





**THE LANGUAGE OF SILENCE**

**George Schloss**

**VOLUME 2—LETTERS**

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## FOREWORD

This book is a collection of letters that my friend George wrote to me over the last few years. In a sense, they represent one end of a conversation between George and me. For you, the reader, the other end must necessarily seem somewhat mysterious. I think that is why George asked me to write this preface.

Let me assure you that the mystery is entirely illusory. You are missing nothing of any consequence. For one thing, I contributed very little that is not evident in the letters themselves. For another, you are already perfectly positioned to see what these letters are all about.

George and I have a shared interest in the question “What am I?” Our conversation began when a mutual friend, Douglas Harding, asked us to perform an experiment, which, he said, would generate some clarifying data on the question. Point your finger at the scene in front of you, he said, and notice that your finger is a thing pointing at another thing. Your attention is directed from one object to another object, both of them opaque, colored and shaped, separate and distant. And the situation is the same if you point to your feet, your belly, your chest. Thing to thing. And then he asked, What do you see when you point to the place where others see your face, the place right where you are?

Well, I’ll tell you what I saw. It wasn’t a thing, it was nothing, a zero. It was a clearing that was as clear as glass, an opening open to infinity, and it was filled with everything. And it was me. George got the same results that I did. And so we began our conversation.

It’s for you to perform the experiment, right now if you like, and see what results you get. You and only you are in a position to see what that inpointing finger is pointing at. If you

get the same results that George and I got, then you will see- see, not know, not understand, but literally see what George is going on about in these letters.

One final suggestion. Zero plus zero is zero; zero less zero is zero. Zero is always the same. If you have performed the experiment and gotten the results that George and I have gotten- if you have seen that you are the clearing, the zero, at the other end of your inpointing finger- then I suggest that the other end of my conversation with George is not mysterious, or hidden or inaccessible at all. You are it!

*Carl Cooper*

**To Carl Cooper with thanks.**



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## INTRODUCTION

These letters were written by George Schloss to Carl Cooper over a period of three years from February 2003. They were progressively added to a website at [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org). I later suggested to George that we put them together in book format together with some of his other work. They are now collected here to form the second volume in the series.

After a lifetime of enquiry I, like George, stumbled on the work of Douglas Harding. I was as impressed as he was by the simplicity and effectiveness of the experiments which Harding designed to show rather than tell. I find the revelation of the experiments undeniable, the experience is complete and convincing, but what about the meaning? What is the significance in relation to everyday life in general, to my and our life stories and to history. These are the questions George deals with so comprehensively in his essays and letters.

It is important to note that an intellectual appreciation of the points that George makes is not, in itself, sufficient; the experiments must do their work on the reader for the meaning of the commentaries to become clear.

Even so, I sometimes found myself struggling to understand passages in George's essay and letters. I dealt with these problems either by question and answer of the sort included in Appendix I, Volume 1 or by writing summaries which I then asked George to review for errors and misinterpretation. I include one of these summaries as an introduction and conclude with another as an epilogue to this volume.

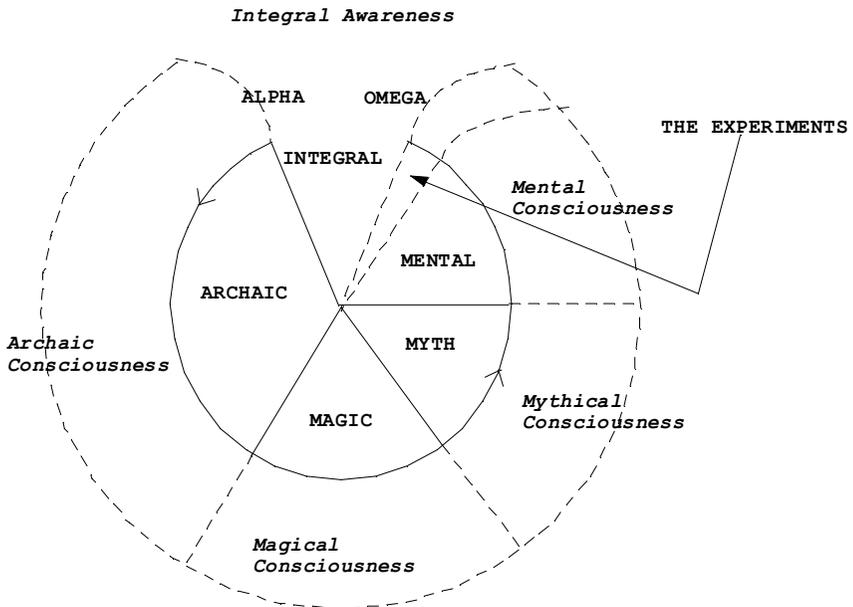
*Alan Mann*



## Commentary on Letters to Carl 2003 — 2007

George draws on the work of Jean Gebser<sup>1</sup> to illustrate his thesis that the Harding experiments provide a doorway to the Integral Awareness, which Gebser says is the threshold on which humanity now stands.

I start with a modification of a George's diagram in Letter 6, Dwg 1, which includes the Gebser categories .



Dwg 1

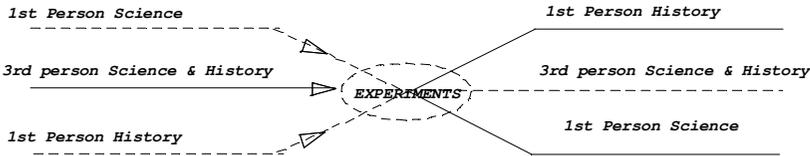
The diagram shows, in anti-clockwise progression, an evolutionary perspective of human consciousness from Alpha to Omega. At the transition point, from our present location in the mental segment, to the integral there arises a possibility of inversion; an awakening to a non-temporal awareness which includes the whole movement. In Gebser's words: *Origin is ever-present. It is not a beginning, since all beginning is linked with time. And the present is not just the "now," today, the moment or a unit of time. It is ever-originating, an achievement of full integration and continuous renewal.*

<sup>1</sup> The Ever Present Origin

*Anyone able to “concretize,” i.e., to realize and effect the reality of origin and the present in their entirety, supersedes “beginning” and “end” and the mere here and now.*

The diagram also attempts to show this inversion of consciousness, consciousness now experienced as ‘all-encompassing awareness’ (graphically represented above as the Integral ground which embraces everything) in which history arises, and not as an emanation of a particular cultural period. George points out that the Harding experiments provide the means for what Gebser refers to as ‘verition’ or concretization of the integral. (Bringing into being? – see below) and the ‘waring’ which is how Gebser describes the necessary action and, in my opinion, accurately describes the state of consciousness revealed by the experiments.

Another of George’s drawings – which I used as a model to check my interpretation of what he is saying – appears below.



