

Issue No.11 – 4th August 94

Meetings are held at 10 am on the third Sunday of every month at 81 Greville Street, Chatswood and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out for themselves, through the process of dialogue, whether transformation of consciousness, enlightenment or whatever you want to call it, can come about.

Arrangements

The new format seemed to work quite well at the July meeting, with the first session running from 10.30am to 1.30pm, so we will continue on this basis and continue after lunch with a "tape" session or further discussion. We are still far from comfortable with the principles of DIALOGUE and I for one readily revert to debate when my assumptions are seriously challenged. Someone suggested we list the principles and hang them on the wall so we can point to them whenever one of us gets carried away. I thought the last meeting was a bit of a shambles but whenever I make comments like that about the meetings I invariably upset somebody who thought it was one of the best they'd been to. I find I can't recall much of what happened on the 17th July so perhaps it is beginning to work after all.

An interesting postal DIALOGUE is developing with a number of the non-attenders who are too far away to come to meetings or find it difficult to get to Greville Street on Sunday mornings. I have extracted material from their letters for inclusion this issue. There is a danger that my editing may distort their intended meanings. If so, apologies in advance, a retraction will appear and please prevent this happening by making your contribution in a way that will allow me to put it in without interference. This means preparing an article so that I don't have to select the material and assemble the final product from your letter. The ideal length would be anything up to one thousand words. Anything longer you should keep and use as the basis for a book on the subject! And if you can supply on disc to save me from the painful pecking, so much the better.

Thank you for the subscriptions in cash or in kind, now nearly all in. Apart from the cost aspect it allows me to screen out people who really don't want the Newsletter but are too polite or fearful or lazy to tell me.

We have permission to reproduce and circulate the USA Newsletter so this will, in future, be copied and sent to you separately. That is, I won't try to combine the mailing as on previous occasions.

Homework

The "alarm clock" question has not produced the overwhelming response I expected and we drifted off the subject at the meeting. We must be getting close to re-inventing the "chairperson". I recall we were looking at whether an awakening would be recognised as such and by whom when we suddenly crashed into debate. However, Rome, who doesn't have to contend with a DIALOGUE group in full cry, wrote the following in response to the June Newsletter:

"Half awake" to me is the brain state. Yes, "clear mind" (not hampered by brain) is highly active and "available to everyone".....spiritual paths are designed to sustain the sleep but that applies to the paths. The state is not different from mind/spirituality which is is-ing. There is no path, per se. Simply by-passing/dropping brain function through thought and voila!

The comment "false assumptions that make me think I am not fully awake" is probably commonsense in its true sense of being common to all, a state with which people are satisfied because it is normal. As I see it that is what assumptions, ideas, theories are all about. WHENEVER the brain is at work, whether during 'silence' or DIALOGUE there is partial sleep and, I'll dare to say it, it can never be otherwise. The harder one tries to change this there is simply an increase in subtlety and, therefore, delusion of being or not being awake.

At long last I've come to treasure, cherish and nurture all the tranpersonal experiences (I call them inperiences) I've encountered in my life and now regard them as special events to be explored and understood. Marvels of the "innerverse".

In the same mail there were two audio tapes, sent to us by Mary Sproal. One of them was "How to Stop Thinking" by Barry Long. Up to this point I had been keeping Mr. Long at arms length for no other reason than a strong resistance to anyone who appears to be treading the guru circuit. Anyway, I listened to the tape and was impressed by the simplicity both of the message and the delivery. It is one of the best talks I have ever heard on meditation and he doesn't mention the word 'meditation' once. Thank you Mary! My reason for including this comment is the similarity of the content of the tape and the subject of Rome's letter.

Rome is an example to us all of sticking to the issue for she concluded her letter with an afterthought, written at 2am, which finished off what we began at the meeting although, of course, she had no idea that this particular hare had been started.

I can never enter into the timeless. I can never "go" into that state. I can only remove my self so the space I occupied is no longer blocking the flow; it does not even come to "me" since I'm not there (or here). I can do nothing for there is nothing to do. Planning, deciding, thinking, talking, DIALOGUING all keep me /"my" space occupied so I can delude myself I'm making progress.

We might have a look at that final comment at the next meeting because the space to which she refers is meant to be the home ground of DIALOGUE. The fact that it is so infrequently the case is our continuing difficulty. We have one solution to the problem, from John Wren-Lewis who referred to it in the interview we heard last month. He will be expanding on it in his book. Those of you who are still behind with this assignment - look out! John has offered to come to one of our meetings so we will try to agree on a date after the next meeting.

Via Negativa

Mishka Jambor who has been with us at the last three meetings wrote a long letter explaining her deep interest in group enquiry and her concern that the groups with which she has been involved do not seem to be serious about getting to the bottom of things. This is summarised in her view that the only effective route for most people is the 'via negativa' whereas she finds that most of the spiritually inclined people she meets are interested only in the 'via positiva'. This inability or unwillingness to address our shadow is, she believes, a fundamental weakness and the trap of the 'via positiva'.

She provides this chilling quotation from Schelzr "*ALL CONSCIOUSNESS IS GROUNDED IN SUFFERING AND ALL HIGHER STAGES OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN INTENSIFIED SUFFERING*".

She includes in her letter a series of questions to the group:

- 1) *Are there obstacles to enlightenment?*
- 2) *Would such enquiry (into the obstacles) contribute to or even enable the pursuit of enlightenment?*
- 3) *Are there thousands of obstacles or do they all spring from one (or two or three) roots?*
- 4) *Can we investigate the root of those obstacles better in group enquiry or is it better done in an individual enquiry, or a combination of both?*
- 5) *If we agree to do it together, how is it to be done - what format can it take?*

I'm sure we all have some fairly predictable reactions to these questions which should, therefore, make this a good subject for enquiry.

Conclusion

Mary attached this little gem by my new acquaintance B. Long:

A DEMONSTRATION OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Knowledge, freedom, happiness - no morality, no religion, no guilt - in an ordinary man or woman - no dishonesty, no unhappiness - no phoney enlightenments - with the good - invoking the law of life - the love in yourself - attached to nothing - alone - passionate.

PASS THE JAM PLEASE

NEXT MEETING - 10 AM FOR 10.30 SUNDAY 21st AUGUST AT 81, GREVILLE STREET, CHATSWOOD Ph 4197394

Gladney has alerted me to the availability of loan tapes from the Adyar library. I plan to get one for the afternoon session on the 21st so we can all have a quiet after-lunch snooze.

We would appreciate a phone call if you are coming. If you can give us a call a couple of days before the meeting day, so much the better.

Issue No.12 - 4th September 94

Meetings are held at 10 am on the third Sunday of every month at 81 Greville Street, Chatswood and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out for themselves, through the process of dialogue, whether transformation of consciousness, enlightenment or whatever you want to call it, can come about.

August Meeting

Two changes at the August meeting which seemed to help the process. Inspired by the Omega Group format we started with ten minutes silence to give us an opportunity to watch the mind in action and reaction even when it has no "external" input from fellow DIALOGUERS. Following a suggestion made at the July meeting we put the DIALOGUE basics up on a blackboard as a constant reminder to us when we go astray. This is the present content of the board:

An enquiry not a debate

Questioning not asserting

Always allow speaker to finish

Question assumptions

Suspend point of view

Priority of ear over mouth

Group interest over self interest

Process over content or result

The changes helped keep us more on track than usual. I felt we adopted a greater degree of commitment to the process, to protecting the flow, than we have been able to do in the past.

We will continue to experiment. The whole process is an experiment, of course, and change or openness to change may be a critical ingredient.

I caught the tail-end of an episode of the "Long Search" on an Open Learning programme. The interviewer was talking to Jacob Needleman who said: "*your programme is well named but the important thing to watch is that the long search is not simply made longer. What is needed is to go deeper, not longer*". This is why I think DIALOGUE is important; I believe it carries the possibility of delivering us to depth. To waste the opportunity at the conversational level will ensure that we make the search longer but that is all. Whizzing around on the surface, enjoying the froth.

There is a recurring question in the Guardian Weekly arising from the question "Can anyone confirm that in a field in the North of England there used to be a sign saying "*Please do not throw stones at this notice*"?"

This followed by the enquiry,"

'are there any other examples of this kind of helpful public information?' The question results in a continuous flow of comparable material from issue to issue. I thought we should try this approach to explore the issue of whether or not we are only partially awake. In the June Newsletter we asked the question "*If we are only partially awake there must be some way of waking fully or of showing why this is not possible*". Since the last issue there have been some interesting replies. I now have six, not counting the Douglas Harding portfolio, and there is the parallel activity reported in the USA DIALOGUE Newsletter I will include one response in each issue in the hope of developing the enquiry. The responses will appear under the **Revielle** heading in this and future issues.

Via Negativa

We considered the via negativa question which Mishka raised at the last meeting and the general feeling seemed to be that analysis of the individual was not something we would want to do as a group but that if there was sufficient interest, those who would like to follow through could meet separately. The question brought to the surface a number of issues to do with suffering not least the extent of suffering experienced by members of the group.

Elsa has summarised the comments she made at the meeting and added some thoughts by Matthew Fox.

Gladney agreed to outline his response to the DIALOGUE which arose from Mishka's questions listed in the last issue. (See page 2)

Thoughts on my healing

When told I was 'cured', nothing could express my gratitude better than the words of the psalmist - my mourning was changed into dancing, my sackcloth removed and clothed with joy, my soul was singing unceasingly...

Now what do you do after the healing, I was asked, what has changed? - But is there such a thing as 'after the healing'? Does the healing process ever end? Is there such a thing as being healed - full stop, now I am whole forever? Aren't we all vulnerable at any moment of our life?

When I heard I had cancer, I thought "From now on, even if I get through this I shall never be fooled into the false security that as long as life is fairly comfortable and predictable I will be safe. I shall feel utterly unsafe and in that will be my true security: to be mindful that there is only this moment in the present. For the past is past, and for that which is in the future I will have no other thought than to accept, trust and surrender. I will go with the flow of life and be as fully whole each moment of my life, because I have no need of crutches, no false securities. This experience of having cancer is a great gift because it teaches me to surrender my ego. And I shall always remember this."

Well, I do remember - not often enough. If I had learned perfectly there would be no need for the healing process to continue. I'm in the river of life, flowing, but I still look at the river banks and get distracted by the flowers I see growing there, and I want to swim across to pick them. Or I look for something to cling to as I still have a fear of where the river will lead to. At times I also look for people to encourage me.

It is natural I should be concerned with my healing, both spiritual and physical. But with such abundance of love and care showered on me by others, now with better health, my thoughts go out to those who suffer, all who travel to the same Source. There is an increased sense of wanting to share.

"... in the face of suffering one has no right to turn away.... When someone suffers and it is not you, he/she comes first.... To watch over a man who grieves is a more urgent duty than to think of God." (Elie Wiesel)

It is not anything I'll seek out purposely, rather I believe if and when the occasions present themselves they will do so as part of the flow of life. For now I try to live in the present, for as Emerson writes: "What lies behind us and what lies before us is nothing compared to what lies within us" - which can only be contemplated moment by moment.

Only by living in harmony and peace, uncluttered by either past or present, there is a chance to experience that space beyond emotions, beyond the ego, in the stillness at the centre of one's being. For it is from this stillness that perception of reality proceeds.

Via Negativa II

Quotations from Matthew Fox's "Original Blessing".

If we could learn to learn from pain
even as it grasps us....

- Adrienne Rich

From suffering I have learned this: That whoever is sore wounded by love will never be made whole unless she embrace the very same love which wounded her.

- Mechtild of Magdeburg

The life in me trickles away, days of grief have gripped me.
At night-time, sickness saps my bones,

I am gnawed by wounds that never sleep

It has thrown me into the mud

where I am no better than dust and ashes.

- Job 30:16,17

It is one thing to empty. It is an even deeper thing to be emptied. Pain does this. It empties us, if we allow it to. Facing the darkness, admitting the pain, allowing the pain to be pain, is never easy. If we fail to let pain be pain ... then pain will haunt us in nightmarish ways. We will become pain's victims instead of the healers we might become.

Both Adrienne Rich and Mechtild of Magdeburg ... have the insight to pain: enter in; befriend it. Jesus had the same insight: love your enemies.

There is no way to let go of pain without first embracing it and loving it ...

First comes the embrace, the allowing of pain to be pain; next comes the journey with the pain; then the letting go, but in a deliberate manner, into a fire, into a cauldron where the pain's energy will serve us... Pain is meant to give us energy.

