

Issue 99 –July 2004

Meetings (10.30am - 3rd Sunday of every month)

81 Greville Street , Chatswood

Next Meetings –18 July and 15 August

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Editor's Note

This month we include the record of another extraordinary awakening to follow Thomas Bird's contribution in the last issue. Jemille Hardy kindly agreed to let me use her story after she wrote to contact us after discovering the similarity between her experience and John Wren-Lewis's, as he describes it in his *The Dazzling Dark* article.

We have been very busy at our meetings lately and I thought it was about time to provide a few notes about what is happening. In addition to the group dialogues I always have a number of one-to-one dialogues in process and I've included a summary of one of those in this issue as well.

Thanks to this month's contributors. A reminder that this journal depends on you for content so please think about letting me have your thoughts, articles, and so on. David Allan wrote to let us know that he has written an article which is a bit too long for the Nowletter. It is available on www.netc.coop/community - click on Articles and Stories in the menu on the left. It is a commentary on the meaning of *peace* in the light of an understanding that what we normally understand as peace is no more than an aspect of the war-peace conditioning in which we are enmeshed. I am hoping to include a précis in a future issue but look at the complete essay if you can.

Mark your diaries for the Bob Hughes – ZenLP meeting on Saturday 7 August. (Details page 11)

Hugh Garsden sent the following message: Some of you may be interested to know a **Ken Wilber** group is starting up in Sydney. We are using this web site initially: <http://kenwilber.meetup.com/> . A couple of meetings have happened with only around 5 people so if you are interested please register on the Web site.

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

Self – from Jemille Hardy

Because I felt afraid of where I was headed I began to spend my time either longing or grasping for life. I had a private medical practice, a beautiful old home and I had married an intelligent man. I felt I did not belong in my own life as if it all might disappear. I did not relax and enjoy any of it. I worried about maintaining what I had and yet what I had was never enough. I felt deprived and I tried to control as much as possible but ultimately I felt out of control. Practising medicine felt burdensome, mechanical and boring. My handsome new husband seemed distant, as if both of us viewed each other from the safety of separate islands. I was in my mid thirties and felt less sure of where I wanted to go and how I wanted to get there than when I was 22 and just entering medical school.

One thing I decided was that it was time to have a baby. All the props were in place and I wanted pregnancy. While I was waiting for my body to cooperate a dental visit was required. This visit seemed strange from the start. I was more anxious than I had ever been in a dental office. The anxiety became raw fear and finally a terror I could barely contain. I felt perspiration on my brow and the uncontrollable clenching of my hands on the arm rests. If I had not been paralyzed by terror I would have bolted from that office.

Something very unusual was going on. My dissatisfaction with life and this terrible fear seemed related. As my jovial dentist began talking me through his painful injections I found myself moving rapidly into a boundless darkness full of vibration and stars. My transit was from desperate fear to overwhelming joy. I searched for something to explain this sudden intensity, but there was nothing in my mind that could come close. I felt as if great love pulsated in that awesome darkness. I felt immersed in vibrating energy and joy. I gave up trying to understand. I could only marvel.

I finally asked the darkness, “What am I here to do?” I don’t know why, but I felt there was some source of answers in that darkness.

Answers pertaining to work or education were what I wanted or perhaps some suggestions regarding a life philosophy, whether to get pregnant or leave my spouse. The answer I received took me by surprise, “You are here to learn that every body has a self like this.”

When I try to share my experience with other people the word awesome comes up, but the word is a faint whisper compared to the actual experience. Yet the experience seemed to be the reality behind all apparent realities. It is just being. I wanted to know what to do with this “infinite touch”. What I decided is that it is important for me to know that every patient, opponent, lover, critic, addict, priest, murderer, infant, judge, soldier, saint - all bodies have a self that is expansive beyond words. Despite my world of glaring inequities, all are equal. None are unworthy. All selves are from a source of love, power and dazzling joy. My life’s challenge is to live the knowledge of what we all are. I returned to my medical practice, my marriage, my eventual motherhood, and my life. In time I abandoned things I had once clung to..

I longed to return to my vibrant self. Mainly I wanted to feel that infinite joy and power again. I had more questions! I felt like a minute extension of that self. Yet I also felt it is up to me to answer the questions of how to live this “minute” life, given what I know about the immense source self. I do not want to see only a fearful self when I encounter my human self or when I meet another person. The patient is playing a role, as am I. Yet the challenge for me is to recall my joyful self. I can be less hard on my “extension” self. In the grander scheme it is not so important what I do, given the self I am. That self is not about judging, punishing, or worrying and its state of being is an abundant reward.

I know it is possible to allow my self to express some of the joy, energy and love that is the nature of that vibrant self. Why not express love consistently in my life?? Every time I find an answer to that why not, it is some thing I think is wrong with me. Every time I feel the beliefs and emotions of “being wrong”, I can see that as part of the role I think I must play and recall my source self in the boundless loving darkness.