Dwg 2

*Awareness before and after the experiments.*

At the left of the diagram the solid line indicates the dominance of the objective and generally accepted world view as represented by 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science and History shown as a solid line. The dotted lines of the left side represent the non-realized or barely realized aspects of awareness, that is, 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science and History. This condition has prevailed throughout human history, through the levels illustrated in Dwg. 1, up until the present and the appearance of the experiments.

At the centre of Dwg. 2 sits a dotted egg representing the Harding experiments which reveal that what appeared as shad-

owy (dotted-lined) prior to the experiments is, in fact, primary and encompasses as secondary what was formerly regarded as primary (3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science and History. Right side of Dwg. 2). The *shadowy nothing* now recognised as 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science and History embraces 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science and History which is now seen to arise within and as an aspect of Awareness, i.e., the Integral.

The diagram is a third person artefact and there is a danger that I will try to apprehend the right hand of the diagram and all it implies from a position or point of view located in the left hand side. That is, I will try to read and understand it “from my point of view”. This attempt takes place in spite of the fact that the experiments, at centre-diagram, have disposed of “my imagined centre” or point of view, or more accurately, relegated it to its proper place.

Somehow, this diagram and what it describes has to be apprehended from the openness of no-viewpoint revealed by the experiments; what I understand Gebser to mean by ‘aperspectival’. This involves a transition from the ‘mental’ to the ‘integrated’. The whole has to be seen not from the gap but somehow as the gap in action. I think this is what Gebser means by his use of the word “verition”.

So, the right side of the above diagram represents awareness at the integrated stage. There has been an inversion from awareness, understood as a product of science and history, to an awareness of awareness itself as origin.

If this is actually apprehended, as opposed to merely conceptualised, then we have arrived at what George refers to as the Gap, in his own words: “*where Omega is joined to Alpha courtesy of the Gap*”. (The Gap is revealed by the Harding experiments and, in particular, the experiment in which people stand in a circle and note the break in the circle of heads where their own is assumed to be). Gebser talks about this as concretization of origin and says it comes about through the ‘waring’ of it. As far as I know, he doesn’t say how to go about ‘waring’ and I first wondered whether he realized it could be ‘done’. He most likely became aware himself through some spontaneous revelation. He didn’t seem to be aware of the Harding experiments. George draws our attention in these letters to the approach of Gebser and others who have reached a

point, in the terms of Dwg 1, we can describe as *post-mental* thinkers and who, like Gebser, have pointed to the next stage. Gebser provides examples of the imminence of the integral phase which is now opening up but without saying very much, if anything at all, about the 'how' of it. For that I was able to turn to another great work, which I had read shortly before I read Gebser's *Ever Present Origin*. This was *The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth* by Douglas Harding, a book which provides background and foreground of the missing element. His statement:

“To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for to-morrow or yesterday must be my first concern. And my second must be to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays”.

...makes perfect sense but, nevertheless, the tendency to reverse the inversion and try to encompass the Integral in the Mental remains strong, which, in a way, is what I'm doing now in trying to step it down into explanation. I suppose, based on my own struggles, I am talking about *incomplete verition*. Or, in George's terms (Letter 1)—I keep falling back into the arms of the nightmare.

I have a difficulty with the above quotation. “To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for to-morrow or yesterday must be my first concern”. I interpret this as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person understanding of my place following the experiments. I imagine the 1<sup>st</sup> Person interpretation would be “To realize this instantaneous Now, to live AS the present moment, etc. Then the second sentence of the quotation falls exactly into place.... “ to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays”.

This helps me explain what I mean by being hit by the second barrel of the shotgun which blows off my head. Barrel one, or pointing, finger, BANG! transparency revealed. Clearly seen, so obvious, undeniably true. As Douglas says “*Everybody gets it but few believe what they see*” That has been my story too as history kicks in with its qualifications and doubts, ‘it couldn't possibly be

so simple', etc. That is what I mean by that transitional segment or incomplete inversion. When I really see that what I directly apprehend is really IT – source, origin, then the second barrel has gone off. *Till we see our nothing we cannot understand the value of our being* says Traherne.

I think the diagram, Dwg 1, is as close as we can get to Gebser's vision in graphic representation:

"Our concern is with a new reality – a reality functioning and effectual integrally, in which intensity and action, the effective and the effect co-exist; one where origin, by virtue of "presentation," blossoms forth anew; and one in which the present is all-encompassing and entire. Integral reality is the world's transparency, a perceiving of the world as truth: a mutual perceiving and imparting of truth of the world and of man and of all that translucens both". Jean Gebser.

John Wren-Lewis<sup>2</sup> has an interesting suggestion about why we find it hard to see this:

"The hypothesis I've come up with is that the block which cuts off so-called normal human consciousness from its roots in that other, impersonal consciousness, is some kind of inflation or hyperactivity of the psychological survival-system. Exactly how or when this originated in the history of our species I have no idea, and at present don't propose to speculate. But the effect of this hyper-defensiveness is to focus individual consciousness so rigidly on the business of securing its own future that the underlying universal consciousness, with its every-

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<sup>2</sup> The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology (Vol. 26, Number 2, 1994) entitled 'Aftereffects of Near-Death Experience: A survival mechanism hypothesis'

present-moment happiness, peace and wonder, gets shut out”.

He goes on to say that Douglas Harding’s exercises for discovering one’s own essential ‘headlessness’ were the best ideas he’d yet come across for the first half of this process, and reminds us of Harding’s admission, that most people ‘get it but simply don’t believe it’

I find George’s work invaluable in addressing this difficulty of getting to believe what I see and dealing with the meaning, as opposed to the experiencing, aspect of the Harding work. In his analysis of the movement of history towards the Integral he places the inversion in an historical context and then shows how this context is transcended and seen to be the content of a deeper context; the integral awareness made plain in the experiments.

I wonder if, in addition to the ‘brain cataract’ diagnosis referred to by John Wren-Lewis, referred to (above), the continuing influence of the magical, mythical and mental components of consciousness may be another reason for our failure to grasp what the mystics ask us to share: the magical creating an expectation of a “super-natural” no longer necessary since the perfectly natural will do; the mythical creating a story line for which illumination may or may not provide a conclusion and the mental requiring us to find illumination by way of ever-improving explanations — all now seen as falling short of direct experience.