First, pain helps us to understand other people in pain. Pain is profoundly social, it is eminently shareable.

Secondly, pain helps us to understand pleasure and to criticize it... - not only by carving us into deeper people and ridding us of layers on layers of cover-ups of both pleasure and pain, but also by allowing us to experience

how the true pleasures in our lives are of the simplest, most shareable kind. Pain destroys the illusion of false, that is elitist, pleasures.

A third way in which pain enlivens us and gives us energy is that embarking on pain and making that journey toughens us up. It makes us stronger by testing us and demanding discipline of us that we did not know we were capable of.

Sensitivity, which includes sensitivity to pain, also demands strength. A new kind of strength, it is true; the strength of endurance and perseverance; the strength that solitude requires; the strength that vulnerability is about. This strength does not come from willing it or gritting our teeth.

There is a strength learned from suffering that cannot be learned in any other way. For suffering tests the depth of our love of life and relationship even when and especially because relationships are so often the cause of our suffering.

Still another energy derived from suffering is the manner in which letting pain be pain links us with others. Not privatized pain or pain kept to oneself or the wallowing in one's own pain, but pain shared.

We can become so alone, so deeply alone and emptied in our pain, that we have to go out to others with whom we can share this dark, dark journey.

"When I can no longer bear my loneliness I take it to my friends. For I must share it with all the friends of God. "Do you suffer?" "So do I!" "

- Mechtild of Magdeburg

Still another way in which pain energizes us is in opening us up.

Our pain is a cosmic pain - and for this reason Simone Weil advises us to "identify with the universe itself."

This cosmic relationship heals, for "everything that is less than the universe is subject to suffering." All creatures of the universe suffer pain - pain unites us.

Pain, like pleasure, is a cosmic experience. It urges us to return to cosmic celebration, cosmic healing, cosmic connection- making, cosmic rituals, cosmic awareness. Here the cosmic Christ plays a special role, for in this figure we have an affirmation of the cosmic pain of God.

Suffering is built into the birth process of the entire cosmos. It has to do with sacrifice and yielding, with receiving and birthing forth.

What we must do ultimately is to let go of pain. Ideally, by entering into it we become able to breathe so much freedom from within the pain that the deepest kind of letting go can truly occur. For this to happen, the naming of the pain, the letting it be pain for a while, is essential. For the Via Negativa is not an end in itself; it is only part of a four-part cycle repeated endlessly - "eternally," Meister Eckhart says - in our lifetimes. [Via Positiva, Negativa, Creativa, Transformativa] There arrives the time when we need to let go even of letting go, when we let the Via Negativa itself go.

Reveille

"If we are only partially awake there must be some way of waking fully or of showing why this is not possible"

Of the six responses received, five need at least half a page of explanation. In view of the limited amount of space remaining in this Newsletter I am including the latest and shortest contribution from Enid. ***Three glasses of wine on an empty stomach!***

This has some surprising affinities with other suggested solutions and offers interesting experimental opportunities.

NEXT MEETING - 10 AM FOR 10.30 SUNDAY 18th SEPTEMBER AT 81, GREVILLE STREET, CHATSWOOD Ph 4197394

We propose to carry on with the new format and DIALOGUE from 10-30 to 1.30. I am still hopeful of booking one of the Adyar Library tapes referred to in the last Newsletter. Donald is home and I asked him if he would tell us something about the DIALOGUE meetings he attended in Europe and the USA after lunch.

Issue No.13 - 10 October 94

Meetings are held at 10 am on the third Sunday of every month at 81 Greville Street, Chatswood and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out for themselves, through the process of

dialogue, whether transformation of consciousness, enlightenment or whatever you want to call it, can come about. September Meeting

There is now an interesting interflow between meetings and Newsletters and the rate of flow seems to have developed such momentum that we are unable to delve into many of the issues which are raised. Donald brought back news of some of the overseas groups. It seems that our bewilderment about the optimum size of groups is global and most seem to operate at about our number. Our decision to start with a few minutes silence is also the usual practice with some other groups. Apologies to Elsa Harting for failing to acknowledge her "Thoughts on my Healing" in the September issue. We found a poem that, I think, mirrors it perfectly:

"Elsa's Song"

***Go not too near a House of Rose-
The depredation of a Breeze
Or inundation of a Dew
Alarms its walls away-
Nor try to tie the Butterfly,
Nor climb the Bars of Ecstasy,
In insecurity to lie
Is Joy's insuring quality.***

Emily Dickinson Poem 1434

Another very positive development is that by far the greatest proportion of the Newsletter content is now coming from you and not from me. Thanks and keep it up. Whatever you have to say will be welcome.

Following our discussion on 'listening' at the last meeting we asked Donald to write up the contribution he made on the day. He has responded by letting me print the following extracts from the manuscript of his new book with the working title "The Spirit of Dialogue".

Communication, Communion, Wholeness

One of the great human cries is, "Understand me. Please understand me". Then what follows is, "Why can't you hear what I so urgently want to tell you" - or "Isn't there anyone who will listen". "Hear my cry! Hear not only my cry for help but for you to hear my insight, my story, my song."

"Listen. Please".

Such anguish is present in us all. The need to be loved, to be accepted as I am and to be heard. Love me, hear me whether I have anything to give or nothing worth giving or worth receiving. And probably without realizing that unless I can listen to you in the very way I desire that you listen to me - openly, generously, freely, following me wherever I go - that until I can so listen and so hear - is it possible for another person to be ready and able to receive what I am expressing.

Can I get the attention I can't give? Can I receive from you what I do not give?

Why do I expect someone to understand me when I am incapable of understanding them? Until I can and do give what I so desire to receive, i.e., your full attention and comprehension, it is rather foolish of me to expect open listening from you.

And so we have to come to the very essence of dialogue: communication and communion.

*One must not only **listen** to others and to what is coming in through the senses - ears, eyes and nose - but **listen** to the responses within oneself..... and of equal importance; to listen (when I speak) to what I am saying, how I am saying it, my gestures, my intensity, my certainty, my hesitancy, my attitude, intention to impress you with my knowledge, or to justify my proposition.*

In other words, until I am willing and able to be a friendly, understanding listener, what chance is there of my finding even one person to hear and understand what I have to say?

Though we talk of sharing, what actually do we share besides information? What about openness, clarity, friendliness - without which qualities can there be any mutual understanding of anything?

And so to dialogue and its importance in relationship - between individuals and collectively, socially.....

Listening

The miracle of dialogue is in listening. Listening allows a transformation of consciousness. To listen openly to all that is being said, without making something of it - simply to hear is to realize what goes on - to hear, not only the meaning intended, the limitations in its expression, but to have a profound awareness of what lies beyond the words permits another dimension to enter the proceedings, a friendliness that brings a sense of well being - a beneficence. Whenever this blessing comes, everything changes, for everything is included and a shared, common meaning emerges in its group.

As only one person talks at any time, all the others are listeners. Listening is the essence of understanding. As listening deepens, so does the capacity of the person speaking to penetrate. Why do I not listen intently? Why am I (so often) not interested? Why is my listening so selective?

To really listen is very difficult. To listen openly and to hear without comparing "what is being said" with "what I already know" demands attentive awareness.

Listening and Awareness

When taking part in dialogue I am listening to other people I am reacting inwardly, and it is so easy to shut off from listening to you while I figure out what I am going to say.

Internalising what is coming in through the ears and eyes and intellectualising what I am desiring to say makes for a lot of mental noise.

The reality of dialogue is uncovering the many facets and layers of a problem or a question until the deeper levels (its essence), begin to come into consciousness. This demands friendliness and patience, goodwill and intelligence.

Russia and the Collapse of Communism

*Gorbachev initiated a dialogue with his own people. He started talking about the facts of Russian society, its failures, economic stagnation, corruption, loss of moral values and the disappearance of freedom. He popularized two words ; **glasnost**, which means 'giving voice' to what was previously 'unspoken', making public what had earlier been kept secret: **perestroika**, which simply means 'restructuring or reconstruction'. Both profound words, opening up as they did whole areas of consciousness to common questions, common visions and common sense.*

Out of this dialogue an enormous energy was released, a great turbulence erupted transforming the national consciousness. The revelation spread rapidly, a tremendous revolution swept, not only through Russia, but the world.

Now dialogue and questioning traditional practices is gathering relevance everywhere, not only in terms of political, religious, philosophical enquiry, in politics, medicine and law, but into individual lives and affairs. Such dialogue includes every domain of living on earth, of change and the swift power to transform and points out to every discerning mind the necessity to break away from the past, awakens the realization that the twin goals of freedom and security, as envisioned in western societies, has to be resolved, has to have a free - flowing reality, a co - existence in our institutions.

To dialogue is to be aware of limitations and falseness, not only in what others are saying but hearing the limitations and errors in my own utterances.

Donald Ingram Smith

In discussing these issues after the meeting at Newport an interesting question:

1. The principles of DIALOGUE, as summarised in the last edition, require us to suspend our own points of view and put the group interest before our own.

If in the course of DIALOGUE you say something that really sets me on my heels. that is, a basic assumption is challenged - what do I do? Do I leave it and, in the group interest, re-focus on the progress of the discussion or do I try to come to grips with the 'internal' confusion even if it means abandoning the group enquiry? - Ed.)

Margot's Puzzles

I am interested in the way 'ego' works, in the NOW group and elsewhere, and how it affects what we say and how we react to others.

"Dialogue" occurs most readily, we believe, when we listen attentively; we accept what we hear; we restrain our need to rush in with an account of our own experience. This is a difficult exercise for me because I mostly believe I am right.

All of this implies a need for the ego to be contained as much as possible. By ego, in this context, I mean an individual's need for her/his world view to be seen as the definitive one. It stands to reason that there are as many world views as there are individuals in the world, none of them necessarily better or worse than any other. It is my ego which allows me to think that my world view is better than anyone else's.

I am trying to make a link between the ego and the validity of what people say in an area where the ego is inextricably bound up with an individual's world view. Or so it seems. My problem is that I am unable to take seriously a person who believes in the suspension of ego, but who acts in an ego-driven way. I first encountered this dilemma with Krishnamurti, whom I have seen talking on video tapes. K used to preach absence of ego, and at the same time was manifestly vain and ego-driven on occasions.

So two things puzzle me:

1. The way some people seem to be locked into a world view which does not allow for the existence of other, presumably equally valid, world views.

2. The way some people preach the suspension of ego but behave in an ego-driven way.

Margot Mann

(In discussing the above at Glen Davis another interesting question came up:

2. Most of us are prepared to suspend our opinions in the interests of the process of DIALOGUE but are we also prepared to change them?

I thought you might be interested in DIALOGUING our way through this question and/or No 1 opposite - Ed.)

Reveille

"If we are only partially awake there must be some way of waking fully or of showing why this is not possible".

At an Omega meeting in August we talked about this question. The Omega group did not think it could be done in the sense of some activity and that the only approach is to do nothing and let what we are become apparent. Perhaps in the sense intended by the next contributor.

*You don't need to leave your room.
Remain sitting at your table and listen.
Don't even listen, simply wait.
Don't even wait.
Be quite still and solitary.
The world will freely offer itself to you,
To be unmasked, it has no choice.
It will roll in ecstasy at your feet.*

F Kafka

(Enid is finding out where this is from)

NEXT MEETING - 10 AM FOR 10.30 SUNDAY 16th OCTOBER AT 81, GREVILLE STREET, CHATSWOOD Ph 4197394

We propose to carry on with the new format and DIALOGUE from 10-30 to 1.30. One of the long awaited Adyar Library tapes which includes exchanges between John Wren-Lewis and U G Krishnamurti is ours at last and will be available for the afternoon session.

The Sunday 16th "Search for Meaning", after the 6pm ABC News, will feature Dr Ann Faraday. (Repeated Friday 21st.)

Issue No 14 - 1st November 94

Meetings are held at 10am on the third Sunday of every month at 81, Greville Street, Chatswood and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out whether, through the process of DIALOGUE, transformation of consciousness, awakening to what we really are, or whatever you want to call it, can come about. October Meeting

Several of the questions canvassed in the October newsletter came under review at the last meeting. We had the opportunity to inspect the clay feet of U G Krishnamurti as part of our ongoing guru verification campaign but the issue which really brought the meeting to life was the question of whether we are prepared to change. It seems that most of us, but not all, see the need to suspend our opinions in DIALOGUE but actually abandoning opinions is a different kettle of fish. Someone suggested that even suspending a strongly held point of view is not really possible or desirable. As the group

interest is in the possibility of mind change (see above), what was going on?

