me it isn't so much that it "comes into existence" as if order, beauty, and so on were absent...it's that they're always already ever presently occurring and have never not been occurring. It's just that a

particular type of perception was going on that prevented the ‘perception’ or ‘recognition’ of this fact. But even that ‘failure’ to recognize only God (in a manner of speaking) is itself order, beauty, wonder, awe, and so on.

I’m reminded of when I’m in a theater watching a movie that’s totally engrossing my attention, such as ‘Seabiscuit’, which I saw yesterday and highly recommend, by the way. As I’m sitting there watching the movie all kinds of experiences are happening as a result of (and dependent upon) where and how ‘attention’ is placed and used...ranging from joy, anticipation, tears, nervousness, excitement, cheering for the underdog, laughter, compassion, and so on.

Suddenly, for apparently no reason at all, attention shifts from focusing on the movie screen (the ‘scene’ or ‘seen’) to ‘expand’ and take in or become consciously aware of not only the movie screen and what’s being projected on it (i.e., rapidly alternating still images) to seeing the audience, the walls of the theater, my (this) body’s physical sensations, various smells, etc. Instantly there’s a ‘dis -engagement’ from what was previously captivating/kidnapping my attention and therefore ‘creating’ (or at least triggering) the emotions mentioned in the paragraph previous to this one. In short, there was a kind of ‘waking up’ that was more inclusive which brought about a certain ‘freedom’ if you will...while at the same time, there was a kind of a ‘loss’ of being swept away and moved by the story that was unfolding on the screen.

I think that trying to change ‘what is’ in our everyday life is about as effective as trying to change what’s happening in a movie. I can sit there and wish, hope, pretend, deny, etc but the movie plays out as it will. All I’m doing (via my activity) is not only futile, it is a joke in a way...as well as unnecessary. The only thing it produces is a sense of ‘struggle’ (which can be seen as suffering) on the part of an assumed separate ‘me’. But again, I think the ‘effort’ IS the ‘me’ so when the effort is given up, comes to an end, is seen through, or by the Grace of G-d or insight is rendered irrelevant, then the shift from identifying oneself with or as a ‘thing(ness) vanishes and is replaced with realizing oneself to be no-thing or simply aware presence, the non-movingness within which and to which movement occurs as a modification of itself. Always instantly arriving and departing at the same time. Another way of saying it is that confusing oneself with one’s ‘story’ or ‘history’ vanishes and along with it the ‘personal’ suffering, aggravation, non-humor, liberation, etc.

Ah, what the hell do I know anyway? I better stop before I continue much further down fantasy lane! Our cats’ litter box needs to be changed. All my best,

Michael

From Warwick 4 August

It is about eleven in the morning here in Sydney. About half an hour ago I switched on the computer and there were ELEVEN mails in the inbox.

Firstly there was the one where you go back to this question that has been troubling me, ‘If ‘I’ (I get sick of these inverted commas but it is much easier to express things badly rather than well, so I use every device available) - to go back, if ‘I’ is the formless consciousness, what to make of the forms?’

There is a lot of good stuff here. I will print it out and go over it in a more leisurely fashion. (Just a thought in passing - Do you think it is possible that the understanding that I am formless consciousness has been converted, almost immediately, into another identification, a statement that I am THIS and not THAT?)

You know, I had already heard from Francis Lucille that I had only grasped the first part of a two-step process, that the first part is disidentification from the mind/body/world in the understanding that ‘I’ is that which sees all of the mind/body/world, and the second step is the understanding that the mind/body/world is not separate from that which sees. But I had never been able to get the second part. (Francis is so fiendishly intelligent, and seems to be able to include so much in one glance, that he doesn’t seem to understand how ordinary folk need to take things slowly, step-by-step, in order to take in what he sees at-a-glance).

I appreciate your description of movie-watching, that’s very helpful.

And then there is the story about the seeker’s encounter with Krishnamurti. More terrific material; more stuff to be printed out and ruminated over.

Well Michael, I agree with all the others here, you have presented some wonderful viewpoints, some fresh and straightforward and exceptionally lucid ways of looking at things. And like the rest, I’m very thankful.

Warwick

Here is the Krishnamurti extract Warwick referred to

From A Vision of the Sacred My Personal Journey with Krishnamurti by Sunanda Patwardhan, p. 49
Insights on the Path: A Mystical Communication

Even individuals who have devoted their lives to the quest for the sacred often lose their focus and need corroboration of their direction. A strange, esoteric event took place once during Krishnaji's visit to India. I am speaking now about a meeting between a Jain sadhu (holy person) and Krishnaji, with Achyutji and I as silent and fascinated witnesses. The sadhu told Krishnaji, 'Sir, for fourteen years now, I have devoted myself to meditation, yet I am not able to get into samadhi. I have been practising meditation, dhyana, but I have not been able to go to the depths of it. Can I do this? Will you be able to tell me what my impediments are?'