*Alan Mann*

**LETTERS TO  
CARL COOPER**

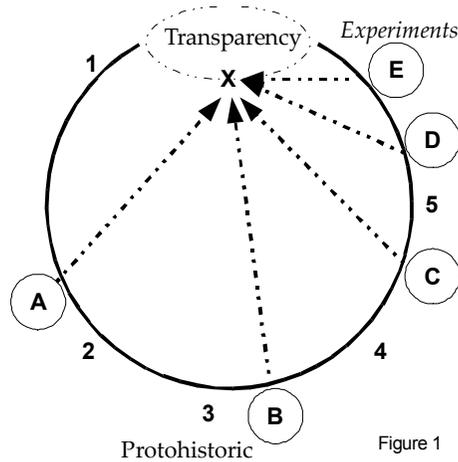
**2003 - 2004**



### Letter 1 — January 4, 2003

Dear Carl, As we discussed on the phone, I include a brief variation, Figure 1, on the drawing in my recent letter. It seems to me we can chart the course of the Temporal Dimension in even greater detail by incorporating “individual experience”—the workings of a vertical, a radial Grace (the spirit blowing where it listeth)—within the wider context of a horizontal circumference, a seemingly time-bound Providence that, offering direction and limits and operating through a history now revealed as both meaningful and goal-oriented, finds itself no longer bound and limited but delivered. There *where* so many have arrived singly at the Gap—the X that marks the spot (which journey I’ve indicated by the broken lines)—single vision becomes available to all *when* the fullness of time meets up with the emptiness of space, two sides of the same coin making in all One. And as promised

(whether as First or Second Coming), it *is* the fullness of time. If it weren’t we wouldn’t have the experiments—a circular argument, perhaps, until we realize because we *see* it that, open at both ends, the only Self-fulfilling prophecy there is ends up as it began by



making *sense* of what is referred to as the resurrection of the body.

Thus, Somewhere around designation 1-2 in Prehistory, we find the cave-drawings, for instance, where though the animals—the sacrificial prey—are depicted with heads, the Palaeolithic hunters are not, which phenomenon I’ve indicated by line A-X. And so on as we go down and around the line: B-X, Shamanism; C-X, Yoga in India and comparable methods in China; D-X, the mysticism so characteristic of Near East and Western spirituality; penultimately, E-X, Zen, and finally and ultimately the experi-

ments. It's interesting to observe how the last—Headlessness, the Omega—consciously approximates and “completes” the “natural” vision of the first, the headless hunters, and so makes the infant Alpha actual and intelligible. And why not since, the one emerging from its place of origin, the other, *incorporating* even as it supersedes its beginning, can only be fully grasped at its end? And if I've omitted prophecy it's simply because with a few somewhat dubious exceptions (Moses and the burning bush, the testimony of Job), its claims have largely been based on the hearing of the ear—the organ that, by measuring time and then taking, first, story and then history to the end of the line, paradoxically and providentially leads the way to its own apotheosis and redemption. In fact, it was precisely the “failure” and subsequent attrition of its “faith” in hearing—the Word—that proved instrumental in uncovering ultimate vision. Which alone should give us pause as to the nature of Grace and Providence. Though the instances of a Grace, special or otherwise, are as innumerable as sunsets everywhere and everywhen—and who knows how many have gone unregarded and unrecorded?—the fact that the last word (which is no word at all) has been left to a Providence taking the long way round, like the experiments themselves speaks louder than words to our present condition.

Just some thoughts. I'll be in touch as soon as I return from Nacton.

*George*

## Letter 2 – February 20, 2004

As agreed an attempt to get some of the material we've been talking about down on paper if only for the record. Speaking for myself (and, it goes without saying, for my Self as well) I'm delighted we've finally achieved a position—literally *the* position—to confirm what's oft been sought and thought and sometimes even taught, but was ne'er so well expressed till now, at least in language—certainly not in a word, even the Word. I refer, of course, to the claims of Seeing: how, no longer under house-arrest in heaven, God or a reasonable facsimile thereof has actually been spotted going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it in the company of, of all people, the devil ( i.e. *deus* diminutive, *devilus*, the little one), a joint undertaking designed to blow both their covers to hell and so reveal via the saving grace of two-way looking exactly who they, that is, we are.

That being the case, I suggest we cut right to the chase and, by-passing the party of the first part, the experience, as being at once no-thing if not Self-evident and at the same time no-thing *and* Self-evident, head straight for the party of the second, the meaning of it all which in our so-called peoplehood is, like the proof of the pudding that lies only in the eating, not so simply and immediately recognizable. As Douglas puts it so succinctly on page 224 of the Hierarchy, "To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, *taking no thought for to-morrow* or yesterday must be my first concern. And my second must be to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays." If, as in the first instance, the experiments are, properly speaking, beyond discussion, then, on the principle that nature hates a vacuum but adores a void, mightn't it follow that the second will attempt to fill the gap if only by default? And so we have the spectacle of the exact Science of the 1<sup>st</sup> Person, the mode of our deliverance, extending its sheltering arms to its kissing cousin, 1<sup>st</sup> Person History, the mode of its delivery, and by this act of all-encompassing inclusion reconciling the proof that pre-eminently goes without saying to the truth whose very life depends on it. But isn't that altogether the story of Headlessness, this marriage of opposites, of silence and speech, space and time, perception and conception, certainty and opinion, sacred and profane, providence and predestination, making in all

One? And if all this seems a little too abstruse at the moment and too compressed for instant digestion, rest assured that like the patient British on their weather—"If you don't like it, wait a minute"—all will come clear, I dare say not only in time but in eternity too.

An example. You may have noticed I've taken the liberty of italicizing, in the Douglas quote above, the *no thought* in "*taking no thought for tomorrow*" and the *find* in "*my second must be to find in this Now,*" the one, *pace* squirrels and beavers, in seeming contradiction to the other yet each, when you think of it—and being who we are how can we not?—doing what, in its own way, comes naturally. For if, in our fear of self-flattery, we didn't know better, which is too bad, we might almost be convinced it's the not-yet in hot pursuit of the Given, the already-here, that catches up with itSelf instead of the other way round, that in reality it's the hound of heaven who, its tongue hanging out, finally hits bottom and, rolling over, plays dead for the sake of its opposite number. That's assuming a zero can be said to have an opposite number. At any rate, like the proverbial flea-bitten mutt running around in circles only to end up its own you-know-what, thereby hangs a tale which, variously described as a Decline and Fall or the Death of God or the End of an Era if not an Age or even an Aeon or, God help us, even a World—all true incidentally—we're now equipped, thanks to the experiments, to classify quite simply as the end of history, this last, though a "consummation devoutly to be wished," not to be confused with its termination.

Concerning which, little did I dream over sixty years ago, long before I was entitled to dream, no less recognize, that dreams come true—that, indeed, that's what they're there for—when, along with *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, I discovered in Joyce's correspondence what, in effect, was to become his motto and mine if only by right of association: "History is a nightmare from which I'm trying to awaken"—little did I dream it was precisely *the* nightmare, the hell and chaos of modernity and all it entailed that was to provide the necessary catalyst to shock us into recognition, to wake us up and force us or at least me, when all else failed, to turn and look the other way. So let that be our watchword, the

guiding light to what we do see revealed when we finally wake from sleep.