A challenge was made that we, as a group, are not serious enough. There is a levity in our approach which mocks the gravity of the enquiry. Seriousness understood as an academic underpinning of views by reference to the published opinions of "great" minds" present and past and the application of academic method.

The exchanges became increasingly heated. The lack of seriousness charges gave rise to counter charges that the 'serious' were confusing reliance on external authority, knowledge and learning with seriousness.

One member claimed to have seen through the hypocrisy and closed-mindedness of the group and had just decided never to attend another meeting. This generated strong responses from people who thought this a gross misrepresentation of what was going on.

My response was a mixture of confusion and anger; the confusion arising from perplexity that a regular attender could have such a negative view of the group. Also the thought that the view might be wholly or partly justified. The anger arose from the way in which the rejection had been expressed which I thought unnecessarily offensive. I felt like suggesting the complainant put the decision into effect immediately but realised this was an opportunity to see how the group handled its first major conflict.

The DIALOGUE continued. The group persevered and it became clear that one side of the discussion was unable to suspend let alone drop their assumptions under any circumstances. We should have taken the early warning more seriously. Given that the serious ones were not prepared to suspend their point of view, They were asked why they had joined a DIALOGUE group and continued to come to meetings. In the hope of converting us perhaps to the point of view that can not be suspended? Or were they group junkies? This line of enquiry led to more heat and drove some of us into the kitchen and the preparation of a calming soup.

After lunch, the DIALOGUE continued on a more even keel with the 'frivolous' faction taking the initiative in trying to effect whatever reconciliation was needed to keep the group together. I showed a copy of the letter from Jim Findlen in the USA Dialogue (to be sent out in early November) to the person who had decided to leave - it 'resonated.' Who knows where all this might lead over the next few days or weeks. Will the serious return for more or are they already seeking less prickly pastures. At least the group responded in a way which held to the openness of DIALOGUE, did not sink to personal abuse, and so leaving the door wide for the disgruntled to return. In retrospect, the lack of 'seriousness' charge may have been triggered because the group was not serious about the agenda of those who complained.

On the other hand, I have heard two comments made recently to the effect that the DIALOGUE group is, or is in danger of becoming, too intellectual.

Is this so? Could those who feel this way bring it up at a meeting? Does this complaint arise from the way we approach the blockages and obstacles to clarity? Are we too analytical, too much in love with sound of our own thinking to become serious enough about DIALOGUE? Is that what the serious ones are trying to say?

If so, what alternative, non-intellectual form could the enquiry take?

Books

Mind Science

An East West Dialogue

This book records of a the Harvard Mind Science Symposium which took place on March 24, 1991 at the Kresge Auditorium, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge. The aim of the meeting was to establish links between Eastern and western mind sciences in the hope that the result would be a synthesis which would provide the basis for a 'great leap forward'. The speakers: The Dalai Lama, Herbert Benson, Robert Thurman, Howard Gardener & Daniel Goleman

The book is full of interesting material, I found the results of Benson's research on meditating Tibetan monks amazing. My purpose in mentioning it here is a summary by Howard Gardener (p86) which includes an interesting definition of DIALOGUE.

"... I want end by mentioning a topic I know absolutely nothing about, and that is consciousness. One of the fascinating trends in the last ten years or so has been the number of cognitivists, scientists and rationalists who have become interested in consciousness, both in a computational sense - that is, how you model consciousness with various kinds of computational systems - and in the phenomenal aspects of consciousness. How do we think about that?

He then goes on to mention five different ways in which people are thinking about it:

1 Reductionist. Nothing special about consciousness. As soon as we understand the neurones we will know all there is to know. This is currently the dominant view among scientists.

2. Two different realms. The realm of consciousness, which is the realm of experience and the realm of matter, which science tries to explain.

3. Yes, we can explain consciousness scientifically but it is going to require an entirely new science. (See note on Roger Penrose)

4. The ecumenical way. This involves drawing on all the knowledge and experience we can. We should learn about consciousness from art as well as science; from computers but also from reading Proust or Virginia Woolf, from human as well as artificial intelligence, to the East as well as the West. This is non-controversial and somewhat vacuous.

5. Alternative five is somewhat less vacuous and I call it ecumenicism with mutual shaping.

In mutual shaping the question is not simply, do you talk to each other?, but rather, do you actually affect the way in which the two speakers think about things? Do you actually seek to restructure people's beliefs, and do you restructure their actions? I would say that a full-blown exploration of mind and consciousness occurs when the participants not only speak and listen to each other, but actually put their own views at risk. And they say, "There is something that the sciences are saying" on the one hand or "There is something that the meditators are saying" on the other. "There is something that might actually make me think differently about things, and go about my daily practice differently." If that happens, then we will have entered into a genuine dialogue, where the ultimate outcome remains open. And, if the dialogue proceeds well, the final synthesis will be greater than, and different from, what any of the participants initially brought to the table."

Sudden versus Gradual

This issue comes up in one form or another at nearly every meeting. Gladney has provided a foundation for further DIALOGUE by summarising the two cases in the form of relevant extracts from a book on the subject entitled Sudden & Gradual by Peter Gregory.

Gladney's contribution takes up the final section, below:

These (jumbled) excerpts from SUDDEN & GRADUAL: **Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought**, (edited by Peter Gregory, 1987) are not meant to argue for or against any particular view, position, or conclusion, either practical or doctrinal. You may take them as it suits you to take them, to understand them as it suits you to understand them.

Hsieh Ling-yun (385-433) in his *Pien tsung lun* (On Distinguishing the Goal), written in the early decades of the 5th century as a defense of Tao-sheng's (ca360-434) theory of sudden enlightenment, was rebutted by Hui-kuai's *Chien-wu lun* (On Gradual Enlightenment). As Tsung-mi points out, within Chinese Buddhist discourse the terms (sudden & gradual) are applied both to enlightenment and to the teachings, as well as to practice or cultivation. Their usage is (said to be) highly nuanced. Yet at least one author claims that the terms "sudden teaching", "sudden practice", and "sudden enlightenment" more often carried affective or rhetorical power as slogans rather than demarcating clearly articulated doctrinal positions.

The *Avatamsaka* was generally accepted as having been the first teaching preached by the Buddha immediately after his

Enlightenment. It was "sudden" because it directly revealed the content of the Buddha's enlightenment as he experienced it under the bodhi tree; in it the Buddha made no effort to accommodate its message to his audience's limited ability to understand. In this context, where the sudden teaching is contrasted with the expedient teachings, the word *tun* (tun-wu intuitive understanding, direct and immediate comprehension of unity) connotes "immediate" in its literal sense of "being without an intermediary", (immediate, in one glance).

1. The nature of *enlightenment*: does it admit of degrees or is it indivisible? Can it be approached through a series of successive approximations or can it only be realized all at once *in its entirety*. 2. The nature of *delusion*: is it fundamentally an error in perception or is it woven throughout the whole fabric of the personality. Is enlightenment therefore more like opening the eyes or overcoming a bad habit? 3. The nature of *ethical and religious practice*: is it something that must be consciously and conscientiously cultivated as a

-essary precondition for enlightenment, or is it rather the --,,,)ntaneous and natural outflowing of the very experience of enlightenment itself and hence something to which no special attention need be directed? 4. The nature of *language*: is enlightenment ineffable or can something meaningful in fact be said about it? If language can only function apophatically to say what enlightenment is not, how are students to be instructed on the path?

The mirror metaphor is well known in India, among the metaphors in the *Upanishads*. In the *Sevetasvetara-upanishad shad* 2.14 we find: Just as a *dust-covered mirror* Glitters like fire when it is cleaned, So does one who has recognized the *atman's* essence Attain the goal, deliverance from anxiety.

The Taoist Chuang-tzu (around 300BC) resorted frequently to the mirror metaphor in order to illustrate dispassionateness, passivity, detachment & disinterestedness: the perfect man uses his mind like a mirror. He wrote: When a mirror is clear, it is because it has not the least amount of dust on it. If there is any dust, the mirror is not clear.

An earlier image, the loss of a reflection due to the ruffling of still water by a slight breeze, would have an even more ancient history than the mirror metaphor. Hsun-Tsu (300-230BC) in his *Dispersed Clouds* compared the human mind to water in a basin; undisturbed it gives a good reflection of the whole self.

In the *Huai-nan-tzu*, a collection of philosophical essays from around the middle of the 2nd-C BC, it is written: A clear mirror cannot be soiled by dust.

Asanga (4th century) in his *Madhyanta-Vibhaga I.21-22* (The Discrimination between the Mean and the Extremes) wrote: If there were no passions, All men would be liberated. If there were no purity Their effort would be fruitless. Emptiness neither has nor lacks the passions; It is neither pure nor impure. The mind is pure by nature, But soiled by adventitious passions, guest dust.

Gregory of Nyssa (337-400) wrote: *The spirit is like a mirror*, receiving a form from the object that appears in it. The nature, which is subordinate to the spirit, cleaves to it, and in turn receives its adornment. (But by reflecting matter, having turned its back on the all-good, it models in itself nothing but the deformity of matter; thus evil is born.)

Chih-i (538-597), writing in 594 in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, (The Great Calming & Contemplation) listed six stages of identity, or six identities, to elucidate the relationship between text and practice:

1. Identity in principle. This affirms inherent Buddhahood.
2. Verbal identity. Here intellectual understanding that we are Buddhas is gained.
3. Identity of practice. Here behavior and mental state are brought (through skillful means) into correspondence with the prior verbal formulations.
4. Identity of resemblance. One's thoughts and evaluations approach what has been expounded in the sutras of previous Buddhas.
5. Identity of partial truth. Ignorance weakens and wisdom becomes increasingly prominent.
6. Ultimate identity. Buddhahood, the final fruit.

Yet, at every stage along the path there is the temptation to claim final attainment, particularly when one's attainment is already (or seems) profound (following identity 2.) Chih-i while uncompromising in his nondual assertion of the identity of good and evil, is equally uncompromising in upholding the necessity of moral restraints. Chih-i felt that a perfect teaching that is completely unadulterated with the provisional, or mediate, cannot even be spoken. In the last analysis it can have no features at all. It is the expedient (means) consisting of directly contemplating the emptiness of all dharmas. The "featureless repentance" implies this same perfect teaching wherein every category of analysis and every, assumed dualism is finally shown to be "empty". The perfect or featureless repentance is one that recognizes that since one's own mind is void of itself, there is no subject in whom sin or merit could inhere. Yet the fact that the practitioner is identical with Buddha at every stage of the path does not mitigate the fact that there are stages ... and the strenuous effort necessary for deepening one's insight never contradicts inherent Buddhahood.

T'an-lun (?-627) is quoted in this verse: Having peeled away one layer after another, what do you find? Purity. [to this T'an-lun replied] If there were an onion it would be possible to peel it; but since there is fundamentally no onion whatsoever, what is there to peel?

The verse of Shen-hsiu (606?-706) said: The body is the tree of awakening (enlightenment); The mind is like a clear mirror. Be unceasingly diligent in wiping and polishing it So that it will be without dust.

Hui-neng (638-713) in the *Platform Sutra* answered with this verse: Awakening entails no tree at all, Nor does the clear mirror entail any material frame. The Buddha-nature is eternally pure; Where could it be stained by dust?

For Shen-hui (684-758) suddenness is a corollary to the identity of enlightenment and delusion. ... one cannot imitate the apprehension of truth, nor can one assay or predict the course of realization, much less bring it about by attempting to reproduce in action its theoretical description. Sudden, or direct, enlightenment is only possible through enlightenment itself. Direct, complete awareness is non-mediate awareness.

Tsung-mi (780-841) enumerated five different ways in which the terms sudden & gradual are used: 1. Gradual cultivation followed by sudden enlightenment; like chopping a tree down: gradual chopping, sudden fall 2. Sudden cultivation followed by gradual enlightenment; sudden resolve, gradual achievement through practice, as one's skill increases 3. Gradual cultivation and gradual enlightenment; like climbing a nine-story tower: a gradually increasing elevation enables a gradually widening view 4. Sudden enlightenment followed by gradual cultivation; sudden (initial) insight, gradual extension 5. Sudden enlightenment and sudden cultivation; solely due to preparation undertaken in previous lives: there is no such thing as a free lunch. Tsung-mi distinguishes the enlightenment of complete realization (cases 1, 2, 3); and the enlightenment of initial insight (cases 4 & 5). Tsung-mi's fullest description of sudden enlightenment occurs in the *Ch'an Chart*, where he says:

While awakening from delusion is sudden the transformation of an unenlightened person into an enlightened person is gradual.