Sincerely,

Jemille Hardy

Being at Home, at one – a beloved presence – Random Thoughts from Ingram Smith

Looking is the only contemplation.

Listening is the only meditation.

Watching, waiting, listening, awareness.

What I am writing here remains, while the mind flies.

And the spoken word – extract the meaning – enjoy the food, leave the husk.

Cut the cord of memory-meaning – and what remains?

I am what I am.

I am the knower – the instrument of knowing – the object known and the desire to know.

Desiring is wanting to know the more and the less,

words express what the senses experience – what is inperienced is my reality.

Within the confines of my skin – consciousness, memories, knowledge – go on

re-establishing in my head the circumscribed universe

from which I observe the world and contemplate my place and existence in it.

Not sullied by knowledge of race, religion, culture, tradition – memories of failures and successes –

torn from the fabric of my retaining mind – with all senses fully awake –

feelings flower and fade within awareness.

Past and future gathered in a transient presence form and become the seed,

(that dormant, eternal capacity) awaiting opportunity to spring into LIFE.

Meanwhile the creation of that renewed generation remains asleep,

mind gripped tight, held within word blocks – words, words, more words.

Words embody meaning and focus attention.

Focusing, be it mental, emotional, physical, painful or pleasurable is the centralising factor,

momentarily excluding all else.

Thus does object, subject and perception – all three – come into consciousness simultaneously.

With words gone, their content released

memories and meanings cease to exist,

a heightened sensitivity, a blessed wonder transforms into beloved presence,

wherever I am , I'm home.

Ingram Smith

Parsing & Sparing

The bubbling stream rejoiced;

I was thirsty and drank.

The meadow flowers smiled;

I was sad and beheld them.

The breeze issued without intent;

I was weary and breathed deep.

The hearth laughed in flames;

I was cold and gathered its warmth.

Thus made glad I called them "good,"

Revealed "elements of life" I ensconced them.

I bade my children do the same,

So they'd know and love these spaces.

But they played there instead,

No thing sated

To temple with a-praisings.

Dennis Fey

Dialogue at Greville Street

My interest in Dialogue is based on the conviction that it offers one of the few experiential routes to a transformation of consciousness. Some of us had another example of an effective experiential method as a result of participating in Chris McLean's introduction to Openness Mind.

The latest edition of Link magazine carries an article by Lee Nicholl which identifies aspects of dialogue which were considered important by David Bohm in his earliest experiments with Dialogue but which seem to have been largely overlooked in practice. People who come to Dialogue are not doing enough on the side. That is, we do not generally carry it over into our everyday lives and, although the questioning of assumptions is fundamental to dialogue, the basic assumption of my self as real is rarely challenged; there is no questioning of the questioner. This echoes Andrew Cohen's criticism that dialogue (as it is practised) cannot lead to ego-death. Finally, Bohm thought, the body is left out of the enquiry. The question of how I feel about the matter under review or how it affects me physically – how I feel about it – is not taken seriously enough.

I was particularly interested in Nicholl's comment on what I call 'the need for inside-outness'. There have been comments on this way of looking in this publication in the past. For example, John Wren-Lewis speaks of "the infinite consciousness that is the inside story of all possible universes"¹ George Schloss, in an exchange of correspondence said, *And if you're anything like I was with the phoney tolerance that pretends to see all sides of a story, meanwhile overlooking the one side that counts - the side that contains all sides because it has none - instead of fused, you end up thoroughly con-fused.* In the last issue (Nowletter 98) Thomas Bird provided another version of this perspective: *I was no longer visualizing my body disappearing from a kind of outside point of view, as I had been before. Rather, I was totally inside -- but inside what? Not a head! My perception instantly changed from a claustrophobic, concave one -- like looking through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars (this was the "normal" way I looked at the world, I now realized) -- to a "convex" one in which there were no borders to my vision at all. This was the opposite of my "normal" perspective, in which there was an imaginary border (ego?) at the limits of my sight. My "new" perspective had always been there; it only seemed limited before.*

Here is the quote from the Link article which started me down this track:

"Normally in the course of daily life, we follow the dictates of one of two masters. Either we follow our random thoughts and urges, or we follow the implicit dictates of the inner watcher, which monitors the random thoughts and urges, judging and directing them in one way or another. But now we are watching the watcher, as well as all else that is happening. This particular awareness is not a disembodied, bird's eye, "objective" view, such as occurs in many kinds of introspective analysis, nor is it the perspective of the so-called "neutral watcher", which is usually nothing more than a shift in positioning of the ego. To the contrary, this awareness is completely within all that is occurring. It is alert to all cognitive, psychological, and affective movements, yet curiously, it also partakes of these movements, and is in some essential sense grounded in them. Rather than awareness from the "outside looking in" this is more akin to awareness from the "inside looking out"."