### Letter 3 – March 15, 2004

Though I began this follow-up to my first letter about a week ago I was almost immediately forced to put it aside in deference to another stay in the hospital—a “repair” job, as they euphemistically referred to it, from which I’ve just been, if not spared, at least released. No picnic but not as bad as the first go-round. “The worst is not/ So long as we can say, ‘This is the worst.’ “

At any rate, picking up where we left off (significantly enough on this the Ides of March), it might not be a bad idea before we move on to examine the relation between 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science and 1<sup>st</sup> Person History, especially with emphasis on the latter which is our particular concern, the first having been definitively, indeed exhaustively, explored by Douglas once and for all. And, like the songs say, I do mean once and for all. Because if—again, following his scheme as outlined on page 224 of THE HIERARCHY and which I referred to in my first letter—if our thesis is correct, then the experiments both present as 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science, and re-present as 1<sup>st</sup> Person History, not merely variations on a theme but the theme itself, the Open Sesame we’ve been looking for since the beginning of time and which, because everything under heaven and earth necessarily conforms to it, everything under heaven and earth necessarily confirms it. In this regard, it should come as no surprise that, as with all original *perception* whether animal or infant, the visibly articulate if silent science offered up instantly on contact to every sentient being takes precedence over *conception*, the consciousness and commentary that, passing for “human,” literally takes time, at the very least the time it takes to talk and so make history. Which is no doubt why, coming too soon, even an Aristotle, one of the first to consider the question (as distinct from its answer, which, due to the unholy and child-like babble it stirred up, has had to await its turn to be seen and not merely heard), understandably missed the boat on this one when he awarded poetry the palm over what he judged simple narrative, however exact. And this on the ground that the possible, provided it was probable, was more “philosophical and elevated” and so, presumably, more highfalutin and symbolic than what actually and factually “is.” What he could not know, of course, because, among other things, time takes time, was

that over and beyond or, if you prefer, under and beneath all phenomena lay not only the possible because probable, but the philosophic cum universal, what, thanks to the experiments, we can now ascribe with absolute assurance to the certain and necessary and this without in any way falling into the trap of the progressivist, the so-called historicist fallacy. Because we all know where invoking the present rather than Presence as the last rather than merely the latest word has gotten us “now” people—as if the Omega were no more than a repetition, an echo of the Alpha rather than comprised and inclusive of it and then some.

As I never tire of pointing out, Nishitani frames it as well as anybody: “The task of the ‘ought’ is already determined by the other-directedness of the ‘is.’ Since a concrete demonstration of this and how we arrived at it represents the heart of what we’re up to, we can go into it in more detail as we go along. Enough for the moment to state categorically that it’s no more (nor less) than to join, along with so many others, in that universal chorus that proclaims that it’s love, love, love that makes the world go round—the only difference being that for the first time ever we’re finally in a position, *the* position, to prove it.

#### **Letter 4 – March 18, 2004**

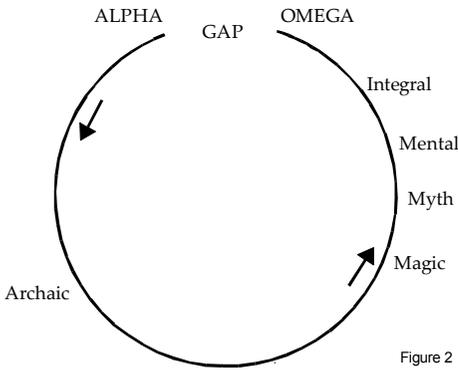
So little to say and so much time to say it in. We should never have worse problems than to take this God's-eye view of things.

I want to explore a little further this business of the Alpha and Omega but as you've no doubt already realized I'm going to have to do it by regular mail, simply because I want to include a few figures and I still haven't "figured out" (sic!) how to get this infernal machine to draw them. So please forgive the hit-or-miss hand-me-down appearance.

You'll also note, I'm sure, that for simplicity's sake and simply because they're right on, I've made use of Gebser's structural designations: archaic, magic, mythical, mental and integral. I know we've talked about them before and, as I recall, I actually used them in a modified form in previous letters but they bear repeating. It's amazing to me how close he comes to playing a John the Baptist crying in the wilderness for our You-Know-Who to show his no-face. And, of course, what's so marvelous about Headlessness and the experiments and the reason we can talk with such assurance without blushing is that we know the "Who" in You-Know-Who is just as much a What and Where and has nothing, but absolutely nothing, to do with Douglas. Or, at least, no more (nor less) than It has to do with you, me or any or everyone else.

I start off with Figure 2 mainly for its "human" interest and to set the stage to indicate how temporally asymmetrical our experience here on earth has been. For convenience' sake I'll smooth all this out in Figure 3.

Nothing all that unusual to note here other than how huddled up any display of humanoid existence seems when measured against the All or at least the relative humanoid all. If you figure the Archaic for a million or two years and the Magical for maybe fifty thousand or so before Myth melds into Mental about six or seven thousand years ago, where does that leave us, clutching at one another on the border of the Integral? At about a minute and a half to midnight on the great scale-pan if that, as speeding up we approach the "end" at the Omega point. (My God, I'm beginning to sound like Teilhard and I don't mean to. I certainly don't want

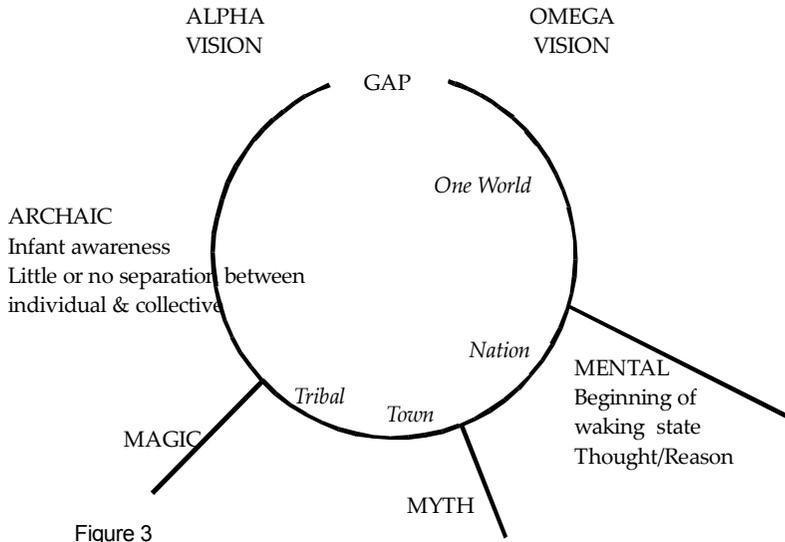


to). How fast can we go? How high can we grow? How long can we live when time, both macro – and microcosmically, gives every indication of exploding into the space out of which it was born, a movement more or less being played out

before our eyes in the “real” world even as it replicates itSelf every minute of the day courtesy of every experiment? The old alchemical formula—“as above, so below; as without, so within” —also applies to bombs since anyway you look at it the experiments, too, are nothing if not bombs, are, if the truth be told, no-thing *and* bombs. Like everything else, the acceleration is all of apiece. Not necessarily a great virtue (after all, it’s we who have the experiments, though at a price, not they) —nevertheless, the early Egyptian dynasties endured for thousands of years. We consider it an accomplishment that as the oldest-living republic we’ve lasted a little over two hundred. To be continued.