For Tsung-mi, sudden enlightenment is the experience in which one sees that one's true nature is, and always has been, wholly identical with that of all Buddhas. The passage that Tsung-mi cites in both the *Ch'an Preface* and the *Inquiry into the Origin of Man* as canonical authority for his description of the highest teaching of the Buddha comes from the *Avatamsaka*:

There is not a single sentient being that is not fully endowed with the wisdom of the Tathagata. It is only on account of their deluded thinking, erroneous views, and attachments that they do not succeed in realizing it. When they become free from deluded thinking, the all-comprehending wisdom, the spontaneous wisdom, and the unobstructed wisdom will

then be manifest before them ... At that time the Tathagata with his unobstructed pure eye of wisdom universally beheld all sentient beings throughout the universe and said,

"How amazing! How amazing! How can it be that these sentient beings are fully endowed with the wisdom of the Tathagata and yet, being ignorant and confused, do not know it, and can not see it? I must teach them the noble path, enabling them to be forever free from deluded thinking and to achieve for themselves the seeing of the broad and vast wisdom of the Tathagata within themselves, and so to be no different from the Buddhas."

For Tsung-mi the necessity of commencing a process of gradual cultivation following the initial experience of (sudden) enlightenment is based on the sheer tenacity of the karmic residue of past actions. As graphically illustrated in the diagram that occurs at the end of the *Ch'an Preface*, both the process of delusion and that of enlightenment are based on the dynamic ambivalence of the (....) which contains both an enlightened and an unenlightened aspect. The following ten stages of phenomenal evolution are enumerated by Tsung-mi: 1. sudden insight 2. resolution, vows 3. cultivation of the six perfections or practices 4. development of compassion and wisdom 5. realisation of emptiness of self, counteracting pride 6. realisation of the emptiness of things, counteracting possessiveness 7. mastery of form 8. mastery of mind 9. freedom from thought 10. attainment of Buddhahood; realising that, since the mind is of its very essence free from thoughts, there is ultimately no distinction between the various stages in the process of realization of enlightenment, all of which are identical with *intrinsic enlightenment*.

Ching-hsuan (943-1027) wrote: One only streaks the mirror by polishing it;

Al-Ghazzali (1059-1111) wrote: Imagine an oxidized [metal] mirror, with rust covering its surface, its clarity obscured, unable to register images. Whoever wishes to restore this mirror must carry out two tasks. He must first wipe and polish it, so as to remove the rust. Then he has to position the mirror in front of the object which he wants to be reflected. Thus the human soul has the capacity to become a mirror which can at any time be oriented to the true.

Supposedly, the defenders of sudden enlightenment base their doctrines on the famous passage from the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* where it is said that all sentient beings possess the nature of a Buddha. From this a fundamental principle of the doctrine of sudden enlightenment is established: "spiritual cultivation cannot be cultivated."

Afterword by Tu Wei-Ming (p446-457, in Gregory 1987): The process that leads to enlightenment is always gradual, whereas the experience itself, no matter how well one is prepared, is always sudden. We do not depart from where we are here and now in order to appropriate what we do not have. Rather, the way is near at hand and inseparable from the ordinary experience of our daily lives. Paradoxically, we must make the existential decision to find our way; otherwise, we will lose it to the extent that we become unaware that it is originally ours. Nevertheless, because it is originally ours, we can get it by simply exercising our will to do so. Willing is the necessary and sufficient condition for us to get it. The way is ours, sudden and simultaneously, when we will that this be done.

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Nowletter Issue No 15

This page is the NOW component of this month's circular which, as you see, is devoted primarily to the latest USA Newsletter.

The November meeting looked at the possibility, raised at the October meet, that the suspension of deeply held opinions might just be another good idea and impossible in practice.

Some of the group think that ideas can be put on or taken off at will, like hats. I think this is only partially true. When we get down to what we consider to be really important, the fundamental "truths", we can no longer take them off, they are what we are. I could as easily take my off my head. The opinion or viewpoint has become what I think I am. The examples that spring to mind are the various religious belief systems. Can the devout Buddhist, Christian, Theosophist or whatever really suspend the religious point of view? The challenge was presented to us by a dedicated environmentalist who was not going to abandon the planet in the interests of DIALOGUE.

My newly developed assumption, following this line of enquiry, is that opinions remain active, whatever we might claim about putting them aside, until the insightful revelation of their falseness causes them to fall away. I expect to receive your counter attack at the next meeting. I don't think this represents a threat to Dialogue. It would be a matter of "admitting" all views" rather than "suspending one's own views". This is what I think we do anyway.

Another question arising from the October meeting was how to handle the disruptive situations. How do we cope with people who seem to have unshakeable agendas? It helps if we can see them as carriers of assumptions. If the DIALOGUE is working it will reveal the nature of the assumptions and the necessary adjustments will come about on both or 'all' sides. This leads us to the question of seriousness again. Seriousness in this context seems to involve a loyalty to the process, insistence on exploring the assumptions, sticking to DIALOGUE and avoiding the fall into debate. *(Concludes on page 9)*

(Read page 10 before this)

Another interesting letter from Wm. Van den Heuvel appears in the USA Newsletter. I thought we might submit an Australian contribution to this DIALOGUE and propose to draft a letter as the basis for a joint contribution. However, it might be better to handle it as a series of separate submissions. What do you think? I have a few expanded A3 size copies for anyone who wants to participate. In any case, your contribution and comment will be welcome when we come together in December *(Alan)*

DQN included an extract from our July NOWletter on the Van den H - S Singh DIALOGUE which I have removed to save space.

Travel - There will be gaps in future meetings. Enid has gone to France for some months and John and Mishka are off to Poland.

Meetings - 1. A new DIALOGUE group has formed and meets on the first Saturday of every month. 12.30pm Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road, North Ryde. For details ring Barry Hora (043) 622843.

NOW Group continues to meet on the third Sunday.

Issue No.16 - 1st January 95

Meetings are held at 10am on the third Sunday of every month at 81, Greville Street, Chatswood (see note on first Saturday meetings, page 4) and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out whether, through the process of DIALOGUE, transformation of consciousness, awakening to what we really are, or whatever you want to call it, can come about.

Editorial

It seems to me that the value of a Newsletter like this lies in the opportunity to share our views and experiences in a way that is usually not possible at a meeting. The pressure of the group flow or lack of time to consider one's ideas, choice of words, etc., often makes it difficult to get some interesting point across. I am hoping to shift towards a higher proportion of contributory content in 95 with the emphasis on the direct experience of members. I would also like to cover book reviews, etc., in terms of the individual reviewer's response and explanation of why it seems relevant to their understanding of the process of DIALOGUE. The exposure of our opinions is part of the DIALOGUE process and what better way than to put them in writing.

We start this new approach with an exchange between me and Donald followed by a drawing together of strands provided by a number of you on the question of Unity. I hope to include a wonderfully idiosyncratic contribution to the Van den Heuvel / Sardar Singh DIALOGUE from Rome Warren in the February issue.

A letter from Glen Davis, 29 October 94

Dear Donald,

I thought I should record our meeting on the 27th because it turned out, for me, to be a wonderful example of DIALOGUE actually working. We didn't set out to have a "DIALOGUE" but somehow it came about. The following is my story of the morning. I realise yours might be quite different.

(It was different - Donald's view of the day follows mine -an interesting example of how different DIALOGUE can be for participants at the same session).

We started off by reviewing the November Newsletter and this led to discussion of the Sudden v Gradual business and Gladney's report and commentary. I think, at this point, we were considering how the gradualist approach provided a "respectable" way of avoiding the issue by permanently postponing the necessary action or handing the responsibility to gurus, churches, belief systems, etc.

This reminded me of a recent experience. Early one morning the previous week, I had been thinking how reluctant I am to do the simple thing, how much easier to complicate it all by reading, thinking, writing Newsletters, etc. I decided to put Kafka's recommendation to the test. After about an hour, the following occurred:

*If we stop long enough for 'what is'
To operate on what we have become,
Instead of the other way round,
What we really are will be revealed.*

All quite obvious and straightforward but also too simple for the 'left brain only' approach which is the way I am programmed to operate.

Our duo-dialogue continued by looking at this and I mentioned Traherne's affirmation of desire, which I have always felt to be fundamental or true in spite of Buddhist insistence that desire is the root of suffering. Coincidentally, you had been reading "This Matter of Culture" and drew my attention to a comment by K. (p216 and 217) in answer to a student's question on how to become desireless, Krishnamurti says,

".....What is desire? It is energy is it not?the problem is not how to curtail energy, but how to maintain and increase it, how to make it independent and continuous - but not at the behest of any belief or society - so that it becomes the movement towards truth, God. Then energy has quite a different significance. As a pebble thrown into a calm lake creates an ever widening circle, so the action of energy in the direction of what is true creates the waves of a new culture. Then, energy is limitless, immeasurable, and that energy is God."

As we were talking, I saw the desire, not as my desire but, in Traherne's words, God's desire. To use K's words, not my energy but THE energy, the movement of "What is". And this extended the Kafka-Omega Group* insight and deepened my understanding of "it is in the perfection of creation that we are engaged".

It seems as though "What is" desperately desires our participation.

So this morning's meeting turned into a very effective DIALOGUE. It did not lead to a change of view in a total and final sense but it re-presented and integrated earlier insights at a deeper level and thereby weakened the grip of the separative world view I carry as a shield before me.

To the extent that this happened there was change. This summary fails to communicate the significance of what happened. I don't think it can be communicated, it can only happen.

This, for me, is what DIALOGUE is about. A way of going deeper instead of merely going further. And to revert to a comment made earlier in our DIALOGUE, about the introduction of Traherne, Krishnamurti and other outsiders to the enquiry. What they have to say has absolutely no relevance to the DIALOGUE except that poets have often expressed insight with greater clarity than most of us are capable. Their expressions, however, are meaningless unless the insights have already arisen in one's own enquiry. Their statements have no value as authority.

It is as though the forerunners have created an insightful language. We can qualify to speak this language only as the result of sharing the insights, not by merely learning the words. And the wonderful thing might be that we do already understand the meanings of this language, in its totality, but at a level we are determined not to explore. (Perhaps we should DIALOGUE this. It seems to follow naturally from the above.)

Alan Mann

Donald re-membered what he said as follows:

A Duo- Dialogue at Baringa

One outcome of our dialogue was a series of glimpses into the meaning of desire.

The teaching, in most Eastern Religions, has been the denial of desire; the reason given is that it is the prime cause of humanity's woes and transgressions and the major distraction away from the true path to THAT whatever it is we assume to be sublime ecstasy, ultimate freedom, etc.

Yet, the desire to do good or to refrain from evil is also desire. Indeed, any longing to do or to be anything other than what I am now is "desire". Are such traditionally accepted urges undesirable? Can our inquiry or any search for change be condemned as desire? Is the desire to change society or transform myself false?

We probed the multiple facets and directions that ever-changing and often contrary desires take. For instance: a desire to be quiet and alone is soon followed by a yearning for activity and company, the longing for freedom is countered by desire for security. To go on pursuing these sequential opposites without probing their common, underlying source is a kind of madness and a perpetuation of duality. And yet, this is our habitual practice to pursue each successive, ephemeral urge and appetite, or sorting through our many hoped-for goals and allotting our priorities. What madness to waste my very life by scattering my energy (in every direction) on passing desires in the hope of coming upon Real Fulfilment (abiding wholeness, happiness, etc.) why permit still further fragmentation of energy on such a confused way of living?

Why not stop, wait watch? Be the observer of my actions rather than the driven actor? Would it be possible to allow all energy to gather in my body-mind? to permit my transient desires to dissolve their force into one whole movement, one single desire say for "Enlightenment in my daily living". I saw, of course that this would mean: Being the observer of whatever comes into consciousness. It means watching my habitual, ever-changing yet ever re-occurring urges. It means realising that my ultimate fear is : that unless I keep on setting up goals that I hope and believe I (and humanity) can achieve I am, at base, nobody, nothing. And, being a self-conscious entity - the fear of not being anything more than an organism, similar to every other living creature on earth and subject to the same natural laws, is too daunting, too impossible to contemplate. To question ourselves might mean the realisation that all humanity's and, so, all our own work and effort may be a tremendous illusion leading us nowhere.