In seeking a way of illustrating my understanding of what Nicholl is pointing to, I thought it helpful to use the simile of comparing 'my' consciousness with yours. Take the personal perspective – I can't see you as I see myself. I can imagine what it feels like to be you but I can't actually see from your perspective. My view of you is from the outside. On the other hand, I apprehend what it is like to be me directly. I have the inside view looking out on the world. We already have the inside view, we always look in that way, so what is the fuss about?

The problem is that I externalize it by making it mine. I interpose, between the world of objects and consciousness, a self – my self, and this conceptual self is taken to be an object. From that point on, the

¹ Review of The Little Book of Life and Death

point of view of the separated ego, looking is regarded as a capacity of the watcher, the 'I' which watches. Taking my self seriously externalizes looking.

Even when the conceptual nature of the self is clearly understood, seen from the inside, the mind continually re-inverts the looking and re-establishes the watcher. It manages this by claiming this new way of looking as an achievement of the watcher rather than resting in absence. If it is successful then it is again reduced to 'outside looking in' – the part observing the whole. That is, as just another point of view. The inversion results not in a revised point of view but the abandonment of point of view as the basis of looking. It results from seeing through not with the 'me'.

The Openness Mind analysis as well as Gurdjieffian 'Self-remembering', Krishnamurti's 'Watch thought' and the Harding experiments reveal an emptiness at centre which is the ground of all form, movement and action. They all reveal consciousness as primary and it is in this sense that the experience of inside-outness is made plain.

At the May Dialogue meeting we were also trying to describe what we mean when we talk about transparency and suggested the pre-death calm as an example; the calm which sometimes descends when one is about to die. There is a famous tale of Livingstone about to be killed by the lion which was shot by his bearer in mid-spring as it leapt upon him. He thought himself a goner but was perfectly calm and later said it was a God-given dispensation of balm to the dying, or something along those lines. I had a similar experience when I was electrocuting myself in the garage and there is a well-known tale of the climber who fell off a precipice and survived. Someone suggested that it was an evolutionary development to ease the horror. That sounded good at the time but, on examination, it is a characteristic which cannot be passed on by those who have it as they rarely have the opportunity to pass it on. So, it must be primary. I think access to this primary state is what we are all on about. It is, in other words 'capacitie'. Another person said we cannot access it because, presumably, it becomes apparent only when I am not, when the caretaker, seeing he can do no more, abandons his role. Wren-Lewis talks about this in "Exploring a Malfunction in Consciousness"². I agree that the caretaker can't access this but that is only a problem as long as there is identification solely with the caretaker.

So, the importance of that Dialogue meeting for me, was looking at the question of whether we can access this state or whether we are to resign ourselves to the conclusion of those who, like Krishnamurti, say nothing can be done and that doing anything at all is a movement in the wrong direction. I think that is only half true and the door to the 'secret garden' is revealed by contentedly doing nothing, being nothing for a change. And that is, of course, very simple. A number of us experienced just how accessible this is when adopting the 'non-seeking mind' role at Chris McLean's recent workshop.

Someone at the meeting put me on to a Suzanne Segal website where I found : "*What had vanished was the reference point of a personal self that felt the feelings personally. Emptiness was consistently co-present with all emotional or mental states, and this co-presence precluded any personal quality from existing. No thoughts, feelings, or actions arose for any personal purpose anymore.*"

That seems to make sense but Suzanne was tipped permanently into this 'no-self' situation and her inability to recover her personality caused her many years of suffering until someone mentioned that her condition was highly prized by certain traditions. Awakening to the possibility of a positive aspect of the condition eventually led her to understanding and reconciliation. I think that the permanent transformation which the Segal story represents is undeniable. However, I also think it quite fruitless to seek it for oneself. On the other hand, to recover the calm is well within everyone's grasp and that is what I find most interesting.

Alan Mann

² Exploring a Malfunction in Consciousness www.capacitie.org

Regaining the flying

(A note about the June & July LookforYourself Meetings)

We started our Saturday meeting by reviewing the day spent with Chris McLean at the May meeting. I find that the adoption of 'non-seeking mind' results in the same clarity as the LookforYourself experiments. It is clearly a more palatable approach for some.

I was trying to describe my experience of Chris's Openness Mind approach at the last Dialogue meeting when someone, who has had no luck at all with the experiments, said, "Oh, is that what headlessness is about?" Which goes to show that a particular recipe can't be expected to suit all tastes.

At the meeting on Saturday 6 June we saw the first two sections of the four-part interview of Douglas Harding by Richard Lang. Douglas talks about his early years and influences and how he developed his lifetime interest in the importance of seeing who we really are, more recently 'where we really are'. The second part concludes with a reminder of the danger of identifying too closely with my human level and reminding me that I can lose all my limbs and live, but take away my sun and that's that.