### Letter 5 – March 19, 2004

True to our agreement, I've decided to limit myself to one or, at the most, two pages a throw. Hence, the rather abrupt halt to my previous remarks.



Picking up from where we left off, above a more detailed if somewhat abstract and stylized depiction of the course we've managed to trace out for ourselves these past few hundred thousand years or so. Please note this is in no way meant to be an accurate or proportioned blow by blow description time-wise; merely a few broad strokes to indicate the general direction in which we've been "heading" — indeed, where a fortunate few have already arrived, at least in *theoria*, that is to say in "Seeing," an activity not necessarily to be confused with conscious behavior, that is to say with Being.

I trust the designations, rudimentary as they may be, are comprehensible: infant vision, for instance, at ALPHA, indicated in small case to distinguish it from conscious child-like VISION at OMEGA, awareness of awareness — and so on. Frankly, I'm not too thrilled with this oversimplified kind of presentation other than as points for future reference, to be invoked only when needed.



## Letter 6 – March 25, 2004

One last graphic, thank God, and a simple one at that.

If we take the same “circle” (and it’s important to note it’s never a closed circle, all closed circles being imaginary, i.e. abstractions solely dependent on observation at the cost, the vital cost of Self-participation)—if we take the same circle and use the same designations only this time *zero* in on Gebser’s MENTAL, that age from which, presumably, we’re just now emerging as, hopefully, we “head” for the INTEGRAL, we come up with a rather curious

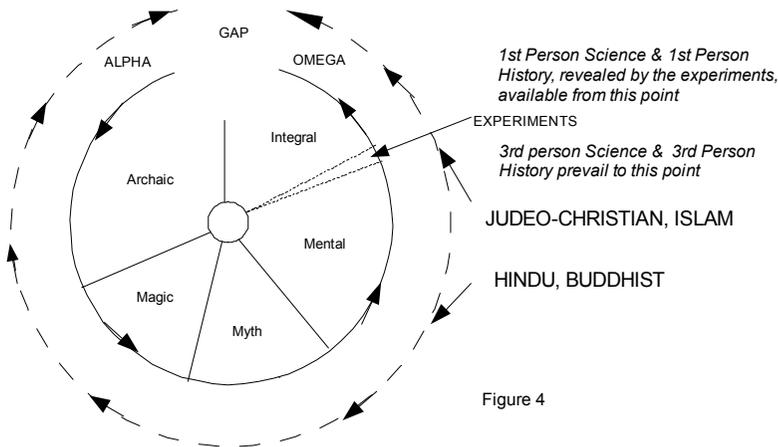


Figure 4

phenomenon. On the one hand, we see Buddhism, specifically Zen, resign in protest from a mother Hinduism with its spelled-out and assertive emphasis on a positive Self—“Thou art that”—in favor of an indeterminate, amorphous No-Self—“Not this, not this”—just as, on the other, we see Christianity almost immediately differentiate itself from its parent Judaism on the grounds that, the good news already arrived, all we have to do is await its Second Coming. I include Islam as a reversion, though this time on a universal rather than a parochial scale, to the this-worldly Jewish roots from which it arose in contrast to a so-called other-worldly, “life-denying” (in Schweitzer’s words) Christianity.

In any case, if, coming round the bend from the myth to the mental, we extend Jaspers’ Axial period from say, 1000 B.C. to 1000 A.D., we can see how both these seminal movements—Mahayana Buddhism in its ultimate refined version, Zen, and Christianity—

seemingly converging at opposite ends of the earth, suddenly diverge. The one, in the absence of any history to speak of (considering it at best an illusion) reverses direction and hies it back to point Alpha as fast as it can which, despite its call for sudden enlightenment, isn't very fast at all, not if you have to spend a lifetime sitting cross-legged on your tale before you can end up negating the duality of speech altogether. The other, Christianity or, if you prefer, Christendom (betokening its all too imperialist detours), takes the opposite, the alternate route. Confronted with the horrors, the self-induced madness and nightmare of history, not least its own, yet literally sticking to its guns to the bitter end even in the shadow of the atom-bomb its collapse helped create, it nevertheless succeeds in coaxing the affirmation of silence out of "the Death of God" and so, miracle of miracles, achieves the better part if only by the skin of its teeth or, at least, the skin of ours. And, as I claim and the experiments verify, it *is* the better part if for no other reason than that the proof of the pudding lies in the eating and, as we see now seated before our very eyes, at Omega-time all are invited to the feast. The affirmation of silence does take precedence over the negation of speech if only because it includes it, just as, paradoxically — and it's the meaning of modernity — when it comes to saving time, the sense of an ending takes precedence over the babble of beginnings that got us there.

We'll have to go into this business of Alpha and Omega more thoroughly — because that, finally, is what we're talking about: the experiments as the absolute Omega experience.

### Letter 7 –April 13, 2004

Since it's almost impossible, at least for me, to determine where to begin when talking about the relationship between history and Headlessness, I might as well declare myself by beginning at the only place from which everything becomes comprehensible anyway and so have done with it once and for all. I refer, of course, to the end. Because in my mind there's no doubt that thanks to the experiments we are, if not at *the* end certainly at *an* end to history, not in the currently fashionable sense of a massive self-destruct (though the I-told-you-so syndrome is always a possibility, especially when playing with fire) or even in the more palatable if distasteful potential of a new Dark Age, but in a quite different sense: the sense of finality, of beating the bomb or war of attrition to the draw so to speak by means of a goal achieved, a mission accomplished – *the* mission as it happens. "I was a treasure and I wanted to be known," as one of the Sufi masters has it. And now, significantly enough (since there is a connection) the good news arrives just in time to be recognized by all even unto the "face" of the Unspeakable. From where, looking back (which is what history is all about or was until, again thanks to the experiments, it graced us with its Presence), everything falls into place, where in the twinkling of an eye even Mr. Eliot's "In my end is my beginning" is transformed from a paradox into a common-place, the only difference being that, though he said it and we read it, now we can prove it and he can't, or couldn't. If, that is, "proof" is the appropriate word for the silence that, though it admits of itSelf by way of the Word, lays no claim to either or even to the provisional certainty that, without exception, from Jesus and the Buddha on down to the latest avatar, to a Ramana Maharshi, for instance, has ruled the spiritual roost or at least what's passed for it up to now. "It's as plain as a gooseberry in the palm of your hand," Ramana used to say. Which indeed it is, once you've seen it. But how do you do that without almost killing yourself as he did straining for a vision or, going him one better, offering yourself up to be killed, which literal sacrifice when made once upon a time by you-know-who was, as it turned out, more than enough to satisfy local as well as universal requirements but, according to Kierkegaard at least, if committed twice in His Name would have

been both superfluous and in bad taste, an indulgence? Well, for the first time in history and as easy as switching on one of Mr. Edison's lights (and, not by coincidence, since there is a connection), we've found a way, I make so bold as to say *the* way. No longer reduced to playing it by ear like the fumbling amateurs we are or were, we, too, can be the Life of the party. We, too, by learning, or rather re-learning, to sight-read, are now in a position to profess our birth-right and so come into our own, testament enough that the meaning of modernity—the despair occasioned by the breakdown and finally collapse of transcendence, the Death of God thrown in for good measure as it were—has served its purpose.