Such a possibility is too challenging to be permitted to enter consciousness. It must be denied. To question humanity's superiority, control, achievements, to suggest that all the struggle has been in vain is unthinkable. Our accomplishments are so obvious, doubt has no place. So goes our thinking.

And yet, and yet.....the ever onward, ever upward ego ascent of humankind may be a myth, a miss-take.

Through our labours the whole world as well as our civilised institutions are out of kilter. The tumbling chaos of

nations and societies world-wide exposes a vast delusion, destructive on a massive scale. The time is here to question the unquestioned, traditional (and now almost unconscious, because habitual) beliefs in our future. It is always the future results of our labours that drive us on.

What we - all of us - are doing now is the real domain of dialogue. Focused Desire, in the sense we talked about it yesterday is into what is happening now.... enquiring into the meaning of enlightenment in daily living. All else is illusion.

Donald Ingram Smith

Unity of Vision

Erik supplied an Omega tape of a talk by Colin Wilson entitled "The Expansion of Human Consciousness". Margot, Enid and I listened to it at Glen Davis a couple of months ago and I, as usual, made a few notes.

Wilson's first book, 'The Outsider', is about people who have had a feeling, in certain moments, that the world is infinitely bigger and more interesting than we normally recognise. And then, the next morning, the vision is gone and the memory seemingly a lie, an illusion. One of the results of the publication of the book was contact between Wilson and Abraham Maslow.

Maslow's work revealed that psychologically healthy people had these experiences quite frequently. The 'peak' experience as a sudden flash of self-knowledge. As soon as they started to study and talk about these peak experiences, the frequency increased. Gratitude seems to have something to do with it; when we realise how lucky we are, holding the mirror of our life to our face and seeing how lucky we are creates the conditions for the expansion of consciousness (Regular readers will remember the John Wren-Lewis comments and my promotion of Tom Traherne's insights along this line.) Wilson's theory is that the contracted consciousness prevails because the senses are 'set' to limit awareness, to focus on the "essentials" and even distort if necessary. If we could find out how this diminution or distortion takes place we might be able to remove the filters and widen consciousness, see how lucky we are, make the mind a truer mirror of reality.

If we ask the question, how can we have the peak experience at will? The answer might lie in the discovery that there are two sides of the brain with quite different characteristics or functions. From here on he provides extensive evidence and commentary on the split brain question which is very interesting but far too long for here.

**(See Tu Wei-Mingbecause it is originally ours, we can get it by simply exercising our will to do so. Willing is the necessary and sufficient condition for us to get it. page 4 Nowletter No.14)*

I find this a very helpful model because it matches my experience and implies that whilst the left brain activity is separative, the right brain activity is never separated. Or, to put it another way, there are aspects of our being which are "free" although obscured by the frenetic activity and protective distortions of our over zealous caretaker left brain. The religious movement in human consciousness can then be understood as an endless effort to awaken what I call me, the inhabitant of the left brain, to the totality of what I really am and integrating it with that side of myself which is at home in the whole. This brings us back to the most frequent Nowletter quotation, *"When heart and mind are not estranged, words fail and cannot speak of that which has no yesterday, tomorrow or today."*

An even more apt offering from Jacob Boehme which I extracted from an article by Pedro Oliveira "Thoughts on Dialogue with Oneself" which Gladney sent me:

Disciple:...Oh! How may I arrive at the unity of will, and how come into the unity of vision?

Master:...Mark now what I say: the Right Eye looks in you into Eternity. The left eye looks backward in you into time. If now you suffer yourself to be always looking into nature, and the things of time, it will be impossible for you ever to arrive at the unity you wish for. Remember this and be on your guard. Give not your mind leave to enter in, nor to fill itself with that which is without you; neither look backward upon yourself....Let not your left eye deceive you, by continually making one representation after another and stirring up thereby an earnest longing in the self-propriety; but let your Right Eye command back this Left.... And only bringing the Eye of Time into the Eye of Eternity, ...and descending through the Light of God into the Light of Nature... will you arrive at the Unity of Vision or Uniformity of Will.

Dialogue on Internet

I have finally made contact with the Internet group referred to in the USA newsletter and enrolled as a subscriber.

It turns out that it is primarily a Krishnamurti rather than a DIALOGUE group. I haven't been involved long enough to evaluate or to work out how much active participation might cost me. I have downloaded a copy of the very comprehensive access requirements for the discussion group, archives, etc.

Van den Heuvel-Sardar Singh

I have not found time to prepare a draft response as promised but will try to do so in time for our meeting on the 15th. Many of us were daunted by the size of the Van den Heuvel letter but, having cleared the air by defining his terms and dealing with some of the developing misunderstandings, he thoughtfully summarised the essence of this DIALOGUE in the next to last paragraph of his letter as follows.

.....As far as I can see, the major differences are about the nature of ideas and about the question of whether or not the perception of "intellect invention" is enough to dissolve the self.....

The idea that the seeing of the nature of the self is enough to ensure its demise is a common claim of Krishnamurtiites. I have always had great difficulty with this claim as, in spite of moments of clarity about this question, there is, in my case, an almost immediate re-identification. I find Van den Heuvel's suggestion that we acknowledge this re-identification and re-name it as a 'virtual' self a helpful step in the necessary direction. Far more DIALOGUE-like than explaining the re-identification as a failure of insight (*Ed*)

Parts-Whole:Person- Group

I can count my five fingers
And this number, five, is no longer
An addition of five separate units,
But an adaptable hand
Having new qualities and capabilities
And an enhanced power
That none of the single fingers have.
And yes, an entity, has individuality,
Yet, has become non-numeral, a new functioning whole.

This new grouping is now
A new, important capacity
Which exceeds its parts.

Similarly, with the five different senses
Though eyes can see the danger,
Ears hear it
Nose smells it
Flesh feel it
Tongue taste it
Yet the whole body moves as one.

For the isolated individual
All the sequential events in time
Show themselves to be independent of each other,
Yet the totality of these groupings
Makes the whole human being what I now am.

Likewise with Dialogue,
The greater the number of inputs or people
The more precise and holistic the understanding.
Such comprehensive "innate knowledge"
Is the essence of intelligence.
The group has a new life, a "whole" new energy and being,
its tendencies different from those of the , individual people
who constitute the circle.

Donald Ingram Smith

Competition

Newsletter 14 included a review and commentary of the cases for and against the Sudden and Gradual points of view.

Which of the quotations selected by Gladney, to represent the two sides, comes closest to reflecting the truth of this matter? You are the current Patriarch and have to decide who gets the robe and bowl. No dithering - there has to be a winner!

First Saturday Meetings

Meetings are also held at 12-30 pm on the first Saturday of every month at 1, Avon Road, North Ryde. This is the Swedenborg Centre Meeting Hall - Up the stairs, first floor. Enquiries to Barry Hora (043) 622 843

Issue No.17 - 1st February 95

Meetings are held at 10am on the third Sunday of every month at 81, Greville Street, Chatswood (first Saturday meetings-see note this page) and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out whether, through the process of DIALOGUE, transformation of consciousness, awakening to what we really are, or whatever you want to call it, can come about.

Editorial

There is a lot happening between meetings apart from the Newsletter which is my primary inter-meeting concern and which generates quite a lot of correspondence with our distant 'members'. The meetings seem to be creating a lot of delayed-action energy which blossoms in the ensuing weeks and leads to further discussion at informal meetings in Newport, Chatswood, etc. There is also the regular DIALOG meeting on first Saturdays at 12-30pm, 1 Avon Road, North Ryde. This group is more of a "pure" dialogue group in that they apply dialogue to any issue which comes up whereas we have adopted dialogue as the means most likely to advance the aims described in our banner heading.

This issue of the NOWletter contains the first response to The Van den Heuvel letter from Rome, a summary of some of the inter-meeting questioning from Margot and extracts from the latest USA DQN.

It has been suggested that a major reason for apparent lack of progress or continued misunderstanding is the absence of a common foundation for our dialogue. Although we have an "agreed" model in Dialogue itself this doesn't seem to be enough and Gladney has agreed to lead an enquiry into the question at the February meeting so that we can better understand what is going on or why things don't seem to be happening. In talking about this we arrived at the question of why we come together at all, what our various expectations might be and whether a clash of expectations might be preventing the flow, (See Margot's contribution below). The underlying motive, which gave rise to the group, is expressed in the banner to this newsletter. Ponder upon whether it is a meaningful statement or an empty dream. I believe it to be a practical and achievable aim given the right conditions. I see group enquiry of this type as the possible "trick" that Van den Heuvel suggests might be necessary. I have an image of our group trying to learn what it means to "hold hands" in a psychological sense. I don't think we have learnt to do that yet. I believe it is possible. It seems to come about when egos are exhausted and the group need starts to take over from the individual urgings.

Expectations

Sometimes, between meetings, people who come to the NOW group talk about their responses to what happens at the meetings.

I think it is interesting, but probably not surprising, that we seem to bring a wide range of expectations to the group. Some of the reasons why we come could be:

- * to meet people/fellowship
- * to learn something
- * to share something

- * to teach something
- * to enjoy ourselves
- * because we are interested in the possibilities of enquiry
- * for lunch/to socialise
- * to have our ideas confirmed/tested
- * to see if anything grabs us
- * to see if the aim of the credo is realistic/can happen

It is likely that a person will have more than one reason for coming to the group. When s/he gets there, s/he may respond in one or more of the following ways:

- * it's too unstructured/structured
- * the topics discussed aren't "spiritual" enough
- * we aren't making any progress - what hope is there of transformation?
- * there are too many people with too much "spiritual baggage" who want to impose their own agendas
- *there are too many people who lack a "spiritual" or philosophical background to have a meaningful discussion
- * Dialogue never works: no one listens; no one suspends deeply held beliefs
- * I am not learning anything
- * there is too much/not enough reliance on external authority
- * we have to start at the beginning every week to accommodate new/different people
- * the same people tend to hold the floor/never speak
- *the level of discussion is not very profound/too intellectual
- *too many people lack a serious commitment to transformation -they just come to enjoy themselves
- *we should have a model for a Dialogue group.

It seems that there are as many different expectations of the NOW group as there are people who attend. Maybe you can add to these lists. I find it interesting that what some people see as highly significant and useful, others see as an obstacle. Do you think the wide range of expectations is a problem for the group? Do you think any of the above reasons for attending, or responses to what happens, are better or more relevant than the others?

Margot Mann

From the Journal

In view of the current questioning I thought it would be interesting to dig up a record of what I think happens when DIALOGUE begins to grip.

On the night of Tuesday 8th October 1987 we had our usual weekly meeting at Dorothy's by the sea. A wild sort of night; wind and rough seas. There were just three of us, Donald, Dorothy and me.

In the early stages of the meeting I remember thinking "what on earth am I doing here, why do we keep coming together, we are never going to unravel it all, it's all so pointless". About an hour later I was listening to Dorothy. I don't know what she was saying ; nor did I know at the time because there was such attention to the speaking that the content was abandoned as soon as it was spoken.

This left the mind open to that which presented in the moment. There was a high level of attention and almost no registration. In the listening there was understanding combined with immediate abandonment of the of the words and the knowledge, leaving only uncontaminated understanding. Both the mechanism of communication, words and knowledge, and the mechanism which sustains the observer, the assumption of a listener were absent. The feeling of being the occupant of the body, looking out and taking in, had gone. It was replaced by an emptiness of inner entity a seeing uncoloured by past experience and freed from the concept of division between inner and outer.

The clear seeing remained for a while and returned from time to time during the meeting. This happened on a number of occasions and it seemed to happen whenever we had exhausted ourselves of opinion and, with ego in abeyance, some listening was able to come about.

Alan Mann

The Pre/Trans Fallacy

This was suggested as a subject for the next meeting. I include the following explanation of what it is in the words of Ken Wilber. (p201-202 of Eye to Eye)

"The essence of the pre/trans fallacy is easy enough to state. We begin by simply *assuming* that human beings do in fact have access to three general realms of being and knowing-the sensory, the mental and the spiritual. Those three realms can be stated in any number of different ways: subconscious, self-conscious and super-conscious or prerational, rational and transrational, or prepersonal, personal and transpersonal. The point is simply that, for example, since prerational and transrational are both, in their own ways, nonrational, then they appear quite similar or even identical to the untutored eye. Once this confusion occurs- the confusion of "pre" and "trans"- then one of two things inevitably happens: the transrational realms are *reduced* to prepersonal status, or the prerational realms are *elevated* to transrational glory.