Krishnaji asked him to describe the kinds of meditative practices he had been following. After listening to him, he said, 'Do you realize that you are still acquiring? Open your fist. There is nothing to acquire.'

For some minutes, the sadhu was silent. He then got up and prostrated himself before Krishnaji, who then asked him to stay on for some more time. After a while, the sadhu said, 'Sir, I want to ask you one more question. Is it the impact of your personality that has given me this [experience]? Is this due to your gurukripa [grace of the guru]?''

Krishnaji replied, 'I knew you would ask this question. That is why I asked you to stay on for some more time. This is not something to acquire but to give up. Release your fist. Leave everything.' He paused for a moment and said, 'Is it the [new] mind that is asking that question? Or is it the mind before you experienced 'this' that is full of questions? You have been caught up in it again. I took you out of it, but you have gone back to it. If you stand firmly on that and let go everything, 'it' will come. 'It' will come, not because you want it, but 'it' will come. Have you understood what I am asking?'

The sadhu prostrated himself again before Krishnaji, sat down and said, 'I don't need to go anywhere else.' Krishnaji then said to him, 'The 'other' is out of time, and we live in time. And we want to bring timeless into time. I have told you all this, but it is not mine.'

Editorial intrusion. This Krishnamurti story underlined for me another well known Krishnamurti saying, 'the first step is the last step'. The idea that we do nothing but stay at the point of realizing the truth is so counter intuitive that we usually react in the manner of the sadhu, we try to make something of it, or do something with it. Michael added to his contributions with this quote from Eliot which seems to be making the same point:

*I said to my soul,
be still,
and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing;
wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing;
there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought,
for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.*

T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

Jan Kersschot Publications

Nobody Home: From Belief to Clarity by Jan Kersschot, foreword by Tony Parsons (This book is a shorter version of Jan's original book 'Coming Home' which will not be reprinted). Ex Amazon Books: Price \$US16.95 less 30% on last check.

This Is It: Dialogues on the nature of Oneness This is the book from which the article in the July Nowletter was extracted. It will be published by Watkins in November of this year.

For more information on Jan and his work visit: <http://users.skynet.be/inspiration/nobodyhome/>

About our week together at Springbrook from Donald Ingram Smith

As each individual human being feels, senses the deep need to be more alive, to be in that wondrous, joyous released state named variously: happiness, ecstasy, enlightenment – what, if anything, can be done to come upon such blessedness?

During these days together in the natural beauty of Springbrook and aware of the perceived differences and the need to be free from the acquired limitations that we go on accruing and storing, and being aware of the need to break through, which is a mutation in human consciousness, why not allow this time out of normal daily pursuits to be an adventure into that critical transforming activity which Krishnamurti has revealed in his writings, letters, recorded commentaries and conversations from 1929 to 1932.

Would you be interested in listening to and hearing something of what was taking place in him during this break-through, break-out, transformation of human consciousness? By witnessing what was occurring in and around him at that time we may permit that immense reality of being to emerge in consciousness. Humanity world-wide, individually and collectively, is in a state of conflict, confusion and destruction so why not leave all that aside, out of consciousness, while we listen and watch what is happening inwardly and inperience the essence of ourselves.

We humans have inherited the belief and the knowledge and so we know and are conscious of the existence of evolutionary, transitory continuity – the continuum. We are always looking outward and forward towards an unknown future and so are largely unaware of the magnitude of the wonder of the ever present, ever manifesting, ever creating universe in the immediate circumstances of our lives.

Donald Ingram Smith

The gathering "will make use of a friend' s thematic compilation of Krishnamurti' s talks and writings (1929 32) called KRISHNAMURTI: LIFE & INDIVIDUALITY, which can be obtained at the gathering or via email upon request.

KRISHNAMURTI GATHERING - 29th October to 5th November 2003

Terry O'Brien 02 99498379 or Barry Hora 07 55335211

REGISTRATION FORM: To: The Treasurer, Krishnamurti Australia, C/- PO Box 458, Burleigh Heads, 4220.

Name:.....

Street:.....**Suburb:**.....

Cost \$45 per person per day full board
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Post code:.....**Tel:**.....(day).....(eve).....

Enclosed: Cheque/ Money Order - \$90 Deposit \$...../ Full Payment \$.....)

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 – 7-30 to 9-30PM**



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

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