I thought it interesting, that at Chris's Openness Mind meeting, what I think I am was successfully dismantled and seen for what it really is in the emptiness at centre. This latest meeting concluded with Douglas pointing to the other aspect of what I really am – the fullness, which is enabled by that emptiness. Coincidentally, synchronistically perhaps, Dave Knowles had sent me a copy of Hua Hu Ching - The Unknown Teachings of Lao Tzu a few days before the meeting and it is bristling with the apparent paradox of empty-full – awakeness.

The Tao gives rise to all forms, yet it has no form of its own.
If you attempt to fix a picture of it in your mind, you will lose it.
This is like pinning a butterfly: the husk is captured, but the flying is lost.
Why not be content with simply experiencing it?

The Hua Hu Ching reading reminded me of the Jim Clatfelter edition of the Tao Te-Ching which I looked at again on <http://www.geocities.com/~jimclatfelter/jimztao.html> and lifted the following from section 15:



The image at the left is the Chinese ideograph for Tao. It is composed of two graphs, one meaning go, one meaning head. It is usually translated as Way. This combination of meanings is found in English as well. Consider these expressions: headway, head off, go away, head out. Douglas Harding points out that the ideograph looks like a head and a chopper. The head is about to be removed! The Tao is the gone-head! Your head must go. See the emptiness or blankness that exists in the place where you imagined a head. Nothing exists here but bare awareness. The Tao is this simple naked awareness.

As this month's issue has been delayed I can include a note on the July *LookforYourself* meeting at which Paul Tulip told us about a recent workshop he'd attended and introduced us to the Labyrinth and related the exercise to our life path. I suppose this newsletter is an example of mine. We watched more of the Douglas interview by Richard and had a very interesting discussion, parts of which are reflected in the following article, which Shane Keher sent to me after the meeting.

Alan Mann

The following article, [The Silence of the Mind](#) – by Robert Linssen, is reprinted from the Mountain Path, the journal of the Ramana Maharshi Association, and is available together with other archived material on their website at – <http://www.ramana-maharshi.org>

The original article carried this introduction. We publish this article by one of the most eminent Western exponents of Zen not because The Mountain Path is concerned with the views of modern psychology as to mental processes or accepts all its findings, but because of the author's conclusion that thought must finally be stilled and that the ego, who is the thinker, resists this process as long as it can, owing to its "instinct for self-preservation". With profound intuition and cogent reasoning, he uses psychology to undermine the conception of a psyche. In order to know ourselves we must be able to answer a quadruple question: What do we think? Why do we think? How do we think? and finally: Who thinks?

The Silence of the Mind – by Robert Linssen

In the West most of us claim to be positive and realistic. In fact we are incoherent in our inner life. As long as we are unaware of the deep motives of our thoughts and of our desires and actions we are incoherent and there is spiritual disorder.

We are well aware, as a matter of fact, that most human beings today are unable to answer the questions why or how we think. Progress made in psychology has made it clear to us how inaccurately we answer even the simplest of all questions. What do we think? We know that the conscious part of ourselves, that which we know with relative clearness, is only a small part of our total self. Beyond this peripheric and superficial consciousness there lie a series of deep layers forming the unconscious. We can consider it a huge recording of the past, full of the scorings of all incomplete actions, incomplete thoughts, incomplete emotions. It is a fact that a complete act, a complete thought, leaves no score on the mind. As Lao Tzu said: "He who walks with Tao leaves no trace."

The Zen 'unconscious' or Krishnamurti's 'unknown' are, on the contrary, absolutely new (to the mind). They are not a result. We can reach the Zen 'unconscious' only by freeing ourselves of the contents of the 'collective unconscious'. It is easy to understand that we can attain full realization of the Present only by liberating our mind from all identification with the past.

The answer to the questions how and why we think can only be given after having solved this first question of what we think. It is far more complex and goes far beyond the field generally explored by psychoanalysis. In my works I have explained in all detail the operational process of an 'associative habit' which, from the atom to human thought, passing through molecules, cells, amoeba and all other stages, continually works by accumulation, leading to the supreme crystallisation, both psychic and psychological, of the 'me' - or 'ego'. Thought is the manifestation of an 'associative habit' on the psychological level.

We associate ourselves with objects: with our bank account, our name, our body, our political, philosophical and religious ideas, with memories of our relationship with different things or of our psycho-physical environment.

The feeling of our continuity and psychological solidity is the result of rapid and complex superimpositions of thoughts. All of them converge towards the same goal the possibility of experiencing oneself as a distinct and continuous entity; It is in this direction that we must investigate if we wish to be able to answer the double question what and how we think.

Thought may be regarded as an invaluable aid to the ego's instinct for self-preservation. It is the direct result of the above-mentioned 'associative habits'. To believe that we think freely is wrong. We are thought. We do not possess our faculties but are possessed by them. We shall go on being their unconscious slaves as long as we remain unable to answer the fundamental questions here raised.