Either way a complete and overall world view is broken in half and folded in the middle, with one half of the real world (the "pre" or the "trans") being thus profoundly mistreated and misunderstood."

Erik and/or Gladney have undertaken to explain the significance of this in relation to our enquiries.

Observations on the Van den Heuvel - Sardar Singh DIALOGUE

The inherent danger in dialogue is to take its theories seriously. Intelligence craves contact/ interflow/ stimulation/ entertainment/ challenge, fellowship, all of which dialogue supplies. When we understand individual perception (manifest and unmanifest) as a hologram, the root of any "dissension problem" is exposed. The "Wheel of Life and Death" is humankind's own creation until the ring of continuity we build around Th'is-ness is perceived. The movement of the ring, insight - perception - observation - understanding - communication - insight - perception, etc., circles constantly while disconnecting the observer from Th'is (What is) with an invisible false membrane or placenta of separation. Th'at (the observer's opinions) can never be at one with Th'is via the brain which creates and maintains the ring of separation dividing manifest from unmanifest; Th'at from Th'is.

However, except through delusion, dialogue does not, nor ever can, touch Truth/ Actuality/ Freedom, what I call Th'is. "I am", not because "I think I am" but because I-AM TH'AT in a state of attitude (where I am at - holistically) and attention. To be self-centred demands the death of the ego, not because it is "bad", but because its opinions constantly swing the pendulum which creates imbalance.

As I see it, the dialogue 'dissenters' and 'faithful' are different sides of one coin. In dialogue, discussion and debate there is a meeting of brains on a matter of mutual interest, whether compatible or clashing. It is attitude (where everyone is at) which is the core of togetherness; the wavelength/brainwave of communion magnetising those inter-est-ed in coming together, in the same place, in a spirit of enquiry.

Manifestly, all overt verbal communication (including the written word) is brain/thought/ intellect/ego based, whereas attitude is subtle and more underground, instinctive/ telepathic/ empathic/ compassionate, able to influence the brain though the brain can merely think its presence.

This observation is based on my own conviction that brain and mind (linked with Universal Mind) are different, the brain being a body-part, mind being in the energy field. In dialogue or discussion of any kind, 'wise' opinions or dissent are equally valid/invalid and equally split because both are parts of movement in the deceptive ring of separation; both think they are right and both are 'victims' in believing the brain can 'know' Truth/Th'is/Actuality even though ALL thought is ideological and therefore delusion Only mind can experience Th'is, rather than think/talk/write about it. This is what I call inperience; it can only be shared at an invisible, very subtle level.

What Van den Heuvel calls "the pure perception of reality", for me is what occurs during inperience and, somehow vivifies my entire being which is ongoing, rather than the quick thrill from intellect, when knowledge is suddenly acquired. In this way, what he says about "as it is" not being available for direct perception is, observably 'right' when referring to the brain, but mind is another matter altogether. What he calls "as it is" and I call "Th'is" is available for "pure observation" in Out of Body Experiences when the brain is not.

Van den Heuvel is beautifully concise when he says, "Ideas do flow into the perception and literally" influence "what we see (and hear)" but this is the fundamental issue of all thought, as influence and pollution of all that is perceived; a case of limited brain's distortion and duality. Mind is a part of and never separated from Universal Mind . Whether as a result of Out of Body Experiences, or what I regard as "Winged Perception", the silent

witness I call the i-dot has no ideas (no brain to think with) and probably what K called "the observer is the observed" which is undoubtedly the i-dot-in-action.

There is no "how" to this state which is brainless and mindful, not because anyone may think this to be so but because it is as an actuality. I suggest that any holistic true insight into the "nature of one's thinking" is the key to transformation. Except when appropriate, thought no longer carries on like an idling motor. There is nothing to "listen" or to maintain itself. Like a motor, it kicks in when needed. There is no "how" nor "when".

When the brain is still, the mind is opened. Instead of the construction of idea and opinion by the limited brain, mind accesses Universal Mind, cosmic consciousness, or whatever else you like to call it, and relays as much as it can to the brain. The greatest noticeable difference, perhaps, is that the brain - for the first time in its life - perceives its own limitations and wants to act as Mind's Receiver instead of as a repository of knowledge!

The great breakthrough is the perception that knowledge/memory need not be cumulative as everything can be accessed through tapping into the field of Universal Mind. Better still, is that the 'Mind's Eye' experiences/ inperiences whatever is seen and heard because it is not separated or isolated, as is the human brain. It experiences freedom whereas the brain, no matter what it does, is limited to the how, why and when of what it thinks freedom to be.

This is where the crunch comes. Through dialogue, discussion or any other communication, I can convey my ideas/ theories /opinions/ illusions (in substance they are identical) but I can never share an inexperience whether of birth, death or somewhere in-between. Every experience is individual and strictly personal. As I see and feel it, passion is a feeling not a theory/idea. Since I discovered how to by-pass the brain, the inexperience of passion as a state of being is extraordinarily vivi and vivifying. The feeling of compassion is the closest we can come to commonsense, I guess, but like Van den Heuvel says, these words are simply pointers.

Part of the confusion about dissolving self is possibly a confusion of an aspect with the whole? Effectively, each of us is a hologram. The end/death of thought is death of the ego, not of the selfhood or i-dot. From infancy we are conditioned to the idea of "selflessness" which is an absurdity. It is not until we are completely self centred that we are in balance and in harmony as me-as-I-am connected with All, and unfragmented, un-neurotic.

It is the insight into the importance of being self-centred (not the idea or words) that brings freedom. It is the inexperience of being totally vulnerable which, alone, brings complete invulnerability, since there is nothing capable of being hurt. The self images are destroyed but the i-dot is indestructible. This is profound liberation and absolute clarity, not from theories but from direct observation.

Rome Warren

Internet etc

Dialogue on the info super-highway doesn't seem to be quite my cup of tea. It is, however, an interesting exercise in uncertainty. Uncertainty about whether you can get on it, if you do, how do you get to where you think you are going, and, finally, are you ever going to get off. All in an atmosphere of wonder and surprise, which reaches its peak when the Compuserve account arrives at the end of the month. Gladney will be saddened to read this as he is my mentor and thinks I have absorbed more of the "teaching" than is, in fact, the case. He has downloaded heaps of stuff from which I have selected the following as this month's gem from cyberspace.

Let that which REALLY matters come of its own.

Thyagi Tzu

Issue No.18 - 1st April 95

Meetings are held at 10am on the third Sunday of every month at 81, Greville Street, Chatswood and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out whether, through the process of DIALOGUE,

transformation of consciousness, awakening to what we really are, or whatever you want to call it, can come about.

Editorial

Sorry we had to cancel the March meeting at the last minute. Note that the April meeting is on the FOURTH Sunday.

I am persisting with the analysis of the meetings by encouraging feed-back and I asked Margot to summarise the comments on the last gathering as an extension of her February contribution to the NOWletter which listed our different reasons for coming together and our various expectations (see below). This enquiry grew out of an expression of dissatisfaction with our progress, "we seem to be going nowhere". Enid made an interesting comment on this complaint, "isn't going now here exactly what this is meant to be about?"

The pre/trans enquiry has produced inter-meeting correspondence, some of which follows. As a result of missing the last meeting I have not quite come to grips with this concept but find the link which Erik makes between PT and DIALOGUE intriguing. Thank you for your contributions both spoken and written.

Desire

Enid writes..I wanted to mention something in relation to the section in the January NOWletter where you wrote about desire in relation to Traherne and Buddhism. You said, "*Traherne's affirmation of desire, which I have always felt to be fundamental or true in spite of Buddhist insistence that desire is the root of suffering*". The better translation of the Pali word is attachment**. There is a place for desire "right desire" which makes us seek out a teacher to meditate (upon) it but once we sit in meditation we let it go. It's no use sitting in meditation and desiring Enlightenment. How can we sit in the present while wishing for the future? It is a defilement. Anything interfering with the emptiness of the moment is a defilement - even a well-intentioned and compassionate desire. Which, of course, wouldn't contradict what Traherne is saying I'm sure. I don't think (but don't know) that "What is" desperately wants our participation' makes any sense in Buddhism. What is, What is. Even if you bring God into it (call it energy or what you will) God is perfect. God is not wanting, God is not lacking, God is! But the desire for us all to get together in the Now of Greville Street - now that is a healthy and wholesome and desirable Desire. (And the soup last Sunday.....)

**(There seem to be hundreds of different meanings for attachment 'Pan Ha' - depending on context - but the usual one for the cause of suffering is craving.)

Enid Jenkins

Pre/Trans 1

In our Feb 19th consideration of the Pre-Trans fallacy two things were mentioned but could well be re-emphasised:

1. that fallacy (or category mistake) is more widespread than the common cold, bruised knees, stubbed toes, alcoholism, tranquillizer abuse, tobacco consumption, overeating, and forgetting where we have put our car in a six story carpark; And
2. the fallacy is not a matter of light consequence for anyone serious about the cessation of confusion and sorrow. The fallacy is endemic among new age teachers (and students) of every persuasion. In its simplest form there is a pre-trans confusion between the **pre-mental instinct** and the **trans (or post) mental intuition**; both seem to be one thing (a "natural, spontaneous, direct, immediate, knowing") to the person unaware that they are as distinct as sunrise and sunset. Both "poke" thought, disturb the mind with adjacent vibrations, prompt the mind to some action, to produce a thought; the instinct habitually pokes from below, from desire for self bene/fit, possessiveness, gain and accumulation (however disguised).

The mind, under the assault from instinct, may readily produce a socially correct yet nevertheless hallucinated explanation to justify subsequent actions. Intuition "pokes" with a light touch, from above; it has no concern with possessiveness, or self-benefit. Both can seem to be energizing, can offer rest and relaxation and calm, can seem to make sense of a difficult situation, can seem to be timelessly concerned with Now (something the mind finds almost impossible), can seem to mimic the cessation of thought.

Any good spiritual text, any good spiritual teacher, leads the individual eventually to a consideration of these two components of humanity. It is in the ability to distinguish them that the groundwork can be laid; it is in a mood of either not knowing that they can be distinguished or not caring to distinguish them or in imagining that one has successfully already distinguished them that the battle is lost before the sides are even engaged.

Gladney Oakley

Pre/Trans 2

Thoughts on Dialogue and the Pre/Trans Fallacy:

The idea of Dialogue is to "give attention to" one's thoughts, observe one's thoughts. The term 'suspend' is used. This "suspend" cannot mean to leave behind, to put behind us, since we are asked to INSPECT our thoughts.

Therefore, my picture of 'suspend' is to dangle in front of me on a string, for close inspection - NOT to temporarily forget.

I am aware there is a point of view in which thoughts are to be got rid of altogether for liberation, and this may well be true. But there is no way people can communicate verbally, examine their assumptions or express their thoughts in Dialogue without thinking. In what follows I will therefore assume that in starting a Dialogue, we do not try to drop our thoughts and ideas into the void, but give attention to them and to their possible irrationality.

How does one observe, become conscious of the observation, interpret the observation?

It is by formulating thoughts about it.

But these thoughts are rational ones, while the ones observed are the assumptions, emotions, desires, feelings etc. which we may call "emotional thoughts".

If we don't make the distinction between rational and emotional thoughts the whole concept of Dialogue becomes a confusion: if we simply say "we suspend and inspect our thoughts", then what do we use to inspect our thoughts with? Presumably we do it by thinking thoughts. And these thoughts must also be inspected ... etc. In this simple picture we think about thoughts in an endlessly closed loop.

But if we make the distinction between types of thought, we can in Dialogue attempt to rationally think about our emotional and conditioned thoughts, which at least is an open-ended, non-circular, activity.

Even if we do this, there is still the underlying assumption that rationality is better/more reliable/more ethical/more conducive to peace and wholeness than non-rationality.

This is an unstated assumption made by those proposing Dialogue as a worthwhile activity. And if all assumptions are open to questioning, then so must this one. Again, this questioning could become an endless process, unless we ultimately agree on some things:

In the end, there must be some common model of Reality people can agree to, and within which questioning and examination can take place. And as a very minimum, this might well be the sentence of Wilber quoted in the latest issue (no.17) of NOW:

"We begin by simply assuming that human beings do in fact have access to three general realms of being and knowing - the sensory, the mental and the spiritual." (And 'mental' equals 'rational' in this context.)

