

The George Schloss Letters

George Schloss has been writing letters to Carl Cooper for several years. This correspondence is the result of their shared interest in the work of Douglas Harding, and the letters are an extension and confirmation of their phone conversations. I don't have Carl's contribution as his input involves telephone discussions with George but readers can get the gist of his contribution from George's written responses. The letters are added to the Schloss page of the Capacitie website as they become available and are a work in progress about the consequences and meaning of experiments developed by Douglas Harding to provide access to the *Holy Grail* of philosophical, theological and spiritual enquiry. This end, generally considered to be remote and inaccessible, is revealed by the Harding experiments to be 'at hand'. A claim regularly made throughout history but never previously demonstrated to be the case. The Schloss letters are now so extensive that I thought this brief introduction would help intending readers to get an idea of the theme before they set out to read the letters themselves.

Background

Spiritual teachings East and West point to a more comprehensive apprehension of our condition than our everyday consciousness makes plain. The series of experiments developed by Douglas Harding provide an immediate experience of this wider view, sometimes described as our true nature, essence, etc. Not everybody who does the experiments finds the revelation meaningful, in fact, the proportion of people who do so is limited to a single figure percentage of those who try the experiments.

The most likely explanation of why people, who are otherwise committed to the enquiry, don't find the experiments work for them is simply that the meaning escapes them or is not immediately apparent. Thus, for most people it is necessary to address both the meaning and the experience of the experiments.

The heavy emphasis on experience (via the experiments) tends to overlook their meaning aspect, which I think is equally important. In letter 75 George points out: "*They simply feel no need for it after the Fact (of the experimental revelation) And, of course, at bottom which is where we (and they) are coming from, they're quite right*". Quite so, but the danger of this approach is the third-person perspective is totally dismissed as irrelevant. An example of this unhealthy one-sidedness are the extreme views of neo-Advaitists with their claims that 'it is all a dream, nothing exists, you and I are figments of a free-floating, impersonal imagination'. My view is that a provisional conceptual framework is necessary; it is not enough simply to toss out the current notion of myself as an entity existing in a context of time and space. The basis for this new life outlook is exactly what George supplies. This is not to suggest that Douglas Harding has left meaning out of the equation. On the contrary, his writing, particularly *The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth*, constantly draws our attention to the need to cover both aspects. However, the results of the experiments can be so shattering that there is a tendency to focus on the experience alone.

The Approach

Taking Alpha and Omega of human experience, both in terms of human history and individual experience, as his framework, George signposts the journey from Alpha at the outset where we move from wholeness into separation, through the evolution of consciousness in a history which ultimately creates the conditions for reintegration at Omega. Thus we return to wholeness enhanced by the experience and fruits, not

simply of the individual life, but of the history of mankind: the means of the reintegration and conversion are the experiments. The result of the experiments is so ordinary, so natural, so everyday – that any attempt to accord them the status of ‘solution to the quest’ is considered by most people to be absurd; likewise, George’s own claim that they constitute ‘the end of history’. He takes Douglas Harding’s double injunction as the guiding principle of his work:

"To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for tomorrow or yesterday must be my first concern. And my second must be to find in this Now all my tomorrows and yesterdays".

The first concern is met in the experience of the experiments, the second involves an inversion of the customary world outlook and, as a consequence, it is deeply resisted. So, whilst the vision is plain its import is denied as long as the significance and value of the experiments continue to be overlooked. George attempts to overcome this resistance by revealing the meaning of the vision in a series of letters, which define an approach to the revelation of the experiments, through its history.

In my case, whilst the experiments take me beyond concept, I find that the everyday world and the established concepts and assumptions, which constitute my world-view quickly re-establish their primacy. Thus, it is not necessarily sufficient for the experiments to work. It is necessary for them to remodel the world-view, which continues to provide the context of my everyday action. For this to happen I have found that a new conceptual framework is required, a working hypothesis as it were, as a transition between the old and the new.

The Method

The ‘end’, generally considered to be remote and/or inaccessible, is revealed by the experiments to ‘be at hand’, a claim regularly made throughout history but never previously shown to be the case. George provides many examples of the brightest minds reaching the limit of intellectual revelation but usually failing to make the necessary shift from concept to direct perception.

The second concern, identified by Douglas, is “...to find in this Now all my tomorrows and yesterdays”. This is the harder of the two concerns in my opinion and the one which George has chosen to tackle in his letters to Carl. The letters identify the point at which the work of key thinkers, on the edge of a transformative realization, come to an apparently insurmountable obstacle, as if there is a boundary at the limits of thought where, it seems, there arises the need for a shift from knowing into being, a shift which the writer is unable to make in the absence of suitable means. George shows that, in many cases, the necessary instrument has arrived in the form of the Harding experiments. The letters provide details of such cases but I have attached an appendix to this introduction with a few brief notes by way of examples. (*In preparation*)

Personal Response

I was overwhelmed by the experience offered by my first taste of the experiments – that was sometime in 1991. They delivered a sense of connection and wholeness, which had previously been available only as brief glimpses. Nevertheless, I was aware that, in spite of their effectiveness in delivering the ‘goods’, my world outlook quickly re-established itself. Sometime later I had an inversion experience where my view of myself as an entity existing along a very strongly ‘experienced’ line of time was

suddenly supplanted by a sense that past and future existed, not exactly in me, but in a wholeness from which, whatever I am, I was not separate. I later came upon Douglas's second injunction which seemed to be describing that experience most accurately, "...to find in this Now all my tomorrows and yesterdays"; time revealed as a tool of the imagination and not the context in which I live. Consequently, I have been very interested in getting to the bottom of the Harding story not merely in terms of the experience, for which as a Traherne enthusiast, I am extremely grateful, but also in terms of its meaning without which, I think it is incomplete. In this respect, I have found the contribution of George Schloss to be invaluable.

Conclusion

The revelation of the first person perspective is made plain by the experiments. That is the 'end' which George constantly affirms. However, unless the full implications are made plain to our third person perspective, Harding's work will be pigeon-holed as an interesting, innovatory approach to the perennial philosophy rather than the foundation for a revolutionary shift in consciousness. The experiments open a window on meaning. They offer a primary, first-person perspective on meaning in the sense of primary meaning; not the meaning we ascribe to things and events but the meaning which gives rise to things and events; that meaning which stands under the various combinations of energy and matter that make up our world.