That said, and admittedly it's a mouthful, we can afford to move on to the things that count—us—always keeping in mind the caveat that, as I pointed out in my opening note and Douglas never tires of repeating, the experience of any experiment—now there's a tautology for you!—is prior to whatever meaning attaches itself to it. Which is no more than to say that, whatever conclusions we may draw regarding both, from a God's-eye perspective and its corresponding sense of vertical fulfillment (up, down, heaven, hell), space—the domain of 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science—takes precedence over time, over the horizontal, linear “completion” of 1<sup>st</sup> Person History, not in the order of value, of course, but in the order of cause. We can go even further and, respectfully acknowledging all previous symbolisms as stations on the way rather than mere shots in the dark, nevertheless insist that, whether we know it or not or even like it or not, here at dead center where the cross is made (and, because conscious, eminently by us) is palpably where all life lives.

And if I bring this up now before setting out in earnest, it's only because I think that, the better to make our case for the sake of some hypothetical reader looking over our shoulder (and—who knows?—as Father Abraham suspected, one or two may more than suffice), we really ought to establish a few Ground-rules, the most obvious being our total debt to and reliance on evidence provided by the experiments. And again for the benefit of our hypothetical reader, should also note the emphasis we place on “the experiments” rather than on Douglas, for all that we owe him

for his unparalleled insight. It's my contention that one of the things that distinguishes generic Seeing from everything that's preceded it—and I can only insist on the "everything"—is its impersonality or, if you prefer (and I do), its anonymity. Because it's not what Douglas says or does or what you or I say or do but what the experiments say or, better yet, render in silence that differentiates them from everything that's gone before. And differentiates them to such a degree as to constitute at Omega what Alpha is only able to *foresee*: the ultimate reversal in kind, the world and everything in it turned upside down and so made right side up. Is it an accident that as with the interplay of lens, retina and light, the very mechanics of the act of seeing while mirroring its own reflection—the way of the world—also reveals the way of deity to those with a single eye trained to and on it? And is it possible that, in turn, this suggests a connection between the way of the world as brought to a head by 1<sup>st</sup> Person History and the way of deity as confirmed by 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science? Well, we shall see.



### Letter 8 – May 1, 2004

Since, hopefully, we're going to be able to touch all bases before we're through, I might as well pick up where we left off last time and consider this notion of differentiation, a most fruitful idea I picked up from Eric Voegelin years ago but have never got around to examining it in any depth though I've been meaning to. Because I think it contains an important key to what the experiments, not so much "re-present" but, present historically. And if I keep emphasizing in any way I can, whether by means of italics, quotation marks, underlinings etc., their essential difference from anything that's come before, it's only because in my view—and I trust it's *the* view—they *are* different from anything that's come before. Witness what we're doing right now: how, notwithstanding their tempting tendency to encourage public speaking with their unique method of delivering the message in person and in the 1<sup>st</sup> Person at that, they nevertheless insist on reaffirming the primacy of eye over ear by consigning their patented method of self-effacement to absolute silence which, by suiting the Word to the action instead of the other way around, enables them to head off the bugbear of all language (including this) and establish certainty in the midst of contradiction and duality.

Incidentally, although I know we've mentioned Voegelin in passing, I don't recall how familiar you are with his work, especially with the last volume of his brilliant *Order and History* entitled *The Ecumenic Age* which, aside from the influence it had on me, at least until I learned about Headlessness, can now serve, however unwittingly, as both a useful foil in exposing the subsequent divergences between us and, at the same time, help in delineating the newly-uncovered parameters established by the experiments. Briefly, where the evidence provided by both disciplines is in total agreement or, better yet, corroborates his hypothetical thesis with our living proof—namely, that the truth of reality is always and everywhere present and the same—what does vary is the degree of differentiation from its original compactness and our capacity to recognize it. Which as we or, at any rate, I learned in college is no more than to say that phylogeny, the development of the race, recapitulates ontogeny, the development of the individual. Or maybe, like the chicken and the egg, it's the

other way round. Since they both go hand in hand and we're not biologists anyway, no matter. What we can say with certainty, however, since conscious or not we're always experiencing it, is that from first to last the development or, if you prefer, the circular "progress," whether individual or collective, from Alpha to Omega, from infant or primitive vision (small "v") as it evolves into imagination and its consequent symbolism in magic and myth, and then, having exhausted all avenues by way of adult reason and intellect and thought, finally ends, but not quite, where it started at the Gap but seen now from this side, from the near side—what we can say with certainty is that this Vision in all its fullness no longer has to pop up out of nowhere or, at best, the nearest blind alley, to pose in a glass darkly for the fortunate few but, in accordance with modern democratic principle—and, in this regard, the relationship between the two is no accident—is finally revealed as open and available to all and not just theoretically but at will.

That said—and so far so good—we can more than go along with Voegelin's acute analysis of the vehicle par excellence that determines this differentiation and that vehicle is history. And by history is meant, following Hegel, not just ordinary history—records, chronicles, journals and so forth—or even reflective history—what in the West, at least, has, since the Greeks, since Herodotus and Thucydides and Aristotle, passed for history, for the appraisal of the coming-to-be and passing-away of all things—but what the Bible knows as sacred, Hegel as philosophic and we, nameless or, better yet, name-free though hardly speechless types and only recently graduated from the school of Hard Nots with our majors in religion or theology or metaphysics or just plain what have you, now we, too, can proudly point to as our degree in no degree, our stake in absolutely no-thing. Quite simply, in contrast to so many but by no means all his colleagues, for Voegelin the essential meaning of history does not derive from a survey or assessment of a series of events, however significant, but rather from the revelation of the Presence to whom it belongs. And as we and we alone, that is to say, we as All One are now in a position to absolutely verify and verify absolutely, as far as he went he was quite right in his claim that, by myopically if not rudely overlook-

ing the ME (more formally, if still somewhat familiarly, addressed as I AM), what usually passes for history does indeed only tell the half of it. Less, if we take into account what the experiments have to “say” about the reality of 3<sup>rd</sup> Person perception, of so-called observation pure and simple, presumably but mistakenly free from the encumbrance of an overriding participation. In any case—and again so far so good—Voegelin also comes, as we do, as we *must*, to the perfectly justifiable conclusion that any account of the stored and storied memory of human behavior in time must, by extension, include a reckoning of man’s participation in the divine presence and that this movement has a final, an eschatological direction. And there in that vague, almost tentative, word “direction” as distinct from, if not quite opposed to, such unqualified concepts as “goal” or “end” or “destination” and their teleological associations, is where we, or at least I, however reluctantly at first, have had and still have to part company with him. Just as, overstaying my leave and come to the end of the page, we two—you and I—must, by pre-agreement, part, though fittingly enough and happily in our case, only for the moment.