If it is possible to agree on this, then we can again ask the question: is rationality better than non-rationality?

And the answer could be: that depends on the kind of non-rationality examined and observed in Dialogue, whether it is 'pre-' or 'trans'-rational, to use the terms as defined by Wilber.

By examining pre-rational impulses, prejudices, desires, emotions etc. by rational thought, we attempt to transcend these more primitive states and become more conscious or more aware.

But there are trans-rational states which go "beyond" rational thought, and are therefore not open to examination by rational thought. Is it possible to reach these states by the bare prescription of giving attention to one's thoughts? Maybe ... maybe this is the real underlying motivation for Dialogue: pay such concentrated attention to one's thoughts that after a time the mind simply gives up on rationality, and this leaves it open to "that which is presented in the moment", as Alan puts it in his piece "From the Journal".

If there is truth in this, then Dialogue could be described as a two-fold process: raise the pre-rational to the rational, and dis-identify with the rational to reach the trans-rational.

Erik Harting

Meetings

On the day of the last meeting, Alan was in England to attend his father's funeral and I was away for the first hour, so Enid graciously consented to welcome group members to the house. Most people were unaware that Alan would be away so it was an interesting exercise to see what response there would be to the now.

Several group members have offered verbal or written feedback (some more than one response), a fascinating exercise in perception, in itself. I was asked to summarise these. One of the things that most people noticed was that Donald, Gladney and Erik had a "long intellectual argument" about Pre-trans fallacy, characterised by "a lot of interrupting between the three of them and very little listening." Another perception was that the Pre-trans fallacy was "dealt with and tossed aside quickly as of minor importance." Yet another perception was that "the idea (of Pre-trans fallacy) was fairly acceptable to most people present." Erik and Donald discussed the problem of going off on tangents. Donald assisted Erik with his enquiries into the reasons for answering question with more questions.

- * There was discussion about **exhaustion** and whether it is necessary to reach this point to get to the worthwhile stuff.
- * Someone described the group as "politely agreeing" that the occasion of the NOW group is large enough to accommodate the hungry, the lonely, the bored and the deeply searching (referring to expectations of the group listed in the last Newsletter.)
- * There was talk about "suspend" (Who suspends, Who acts, Who thinks?) with people favouring different definitions of "suspend."
- * **Distinguishing thoughts from feelings**, a topic which one member thinks the group is "not yet cohesive enough" to discuss.
- * One member thinks we are talking to each other with "more truth."
- * Quite a few people missed Alan in his role as 'leader', which surprises Alan because he puts a lot of effort into trying not to lead. Is it *easier* for us all to have a pivotal person, therefore less individual responsibility? If so, is this a problem?
- * Gladney told the group that what Alan Mann meant by "The group has not yet learned to hold hands" was that the group does not have telepathy. I disagreed with this interpretation.
- * One nearly-new member felt not particularly welcome when another member rather disapprovingly mentioned "continuity". Are we threatened by new people=new ideas=challenge=change?

Margot Mann

Guru Watch

In preparation for the recent visit of Andrew Cohen I read his book, "Autobiography of an Awakening". Cohen claims to be fully awakened and the book explains how the transformation came about. At the age of sixteen he had an experience of the wider consciousness which set him on a path which, he claims, led him to his present state of perfect realisation and the role of world teacher.

The book is a record of Cohen's dealings with a number of gurus all of whom, in spite of their "enlightenment", prove to be less than perfect. This is a disappointment to him and he wonders at the residual ego action of these otherwise free beings. He ends up having some fairly severe disagreements with a number of teachers and a particularly savage spat with his own guru; the man who delivered him to freedom is ultimately described as a megalomaniac. He even manages to drive his mother into the arms of U G Krishnamurti.

The reader is left wondering why Cohen is so hard to get along with and why, if he has experienced the source of revelation, does he persist in pursuing it externally through gurus. Also, why he, as an enlightened being, finds it necessary to pepper the reader with testimonials from his teacher, Tibetan Masters and other assorted gurus, endorsing his claim to have "got it".

A particularly unpleasant aspect of his style is the dismissal of those who disagree with him as either lacking the courage to accept him at his own evaluation or the spiritual depth to appreciate his message. This uncompromising approach is justified on the grounds that he is completely free of doubt.

M & I had the opportunity to meet Mr Cohen, courtesy John Wren-Lewis and Ann, and we were interested to see whether he could undo the damage of his pen when we met him face to face.

Andrew, in person, turned out to be an entirely different kettle of fish. In the two sessions I attended he communicated a simplicity and openness which just does not come through in his writing, a story he tells about four Hasidic Jews who attended one of his meetings is very revealing and convincing. (Too long to tell here) He functions better in dealing with questions than 'lecturing'. He said he was amazed at how many on the path had very fixed ideas and was regularly surprised at how they often had complete certainty about things concerning which it is very hard to be certain. His prescription is to question everything and presume nothing. He talked of the expectation that realisation is extraordinary instead of extra ordinary, as a major blockage. During my time in England I had been thinking about how I have failed to live up to the limited insights in my life and he touched a raw nerve when he said 'the more we have the courage to respond to the revelation the more we learn and progress.'

He considers the most important result of realisation is behavioural. What you think, say or feel is of secondary importance. What really matters is what you do. If you apply this as a test or measure of the level of insight and qualifications of self proclaimed teachers to teach, it is, in my view, a very reliable yardstick. He had to handle the perennial question "who is it who acts?" Instead of getting into the usual guruspeak about the nature of ego or egolessness, actorless action, etc., he said "You do" and moved on. On the question of blissful states he was very dismissive of the idea that these states could be equated with enlightenment or freedom. He defined freedom as the ending of the limitation imposed by the retention of fixed ideas about self.

All in all I have to admit that I was impressed and, more to the point, so was Margot. We told him we thought his book was dreadful and created the impression of an insecure, self justifying person and that it seemed to demonstrate the same ego driven behaviour he finds impossible to accept in other teachers. He was genuinely surprised at this reaction but took it very calmly, in fact with thanks, and thereby earned more points. In his earlier talk he told us he had withdrawn a later book, of letters from students, for what sounded like the same reasons. He said two of his students had attended a DIALOGUE group in England recently and found it 'aridly intellectual'. I said we had adopted DIALOGUE as a means to an end in the hope that it would help us to leave our spiritual baggage "suspended" at the door instead of using it to bash one another around with. He didn't ask whether it was working!.

When in England, I tried to contact Douglas but he was either off on one of his campaigns to behead the French or his honeymoon. I was lucky to catch Peter Spink and I'm now reading his book which I should have read before our meeting. I'm indebted to him for a description of what the NOW meetings might be or might become, "an intersection point between the horizontal and the vertical."

Alan Mann

DIALOGUE

Following on from the intersection point between the horizontal and the vertical , the following question was asked privately at the February meeting:

"Do they think they can come here and achieve together what none of us can achieve alone?. Can they hope, by combining their fractional skills, that it will add up to a whole?" I say yes to the first, no to the second. It is not what we bring that matters so much as what we are prepared to leave behind. I think the 'whole' of which the questioner speaks is already and always, we don't construct it out of what we know about it. I see DIALOGUE as a possible means of revealing why this is not readily apparent. If we are prepared to come empty-minded or become empty-minded, in the way suggested by Erik above, then something new might happen. I am perplexed by recurring references to the need or advisability of suspending thought in DIALOGUE. I thought what we had to suspend were our assumptions and points of view, thereby freeing thought to flow in a meaningful rather than a mechanical way. Is this not so?

I have a column to spare so I thought I would ask myself what I meant in last month's letter by 'psychological hand holding'. I said:

I have an image of our group trying to learn what it means to "hold hands" in a psychological sense. I don't think we have learnt to do that yet.

Holding to the analogy, I think, that for a group of people to hold hands physically, it would form a circle with every person grasping the available hand on either side. This would form a connected circle or whole in which all the links would be of equal importance in maintaining the totality.

What sort of things would work against this unity of approach and outcome?

* If I refuse to hold hands.

- * If I refuse adjacent hands and reach across my neighbours to make contacts of choice.
- * If, because I have specialised hand-holding skills, I decide, instead of standing in the circle myself, to stand in the middle to make sure you all get it right.
- * If I believe it is never possible, in any circumstances, to hold hands.

It doesn't take much effort to see how often, in our meetings, I fall into the psychological equivalents of these destructive actions. I am not always aware that I am doing it but then that is because I'm not DIALOGUING properly.

Ed

The April meeting will be held on 23rd April not 16th April which is Easter Sunday.

First Saturday Meetings

Meetings are also held at 12-30 pm on the first Saturday of every month at 1, Avon Road, North Ryde. These are more truly DIALOGUE meetings in that there is no agenda, explicit or implicit.

This is the Swedenborg Centre Meeting Hall - Up the stairs, first floor.

Enquiries to Barry Hora (043) 622 843

Issue No.19 - 10th May 95

Meetings are held at 10am on the third Sunday of every month at 81, Greville Street, Chatswood and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out for themselves whether, through the process of DIALOGUE, transformation of consciousness, awakening to what we really are, or whatever you want to call it, can come about.

Odds & Ends

The April meeting opened with a few general matters including the suggestion that we were getting out of balance, with certain persons specialising in listening whilst others seemed to be doing all the talking. I thought we would benefit if the group became more aware of the imbalance and made some adjustments.

(This might also become a problem as far as the NOWletter is concerned, so contributions please. There should be no concern about reputations after all the crazy things that have already appeared in previous editions.)

The need for an agreed framework, a neutral model, is considered by some to be essential and by others a serious obstacle to progress. I found myself coming down firmly on both sides of this argument. Erik agreed to summarise the 'pro' case in an outline of the approach we have discussed and canvassed in earlier issues. (See below)

The anti-model case is based on the view that everything necessary for our exploration is already present in the actual moment and movement of our enquiry. To impose a framework upon this movement will be restrictive as it will be a constant pressure to pull it in a particular direction. This approach relies on 'seeing' and 'seeing' became the main theme of the April meeting.

Seeing 1

The discussion was led by Dorothy who, unfortunately, practises what she preaches. When asked to provide a summary for the NOWletter, she told me that it had flown, and what a number of us had thought quite wonderful at the time, was now all dead leaves. She said that if I really wanted to publish I would have to reconstruct it myself. I agreed to do this provided she gave it a final review and that is what we did. There was another session on seeing in the afternoon when a select group chose to listen to a tape which Enid brought and which seemed to underline Dorothy's comments very aptly.

As we were getting under way, Donald pointed out that we probably all had different views on what is meant by the word "seeing". So we agreed that apprehension, in its widest sense, came closest. In the sense of perceiving with the senses and intellect. What is going on NOW.

We had been talking about the acceptability of the Wilber model as a basis for agreement. Dorothy thought it was not necessary.

What is necessary, she believes or 'sees', is to learn to observe and then things will come in of their own accord. Our problem arises from the fact that we are not in touch with life. The primary requirement is to be still. We don't have to do anything or say anything or agree on any formula - just see what is really happening. It is not what we do or say, it is to do with what we see for ourselves. And this 'seeing' is true action.

It is a matter of complete simplicity - revealed when we are still. Yet just being still seems to be the hardest thing in the world yet it is the simplest. Don't pretend to be still or adopt an attitude of stillness - just be still - and *see* what happens.

Dorothy Lange

Seeing 2

Dorothy's comments struck a few sparks for me as earlier in the month I had *been* pondering why it is so hard. So hard for me, that is. I then had a very strong insight to the effect that it is not just hard but impossible until priority is given to 'seeing' over doing and thinking.

Alan Mann

Seeing 3

I pulled the following extracts from Enid's tape. Although out of the context of a marvellous talk on mindfulness (to USA psychotherapists) I thought them very complementary to Dorothy's comments:

** The art of mindful living helps you to be in touch with life. In touch with the flower, in touch with your non-toothache.*

** What if we are incapable of enjoying our capacity to see?*

** How not to be obsessed by the past. Become aware that the only moment available to you is the present one.*

** There is no way to peace, peace is not in the future. Your peace is here and 'NOW'.*

** Mindfulness is awareness that something is going on, and being aware of what is going on is the essence of Buddhahood.*

** Mindfulness is the Buddha, in person.*

Thich Nhat Hanh

Seeing 4 - What Am I?