Symbols, pictures, mental clichés appear unceasingly in our mind, some seeming coherent, others totally incoherent. We sometimes wonder why an absurd idea comes into our mind, but these 'intruders', as some psychologists call them, are not really as distinct from us as we suppose. No thought that comes to us is a complete stranger. Those that we call reasonable and those that seem to us idiotic or queer all come from the same centre. Periodic pulsions bring them up ceaselessly. As soon as one thought comes to our mind another appears. We do not allow the first to come to an end to make way for the second; before the

second can end its course a third appears. Why? We must think; we must think quickly ... quickly ... quickly.

Why is it that our mind brings up these ceaseless thoughts? There is one evident reason which no modern psychologist has admitted up to now, and which many would probably find it embarrassing to admit. Zen Buddhism and Krishnamurti's thought concur here in perfect agreement in their answer: "Thought must be considered a reflex or auto-defence of a fundamental fear." Fear of what? Fear of being nothing, fear of a lack of continuity. Does this mean that if we were able to live one moment of perfect mental silence, perfectly relaxed, we should no longer have the conviction of personal continuity?

Yes! The experience of oneself as a continuous psychologically distinct entity results from the rapidity and complexity of the mental process. We feel consciousness as a continuous duration: from yesterday, through today, towards tomorrow. But this feeling of continuity is illusory.

There is discontinuity in matter as well as in consciousness. They are expressions of one and the same completely discontinuous energy. The feeling of continuity of consciousness can be compared to the apparent continuity that the gesture of raising an arm seen on a cinema screen may give. We have the impression of a continuous action but this is in fact the result of a succession of disconnected pictures of the arm, each one a little higher. It is the same with thought. The mental life is not in fact continuous.

Between two thoughts there is an interval of silence. If we were to face up to this the illusory nature of our ego would immediately be revealed to us. If an instant of real silence in our mental activity were located, we should immediately become aware of the vanity of the comedy we play to ourselves.

This would be Liberation. What prevents us from achieving it? A force of inertia, very deep, powerful and obscure, opposes it. In some scriptures it is characterised as the 'old man' whom we have to get rid of. In Buddhism it is the fundamental 'tanha', the greed of becoming. It is also personified as Satan, from an old Semitic root meaning 'I resist'. What do I resist? I resist awareness as impersonal Being-Knowledge-Bliss.

From the experimental point of view the problem may be stated as follows: we have to appreciate that mental activity is the expression of a fundamental fear, the fear of being nothing, fear of lack of continuity as a separate entity. In a word, we have to feel and understand that thought is the outcome of our greed to become something, of our thirst for personal duration.

This is not mere theory. When this desire for continuity and ego-duration is seen for what it is, the endless flow of thoughts ceases and mental silence becomes a reality. The ego is then seen to be an illusion. The past is washed away by a fathomless presence that our language cannot express. At this level Words like 'Being', 'Love', 'Plenitude of Consciousness' - (Satchitananda) might be used; too often, however, words are ill understood and become treacherous or lead to treason.

Some have asked who it is that sees in this state. One can say immediately that it is not the ego. It is 'Satchitananda'. It cannot be the ego because he is the prisoner of his conditioning. The 'me' which is conditioned cannot free the 'me'. When I spoke of the need to feel and understand, I referred to a state of complete perception in which there is no approval, no judgement, no choice, no memory, in fact nothing which is personal. Only pure impersonal awareness of the Real remains. As Chuang Tzu said: we have to be like a perfect mirror. "The perfect mirror sees everything but does not accumulate or choose." Such is pure perception.

The important thing is to make a practical study of the process of thinking. It is not enough to read books on psychology because they generally deal only with the outermost aspects of the problem. Knowledge of Self is a constant awareness. There is no lasting happiness so long as the illusion of an ego remains with its identifications and its violence. Going beyond oneself is not a failure, but Victory. The ancient Chinese Sages called it 'going home'.

Robert Linssen

(Further reflections on the above and our exchanges at the meetings led Shane to send me the following which I persuaded him to let me add here. Ed.)

Spiritual Techniques or Seeing What's Here? – from Shane Keher

Sending my last message stimulated a fresh perspective on something that's been nagging at my mind for a few months. I remember you telling me that some Krishnamurti friends of yours had reservations about the Headless experiments because they saw the experiments as spiritual techniques. I think their concern was that no technique could ever lead to the discovery of Reality or True Nature. For some reason I thought there was a difference between the experiments and what we normally call spiritual techniques, such as concentration exercises, prayer and mantra repetition, but I couldn't describe what that difference was at the time.

After reading and reflecting on the Linssen article, it occurs to me that the experiments are very clearly not techniques in the usual sense. The experiments simply invite you to SEE WHAT YOU ACTUALLY SEE, rather than what you THINK you see, or what the mind tells you that you're seeing. Conventional spiritual techniques don't radically question one's mental picture of reality. They attempt to work with or transform the mental picture. For example, one tries to purify and transform the mind or ego so that the soul or spirit is more apparent. A spiritual technique is an exercise in trying to change an "impure" or "lesser" state into one that's more uplifted, harmonious, and so on. From a nondual perspective, it begs the question of whether all you've achieved is substituting one image or picture of what you think is happening for another.