### Letter 9 – May 10, 2004

Sorry to have had to cut off my previous note so abruptly, especially since, reflecting, however tangentially, the parlous nature of our current dilemma, it seems to bear all the earmarks of the cliff-hanger we're actually living through. For instance, will he -Voegelin— take the leap or won't he? And if he does will he make it and so, by extension, help us to, with what consequences for the destiny of humankind we no longer have to leave to the imagination, it, too, being quite worn out from overuse and, like the rest of us caught up in the process of succumbing to FACT, very much up for grabs? Am I being too dramatic? Given the potential for the first time in history of a universal rescue operation to go along with the co-responding disaster that occasioned it, I don't think so. As a former teacher of mine used to point out: ideas, especially at their extremes, have consequences.

Seriously, just for the fun of it let's divide up and choose sides. Let's take a look at a couple of those ideas just for the sake of orientation, the most obvious being the absence of any at all or so close to absence as to constitute virtually nothing. Events like being born, eating and sleeping, breathing and laboring and fighting, leaving descendants, aging, dying—broadly speaking, the way the world works and, except for a hypothetical interruption or two like Athens or Jerusalem, has worked for ninety-nine and forty-four hundredths of its animal, vegetable and mineral, not to mention its human, life since the beginning of time. And not such a bad procedure at that considering its common sense approach has managed to get us where we are, so irretrievably lost as may provoke yet another advance cadre ready, willing and presumably able this time for one more run at converting never-never to ever-ever land and all in the twinkling of an eye.

I say "may," even though it doesn't look bloody likely at the moment. All the more reason, if past is prologue, to expect, to hope without hope as it were, for a rabbit out of the hat (one of which, it so happens, I just happen to have here under mine. Not that I've been asked, mind you). Meanwhile, discretion being the better part of valor, sufficient unto the day to head, if not quite for the absolute bottom of things— only the magic of the experiments can do that— at least close enough to that consummation devoutly

to be wished to enable us to sniff out our bearings that others may take theirs. And for that, in addition to Voegelin, we can call upon two other speed merchants of sorts, Nishitani and Altizer, making in all a promising trifecta on whom to place our bets. And, please note, this is in no way an attempt to set them up as sure winners (since there's only One anyway and It only wins for losing) or even to indulge in an exercise in name-dropping but simply to establish a quick and convenient method for defining positions by employing a kind of short-hand: by their readings, if you like, if not pictures; their soundings if not sightings. With Nishitani, for instance, and his younger colleague, also from the Kyoto School, Masao Abe (still with us, I understand, though, like Douglas, in his nineties), we get a perfect example of what I call the Alpha approach, the attempt to break the back of duality by a deliberate regression to the Gap as it is or, as we see now, was before the beginning. And I must admit that, until I discovered the experiments, Zen and its promise of sudden enlightenment seemed to me as to so many others, if not the only, certainly the quickest and surest way for us reputedly in-the-know moderns to get to heaven. (That is, if we can describe as "sudden" what takes a lifetime of sitting cross-legged to achieve. We've only to think of the original subtitle—since withdrawn—to *On Having No Head*). But, then, as I say, I discovered the experiments and all my notions of Buddhism's reputed superiority to Christianity, at least in this regard, went, if not straight to hell where it could go up in smoke, at least close enough to get itself singed. As I keep pointing out if only to remind me, I saw that though the one may very well have constituted the last word by going back to the beginning via the negation of speech, the other went it one better, if only by a hair's breadth, by pursuing history to the bitter end in order to announce as well as render, and in no uncertain terms, the affirmation of silence.

Now I realize there might be something distasteful, not to say odorous, in playing this comparison game—after all, who's keeping score?—but I do think it important, if only for the sake of defending the workings of Providence from the canard of being mysterious, as if mystery—from "mystes, closed lips"—pertained to that which cannot be known rather than to that which cannot be

spoken, a dualist charge that, so far as I know, Hegel was the first to expose and we're now in a position to confirm. In any case, how else account for a Buddhism, one of the great religions of the world (assuming, that is, that it's a religion at all) and, as Douglas has consistently recognized by acknowledging its influence, arguably at the top of its game in Zen, coming in second best to an abysmally failed Christianity in the Person, the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the experiments, if not to the ways of a Providence operating in its native habitat where "abysmal failures" like crucifixions, for instance, or "the cunning of reason" we know as history, take to it like mother's milk? And thereby hangs a tale.



### Letter 10 – May 14, 2004

A tale, indeed. “There is one story and one story only...” (Robert Graves). Constant, unchanging and, because unchanging, roomy enough for the happy ending so beloved by children of all ages in all ages including ours. And as Ishmael, the narrator if not hero of Melville’s *Moby Dick*, found to his horror as well as delight, the reward for living to tell the tale was....well, living to tell the tale. And now we’re in a position to.

Which brings me to Altizer who tells it very well as far as he goes, in fact, probably tells it as well if not better than anyone else I’ve come across absent the experiments. At least from our angle which, set at zero, turns out to be the really really right angle. In any case, though I may have cited it before if only in passing, I think that, despite its length, the following paragraph from his *Genesis and Apocalypse* is worth quoting in full if only because, with one exception (which I’ve underlined), it just about encapsulates all that can be said. (The italics will also be mine):

“Now we can see that modernity is not simply a reversal of the medieval world; it is far rather a deepening or extension of that world, even as the medieval world was a deepening and extension of the ancient Christian world. And nowhere is the modern world more fully itself than in its discovery of history as an irreversible and forward movement, and even if that discovery is an extension of medieval visions of history, it is nonetheless revolutionary, and most revolutionary in apprehending *the totality of history as the embodiment of providence or God*, a providence or God which is now the total immanence of God, and a total immanence reversing the transcendence of God even as ancient Christian visions of the transcendence of transcendence reversed the incarnation of God. If incarnation only fully enters the mind and the imagination with the full advent of the modern world, that is a consequence of a profound historical transformation, a transformation that only gradually evolves in history, and one generating deep regressions and reversals, but nevertheless one pro-

ceeding by a forward-moving process of historical evolution, an evolution that is a reversal of the backward movement of return. But if that reversal is ultimately and finally real, it is a reversal grounded in Godhead, and grounded in a reversal occurring in Godhead itself. Nothing less than such a reversal can be evoked by the symbol of the incarnation, and if historical Christianity has ever attempted a reversal of that symbol, that is a reversal which itself has been reversed by the actuality of history, and most clearly so in Western Christian history, a history that has very nearly completed a movement from the transcendence of transcendence to the immanence of immanence."