This is an example of some of the inter-meeting activity which keeps us out of mischief. From the Journal - 8 Feb 95

On Sunday Donald asked Dorothy and me what we thought caused him to be so vehement in discussion and so passionate in presenting his views. I said we were used to it and I always, or usually, waited until he had blown himself out. But that didn't answer the question. What do I think might be the reason. It must be that he feels an enormous need to get his point across. So what is the reason for the urgency? I spent some time running possible reasons for his behaviour through my mind.

Why did he ask us, he must know the answer? He doesn't need us to give him the answer to the question of why he does it, he wants to know why we THINK he does it. He wants to know what we THINK. That's it! Now why does he need to know that?

I asked Donald to answer this one himself and he replied as follows:

I want to open this question out so that I can see and hear, through other eyes and minds, the spontaneous responses to my speech and behaviour, i.e., before they present their civil and controlled words. I want to see myself in action, as others see me, and how my emphatic talk actually affects listeners - what they feel.

Well that was that but Dorothy started me off again, when she rang the following day (9th). She said it was moving in her, whereas, by that time I had forgotten about it. After the phone call I sat looking out of the kitchen window whilst what I have now written about it was wriggling around in my head. I was looking at my image of Donald when I had a very powerful Hardingesque revelation and realised that I exist only as images in the memories of those who know me. That the only actual, factual, thingness with any claim to continuity that can be accurately described as Alan Mann is what is going on in other people. What is going on HERE is the images

of them, the representations of the world around me and some memories of what this body has been up to over the years. All of which I mistakenly take for Alan, for what I really am. I exist, as Alan Mann, only as reflections in other minds. I felt this so strongly that it stopped me several times during the day. If this is so, what I think of myself as being is nothing to do with what is going on here and everything to do with what is going on there.

So perhaps Donald is saying that the turmoil, here in me, which results from his behaviour, is superfluous. It is a reaction, resistance to a trespasser who is not trespassing at all. He is 'here' on the empty, common ground. Which is the space reserved for rampaging Donalds, my reactions, if any, and the universe. It can only be a problem if I think "his" space HERE should be occupied by what I call Alan whose proper space I have just realised is THERE. So all I have to do is get out of the way and be what I truly am, the capacity for whatever.

A number of you had a powerful reaction against this apparent absurdity so perhaps we should look at it next meeting?

???

To Model or not to Model

We are faced with a dilemma. After two years of promoting the suspension of belief systems, established opinions, at least for the duration of our meetings, we are finding ourselves in a rudderless chaos which means we have to start off from the same position every meeting. This is particularly the case with new members or visitors. Also, going over the same old ground every time can become very dull for the regulars.

It has been suggested we adopt some sort of agreed neutral model as a framework from which to work. In the same way that we use a common language. Can we use, as a basic code, what we have previously agreed about 'reality' and 'consciousness' or 'mind'.

Recent meetings have indicated a formula which might work, the Wilber "double triangle" which suggests the following simple model:

Reality

Comprises: the physical, the mental and the spiritual.

Consciousness

Comprises three modes:

the pre-rational, the rational and the trans-rational.

which have as their respective proper concern the physical, mental and spiritual.

By way of further description of the three modes of consciousness, can we accept that each has its own way of knowing and experiencing reality.

The pre-rational has sensory knowledge of the physical world. the rational has knowledge of logic, concepts and ideas (including beliefs and religious dogma).

The trans-rational has direct, contemplative, intuitive knowledge of Reality, God, 'the Ground of Being, the 'Over-Self'-direct knowledge of Spirit by spirit, which cannot be expressed in rational terms and is said to flow from the sustained practice of contemplation, 'listening', emptying the mind of thought and/or 'seeing'.

Erik Harting

Group Need

Gladney put me on the spot about what I mean by my regular references to 'group need'. When we started the meetings I thought we might be creating an opportunity for something new to come about. The idea was that we might find a way in which the present moment provided revelation in relationship not just a meeting point for the past experiences of the people involved.

It cannot happen if we come together in the same spirit that prevails at normal social events such as lunch parties or business driven management or problem solving meetings. The adoption of the principles of DIALOGUE seemed to provide the necessary differentiation because it creates, or should allow, the development of an awareness of what individual action is necessary and unnecessary in relation to what is happening in the group. The communal direction which the enquiry is taking as opposed to the pressure of individual reaction to what is happening. This is what I mean by group need. The extent to which we recognise and respond to this need determines, I think, the effectiveness of the process.

Alan Mann

Ryde Meetings

The May meeting opened with Gladney telling us about his correspondence with Peter Garrett, one of the founders of the Dialogue 'movement'. He had asked Peter how Dialogue was going and what changes had occurred since the Bohm, Factor, Garrett paper was published in '91. The major development has been the introduction of Dialogue into the UK prison system and we discussed the possibility of extending to Australia.

The meeting then went on to wrestle with the issues of structure versus non-structure of meetings and of process versus content.

After some preliminary confusion, it was suggested that we go around the ring and, in turn, say what Dialogue meant to every person present. Instead of the usual, and expected, sequential clockwise movement we found people making their contributions 'out of turn'. One o'clock, followed by five o'clock, followed by ten o'clock and so on. This led to a protest from the structurarians who said it would be a good idea to appoint a chairperson to prevent the disorderly developments of this sort. Others felt that it was orderly in that it arose from the needs of the moment and that every speaker's comments 'fitted' or flowed from those of the previous speaker. This natural flow they thought more important than maintaining a rigid conformity based on where we were sitting. This led to talk about control and whether the group could control itself. A new member observed that perhaps there could be a self-regulating movement. For a time, it seemed that the group was in a self-regulating mode. The energy level was high but focused in the group rather than fuelling our egos. I thought this might just have been my response but others said later that they had also felt the change. I think we touched on the essence of Dialogue and I think the idea of a group 'self-regulating' is a good way of describing what happens when it works.

Editor

Overseas

The latest USA Newsletter 'DQN' has arrived and I will circulate early in June.

Also a new issue of "Share It" the irregular publication published by the people who are involved with Douglas Harding in Europe and North America.

This is of particular interest in view of our current attempt to get to grips with 'seeing'. For some time I have been wondering whether we are ready for a "Seeing Workshop" using the Harding tools and techniques. What about it? You have nothing to lose but your heads!

At the time of writing I have not taken any action on the Alister Hardy Society proposal. I am vague about the brief. What value do we see in this, is it relevant and how, if we subscribe, do we circulate? I will see if any of the libraries provide access and suggest we look at it again and think a bit more before discussing at the June meeting.

Issue No. 20 - 7th June 95

Meetings are held at 10am on the third Sunday of every month at 81, Greville Street, Chatswood and are open to anyone interested in the possibility of working out whether, through the process of DIALOGUE, transformation of consciousness, awakening to what we really are, or whatever you want to call it, can come about.

The USA Dialogue Newsletter forms the bulk of this month's issue. I have removed four pages, for reasons of size & space, including Rome's piece and Erik's summary of the pre-trans fallacy which were lifted from our February NOWletter to re-appear in the USA publication.

An unexpected event, for a Dialogue environment, when two people were asked to leave the group after the April meeting. The action was eased by an awareness that the pair had almost decided that it was not for them anyway. Nevertheless, it gave rise to concerns about our ability to cope with turmoil and whether we were overlooking the positive aspects of conflict. This enquiry was an issue at the May meeting and after considering

the possibility of dedicating a future meeting to focusing on their assumptions it was decided that this would not help. The couple concerned hold very strong views and, over several meetings, made it clear that they disagreed with our objectives and the principles of Dialogue and their aim was to convert us to their position.

Seeing Follow-up 1

There was a lot of feedback and follow up to our section on 'seeing' in the last newsletter. It reminded John Wren-Lewis of an article he had seen in the American Journal of Noetic Sciences by Brock Travis entitled 'Mindful Dialogue' which he sent me and from which I extract the following:

While meditation is sometimes limited to solitary insights and effects, and while conversation is sometimes limited to the social surfaces of human experience, meditative conversation permits participants to explore the boundaries between "self" and "other" and the frontiers between "inner" and "outer".

If meditators practise mindfulness in dialogue together as a group, then the learnings of one become the learnings of all. The group as a whole becomes enriched with shared insights. Also, if a group of participants in a dialogue practice mindfulness of the unified whole, then the conversation is not as likely to polarize and break down over personality issues. Brock Travis. The Awareness Institute, Guerneville, CA

I think the second paragraph is an excellent description of what happens when Dialogue starts to work.

Seeing Follow-up 2

With a view to holding some 'Seeing' workshops later this year, I have reopened contact with the Douglas Harding group in England. I have also signed on to their internet conference, which is run by Richard Lang, and now receiving some wonderful email as a result. I have a copy of their the headless periodical 'Share It' which is doing the rounds. Let me know if you want to see it.

Seeing Follow-up 3

During my recent UK visit I tried to persuade my cousin, Bidy Foster, to contribute now and again. So here she is:

There is a state in which day to day activity continues but 'thought' - the endless dialogue inside our heads, ceases. That does not mean one does not think, rather that each thought is dealt with 'cleanly' without it giving rise to endless chain reactions. The emotions are not swayed because the whole basks in constant love, All insecurities vanish in this certainty and knowledge. The most appropriate phrase (which I thought was from the Hsin Hsin Ming but I now find must be from somewhere else) is , "The void is everything. Everything is void." this state continues until fear creeps back in. The two can never co-exist, one being the product and sign of total acceptance, trust, truth, love and security. The other relating to insecurities, possession and fear of loss. the state of quiet mind is a passive thing. It arrives without any help from oneself, but the knowledge and certainty of being 'loved, lovable and in touch with truth' comes first, then turmoil ceases. It does not come about by talking, meditating upon it, speculating, theorizing or by any other positive move.

She goes on to say that the above was prompted by Erik's piece in issue 18 but also relates to Enid's comments on desire. However, the essence of the article by Rome in issue 17 indicates they are running on the same lines. It was Bidy who sent me, several years ago, the most frequently used quote in this newsletter: **"Where trusting heart and mind are not estranged, Words fail, and cannot tell of THAT which has no yesterday, tomorrow or today."** and that is from the 'Hsin Hsin Ming'.

Seeing Follow-up 4

In response to 'Seeing 4' in the last issue, Richard Lang sent this extract from "the Hierarchy of Heaven & Earth" by DEH. This is a much more comprehensive and clear explanation:

"To push home your inquiry into my existence is to destroy it, for I am always elsewhere, like a rainbow or a mirage. If I take myself as I am to myself, I find presented these men, trees, clouds, stars; and I scatter them all as if in a giant centrifuge, leaving the centre empty. If, instead, I take myself as I am to others, I am a host of creatures of numberless shapes and sizes, and all of them, though they belong out there, I pull in here as if by a powerful magnet, leaving none at large. Accordingly it is impossible to pin me down either to my centre here or to the centres of my regional observers there. I am something like a game of hide-and-seek in which hider and

seeker never meet because each takes refuge in the other. Everybody is out on a visit; but because no one will stay at home to be visited, there are no meetings. We all keep our distance by changing places, and live inside-out.

And one of the reasons why we can never meet is that we more than meet: we become one another. For I do not live here at this centre only, content to enjoy what is presented here and to refer it to centres over there in my regions. Equally I live out there in those centres, contemplating myself as manifested in them. Indeed I have already found that I am more at home out there observing my head, than here observing my headlessness. The view in comes at least as naturally to me as the view out. Unlike Burns, the gift I need is to see myself as I see myself."

Seeing Follow-up 5

The May meeting concluded with a discussion of 'seeing'; mainly to do with the practicality of it and its transitory nature. The issue was beautifully summed up by Barry who said 'the problem is that the ego thinks that **it** is doing the seeing.'

The final two pages of this edition are devoted to Gladney's summary of our DIALOGUE to date, a sort of progress report. I am sure he would welcome extra input.

As a result of his dealings with Peter Garrett Gladney has a 12 page article entitled "Group Dialogue within Prisons" which summarises the pioneering work, undertaken by Peter and his colleagues at a maximum security prison in Cambridgeshire, from September 93 to the present.

The report concludes with a summary of 17 points from which I have selected the following as being particularly relevant to our struggles:

8 .Individuals learn how to change their views and form new ones.

9 .The large group is a challenge but quieter individuals do find their own voices and dominant ones do learn to hold back without being prompted.

12 .The rigid stance (how it is) loosens to become a participatory one (how it seems to me).

13 .Allowing each their own speed, a self-organising common sense emerges in the group.

17 .The DIALOGUE comes to be owned by the group.

I will leave it to Gladney to report on the overall effect on the prisons.