I wonder then whether the same observation can be made about other nondual teachings, ie: they could be more accurately described as "pointers" to direct, immediate experience, rather than "techniques". For example, I'm very familiar with Ramana Maharshi's Self Inquiry. Ramana always said that the question "who am I?" was not to be used like a mantra. Instead, it was meant as a direct inquiry into the "I thought". Experientially, that means to fully embrace the feeling of "me" until it dissolves into what is actually here, Awareness. My personal observation is that what happens in Self Inquiry is exactly what happens in a Headless experiment. Instead of believing what the mind tells me: that I have a head or that what I really am is this little "me" ego - what is revealed is WHAT IS ACTUALLY THE CASE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT, uncoloured by the mind's associations from the past. I have to impose psychological memory onto this moment to believe there is a "me" or a "head" here.

So: my theory is that what I'm saying is true in regard to any truly nondual teaching, whether it be a Zen koan, a Dzogchen "pointing out" instruction, Self Inquiry, or a Headless Experiment - they are all immediate pointers to What-Is-really-here, rather than What I-think-is-here. A truly nondual pointer indicates the Silence between the words in our minds, or what is in the "Gap", to use Douglas's term. Looking at ourselves and the world with our "normal" conditioned minds, we don't see what's Here - we see our minds imaginings or thought pictures of what's Here....

Shane Keher

Headless or Not from Alan Mann

(This is a letter I sent to two friends a few months ago as an attempt to resolve an ongoing failure to reach agreement).

Dear X (and Y), You have twice mentioned, in recent conversations, the apparent contradiction between the way things appear and the way things 'really are'. You illustrated this point by the example of the earth appearing to be stationary whilst the sun rises and falls and contrasting this with what we know to be true; that the earth is travelling around the sun.

At a recent dialogue meeting at Chatswood you replied to a statement someone made by saying "that is the same as the headless delusion". I was puzzled by the remark but didn't query it at the time. At a subsequent, one-to-one meeting you again raised the issue of the earth going around the sun. I finally made the connection. I realized that you think the headless position is flawed because it insists on the truth of something "no head here" which can be demonstrated to be untrue, i.e., "well, I can see your head even if you can't." And you confirmed that I had at last got the point you had been trying to make.

To digress. This is a regular objection to the Harding story and I'm turning your particular protest into an opportunity for me to get my thinking as close as I can to a representation of the clarity the experiments reveal.

As an example of the objection, another friend claims that Douglas's big mistake is to say he is literally headless instead of saying that from where he (Douglas) stands it is 'as if' he is headless. This, in my view, is the great temptation; to deal with the objection by saying headlessness is only a dramatic metaphor for the absence of any self-entity.

However, that won't do. And it won't do because we are not talking about a modest change or minor modification to my worldview but a complete revolution, a turning inside out of the whole business.

It has been necessary, for me, to locate the position or level from which the claim "I have no head" makes sense. Until I have done so I don't think it is possible for me to grasp what Krishnamurti, Traherne, Gurdjieff, Ramana or any of them are really on about.

This is why I respond so positively to George Schloss who has no hesitation in making what seems to be the extravagant claim that herein lies the beginning and end of history. It is exactly what I saw for the first time one lunch hour in Macquarie Street – that I am not an entity in time and space but that the entity and time and space are in some way all here and now as This. It is also interesting in this connection that Krishnamurti, in an interview with someone, defined Vedanta as the end of knowledge. Meaning, I think, both the purpose of knowledge and the finish of it by way of transcendence, e.g., *As is the use of a well of water where water everywhere overflows/ Such is the use of all the Vedas to the seer of the unseen. B.Gita*

So, putting aside the turning world for a moment I'll check my understanding of headlessness. It is not a good name because if I stick my neck out far enough 'I' become bodiless. So, let's look again at the Harding process by employing the standard experimental formula.

First the rules:

- Confine yourself to what is directly apprehended.
- Abandon, for the time being, what you know.
- Rely strictly on your experience not on any outside authority.

Then do one of the experiments, for example, the pointing finger routine which ends up with the finger pointing where you would point the revolver if about to blow your brains out. What is it pointing to? Based strictly on the above I find – Nothing – a spacious emptiness:

- Unlimited
- Filled with whatever happens to be on show
- Distinguishable from what appears but totally integrated with it
- Awake

If I follow the rules I can't help but see this to be so. Perhaps you can? I discover that, at centre, there is simply awareness.

It is not Alan who is headless but Awareness (also colourless, shapeless, etc., etc.), and Awareness is what I really am. (Better to say, at centre awareness is, and I am not other than that). All the experiments do is relieve me of the false identification with the supposed Alan-entity and free me from dependence on what I *know* to be the case. I think the use of the term 'What I really am' is unhelpful. I have to take a step away from Douglas here. When I do the closed-eye experiment, which is a very effective stripper-away of the inessential and which always finally reveals 'essence', I cannot describe what is left as 'I am'. It seems that what is left has no 'I' about it, in the usual sense of the word. All that remains is 'Am or amness' without the I. There is no need for identification at this level, so, claiming that it is what I really, really am seems to be reinserting an aspect of what has just been transcended.

There is, nothing new about the revelation, which is what all the sages are talking about. The difference is that Harding's approach doesn't merely tell me about it, it tips me right into it – seeing suddenly supersedes believing.

For that to become crystal clear I have to be ruthlessly insistent on banning knowledge from the game. That is extremely hard to do because, as we know, knowledge is very tricky, it reasserts itself as explanation, it excuses itself by presenting new explanations in the guise of insight; any excuse to get back to centre where awareness is now established. Its last refuge is respectability – who, in their 'right mind' would admit to being headless? Exactly, the point being – in this context – 'no mind'.

And when Awareness is enjoying its rightful place the world freely unfolds as colour, shape, movement and even explanations come and go. And the 'I' can re-enter the ever-arising, so-called objective world, the world of relationship and play the role of Alan. Here 'I' needs explanations and interpretations and will adopt those that best fit the facts as 'I' sees them or even as 'I' believes them. I will act 'as if' there is a head here rather than a wide-open capacity for you and everything else because that is how it works at the 'As if' level.

Note how the 'as if – as is' scenario is now reversed. I do not go about as if I do not have a head – I behave, in order to relate to the world of 'other', as if I do.

Perhaps, this is the point where you ask me whether at the 'as-if' level of everyday life I claim to have no head? Well, because from your point of view there clearly is one here, assuming you see me as I see you, I will take your word for it. I won't deny it because if I do we enter into endless and fruitless debate but don't ask me to affirm what I cannot directly experience. The point is to stand in the place where the absence of head or of any other attributes whatsoever cannot be denied. I have found this is only possible by careful observation of what is and a staunch refusal to either affirm or deny that which cannot be directly apprehended. It seems to be the only way to break the stranglehold of the known. And having 'stood' in that place and seen there are two modes and that they exist together, the question is no longer whether or not I really have a head but whether it is possible to be at the point where to say "no head" makes sense.

And our dispute is really a case of category error. I am trying to describe a first person perspective in third person terms. The experiments are a beheading in the sense of removing the habit which confines me to the third-person, objective worldview. They subdue what is known to be the case and, thereby, reveal what is directly experienced. In fact, as I wrote this I realized for the first time that to say 'I have no head' is itself an example of category error. Where 'no head' makes sense then it follows that there can be no 'I' to not have one, either.

The whole Harding experimental repertoire is an excellent test of whether it is possible to be free from the known. The major obstacle is my dependence on what I know. I say I want to be free but if that entails abandoning my interpretations and explanations I find it too high a price. It involves giving up what I have come to believe is myself. I am dedicated to explanation as this letter demonstrates.

I have been trying to find something that would link all this to Krishnamurti because of the overlapping of our mutual interest in K. The closest I could get was this note, dropped into the email conference by Alan Rowlands some months ago.

It does seem that Krishnamurti, intense psychological investigator that he was, sometimes came extraordinarily close to formulating the headless perspective, even physically - though never with the final specificity of Douglas. I don't think he ever got to the point, in spite of his extraordinary experiences and far-reaching insights, of saying that the essence of a physical object (e.g. one's own head) is absolutely nothing. I have the sense that the world of objects was to him a physical reality independent of our seeing. But he did come near to making that distinction (which solves so many problems) between the 1st person and the 3rd person:

" The outward manifestation of K appears to be a person, but at the centre there is no person" (Tradition and Revolution).

Here we have the manifestation and the essence, the appearance and the reality. He just omitted to mention that it is true of every one of us, if we just take a good look!

It interesting to note that Krishnamurti often said he had no ego. To the casual observer that is just as absurd as Douglas saying he has no head. Many of us are aware of Krishnamurti's very ego driven behaviour on occasions. But if we adopt the view that, in making such a claim, K is talking about the reality he equated with God or 'Other' and referred to as 'direct experiencing', the state where the observer is the observed, then we can allow him the claim. Providing, of course, we too can join him at the level where it is true to say 'no head, no ego'.

Now back to the rotating earth. As I lay in bed last night I realized that the problem is all to do with interpretation and explanation of events and not our direct perception of them. We say the sun rises and the sun sets but might as well choose to say the horizon is falling or rising. I remember climbing the cliff at the back of the hut at Glen Davis and spending a cold winter's night sleeping fitfully and waking at regular intervals. My waking moments provided 'still shots' of the star positions. I had a strong feeling that I was rotating under the changing star pattern not that the stars were moving over me. It is also easy to make this shift at sunrise and sunset when the sun is near the horizon. At such times it is easy to feel yourself rolling towards or away from a fixed sun with the horizon rising or falling. And all of that is interpretation of the experience. The actual experience is more like awareness of a still shot which has nothing to say about what is moving and what is not.

That's how I see this question. Thanks for pushing me into looking harder at it. In fact, it may be as Rumi says I have two heads rather than none at all:

"You have two heads. That head of clay is from earth, this pure head is from heaven. That derived head is manifest, this original head is hidden". It is my business to lose my head, the business of my King to give me a new one. Rumi

I hope this will persuade you to put your point of view in a future Nowletter and that, of course, goes for all readers who feel inclined.

Alan Mann

From the Place where we are Right.

From the place where we are right
Flowers will never grow in the Spring.
The place where we are right
Is hard and trampled like a yard.
But doubts and loves dig up the world
Like a mole, a plough.

Yehuda Amichai

This poem was quoted by Richard Holloway in his interview on the ABC 'Encounter' programme, [Inns on the Road](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/enc/stories/s445746.htm) <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/enc/stories/s445746.htm> . Thanks to Jacqui Williams who sent it in after we talked about the programme at the last LookforYourself meeting

Sydney Look for Yourself Meetings

- Saturday 3 AprilDouglas Harding - Melbourne Talk - Video
 Saturday 1 May..... Chris McLean workshop
 Saturday 5 June.....Richard Lang interviews Douglas - Video 1
 Saturday 3 July.....Richard Lang interviews Douglas - Video 2
Saturday 7 August.....Bob Hughes workshop (See below)
 Saturday 4 September..... Frequently asked questions - DEH Video and Dialogue

As you can see, this programme is nearly complete. Whether we continue will depend on demand and I would appreciate feedback. If you have ideas about whether or not we should carry on and, if you think we should, what form would you like future meetings to take. In particular, I'd like everyone of you to think about leading one of the sessions – on a subject dear to your heart but generally within the broad aims of these sessions.

Bob Hughes meeting – Saturday 7 August

Bob is one of the people who attended the Douglas Harding Sydney seminar in 1991. A well-known broadcaster with the ABC he is currently involved in Wellspring an organization broadcasting on air through Spa, Foxtel/Austar Channel 845, and SMA Channel 16 and dedicated to Meditation, Motivation and Health.

<http://www.wellspringconnection.net/>

I asked Bob if he would lead a meeting on his present activities, in particular his involvement in ZeNLP and how he sees it fitting in with the Harding story.

Krishnamurti Gathering 10 — 17 November 2004

The next Krishnamurti gathering will be a week long from the tenth of November, in Springbrook, Queensland, at the Theosophical Society Learning and Retreat Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road.

This is a special opportunity to come together in awareness. Seeing the false as the false. A look into Reality, free from the old still-present foolishnesses that engage our minds and determine our behaviour. (We argue our differences and so maintain our conflicts). Free from debating the futile, the human mind may come upon clear, unimpeded perception, true action.

Opportunities are available for great walks, vast mountain scenery, a superb waterfall, for meditation, dialogues, tape viewing, listening and free time. Costs: The weeklong gathering costs \$322 from Wednesday to Wednesday (7 days) including vegetarian meals and accommodation. Day visitors to pay \$16 per day including lunch.

Enrolment: Registration is requested before 15 October 2004. Enrolment forms are available through Barry Hora Ph: (07) 5533 5211; Fax: (07) 5533 5548, and Gerald Reardon Ph: (07) 5533 5247. Please return the completed forms with full payment (Cheque/Money Order to be made out to Krishnamurti Australia) to The Treasurer, Krishnamurti Australia, PO Box 458 Burleigh Heads, QLD 4220 and a receipt will be forwarded.

Enrolment Forms can be downloaded from: <http://www.krishnamurtiaustralia.org/>

Academy of the Word Seminar Programme

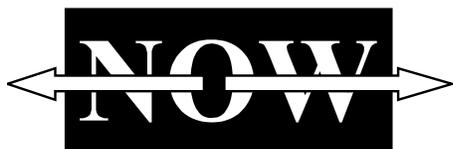
Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504 – 2nd & 4th Tuesdays– Under St Peter’s Church, Devonshire St., Surry Hills.
Second Tuesday 6.15pm - Healing & Well-being - **Fourth** Tuesday 6pm - State of the World

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 Satsang/Dialogue with Penny Fenner

23a Britten Street Glen Iris - Monday evenings 7.30-9.30pm - To confirm attendance and for further information
 please call 03 - 9885 0119 T: + 61 3 9885 0119// 0411 554 007
 E: penny@fenner.org - www.skilfulaction.org



**If unable to deliver please return to:
 81 Greville Street, Chatswood 2067**

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