Though I might wonder at "a reversal occurring in Godhead itself" which, unless "defined" as to where, exactly, Godhead is or isn't, seems to me somewhat moot, I find this passage so packed with suggestion and meaning we could parse it till kingdom come and still have grounds for discussion, and more than discussion, agreement, the first of which might very well be the very real presence of that kingdom itself. That said, what seems to me its most salient point for our purposes is the "very nearly completed" I've underlined and which, as far as I can see, constitutes the major difference between us and not only the difference between us but between everything and, I dare say, everyone that's come before us, even someone who's come as close as Altizer. And that difference is, quite simply, the difference, on the one hand, between speech and faith in whatever shape and form they take and, on the other, the sure if silent knowledge manifest in the absolute certainty provided by the experiments. And by "silent" I most certainly do not mean the deliberate withdrawal from communication of any kind so favored by ascetic practitioners but, on the contrary, the language that literally speaks louder than words, the conscious participation between someone and no one in the one medium capable of fully surpassing itself because capable of fully delivering itSelf and which we sentimental late-comers now know more familiarly from every pop-tune ever written as the language of love. At any rate, are we entitled to

claim on the strength of the experiments alone, that the “very nearly” is no longer operative but has been superseded by the “fully completed” and, as we’re now equipped to demonstrate beyond all contention, the arena for this finishing touch is or, at least, was provided by history? I think we are. I think we must. But I’ll reserve that for next time.



### Letter 11 – May 19, 2004

Your bringing up the distinction between “direction” and “end” has triggered so many ideas I hardly know where to begin which, I suppose, may be as good a way as any to get started—*in media res* as they say or used to. Of course, when your looking is restricted to “out there,” to 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science—observation absent participation—everywhere you look is in the middle. That’s where the middle is. But, as the experiments instruct us, how about looking the other way and beginning at the beginning for a change, at the Alpha where Nishitani and Co. have ended up or, better yet, indeed best of all, at the end itSelf, at the Omega where, again courtesy of the experiments, time and space, the not-yet and the already-here, combine to give us the whole picture, the full Monty?

I’m reminded of a dubious quote from Lessing which bugged me for years and, although I suspected that something was out of sync, I could never quite figure out what or why. “The search for truth is more precious than its possession,” which even when delivered in the watered-down version I grew up with — “It’s not the getting but the going there that counts” — left me if not absolutely cold at least a little chilly and, as I’d learned from hard experience, for good reason. Try singing that version of the school-boy’s lament some wintry Saturday afternoon to the cashier at your local movie-house after you’ve braved a mile or so of rain, hail, sleet and snow, only to discover you’ve left your quarter—the price of admission—at home. Or as, in a more serious vein, the well-known Jewish joke would have it: try telling it to the three diamond merchants who, discovering their office at the very top of the Empire State Building is virtually unreachable due to an elevator strike but pressed by the urgent nature of their business, decide to give it a try anyway and walk it, agreeing to stop for rest and recuperation at every thirty-fifth floor to tell themselves a sad story and so cheer themselves up. Which they do, only to arrive, after two fell swoops, at a hundred and five floors to heaven and, rarified air or not, the saddest story of them all. They’ve forgotten the key. Now there’s a parable of transcendence for you and a moral, too, especially applicable to those who, easily winded, prefer to pay tribute to the chase rather than the quarry and so run

out of breath sooner rather than later. “Better to find” or, as we might say paraphrasing Aristotle, “better to see than to seek.” Best of all—and it’s the moral of the story—to remember to remember.

Which brings us, presumably because of its simplicity, to what seems to be the most complex of all to explicate but is rendered in perfect silence by those vigilantes of the spirit, the experiments. I’m referring to Dogen’s idea of practice as realization and realization as practice; of direction and end as, in reality, one and the same, only to be perceived as divided by various unresolved dualisms. So we have the *either/or* dichotomy of the three monotheisms where direction is direction and end is end and—no two ways about it—never the twain shall meet till they’re united in the heavenly you-know-where, a dead give-away if there ever was one as to where that you-know-where really really is and always has been only we couldn’t recognize it and wouldn’t have known what to call it if we had. A Gap? A (w)hole in the head? Or, taking it a step further, to the *both/and* where we arrive at the “thou art that” of the Upanishads which, along with its exaltation of the Self had, also, in turn, as with Judaism vis-à-vis Christianity, to give way to the *neti, neti* of the Vedanta—not this, not this—or the ultimate, or almost ultimate, in reversals: the *neither/nor* of Zen Buddhism. Which, like so much else, is fine as far as it goes. But if, as most seem to agree time must have a stop, does even that negation of speech go far enough, at least as far as it can go? Apparently not, not if history has anything to say about it and it obviously does if only by virtue of the experiments, those johnnies-come-lately insuring absolutism to a language not only condemned out of its own mouth but, come to the end of its rope and, like history itself, kicking and screaming all the way, finds itself sentenced to stand on its head in retribution for this “tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” Which no-thing, short of seeing it, was, for all its nihilistic flimflam, the very best we were able to come up with until only yesterday.

### Letter 12 – May 28, 2004

Once more into the breach with this follow-up to my last. For what it's worth, I'm still not completely satisfied with my analysis of direction and end and would like to explore more closely their essential relation to 1<sup>st</sup> Person History.

A quick review may be in order, if only to assure us that our own heads are screwed on tight (for which read, screwed off right). It seems to me, and the presence of the experiments would appear to corroborate, that, following Hegel, there are three kinds of history. There's what he calls original history—journals, diaries, but primarily records—which, with the invention of writing, first makes its appearance anywhere from Egypt to China. It's worth noting, too, on this score that, as regards China and environs (India, Japan and so on), with one or two exceptions—the *Shih-chi* of Ssu-ma Ch'ien, for instance, which, incidentally, Voegelin addresses—it's where, for good and sufficient reasons (notably, a quasi-metaphysical bent and devaluation of time), an interest in all but the most rudimentary chronicles was virtually non-existent. Also worth noting, though very much *a propos* of nothing, is that this lack of concern with things historical may help explain an associated geographical anomaly: the mystery of why, in spite of the world being round, that region was and still is arbitrarily referred to as the Far East. Were it not for fear of roiling international waters even more than they're stirred up already, we might even take a step further and ask, as if we didn't know, exactly where this Far East is far east of? Or its neighboring Near or Middle East for that matter? However...

And then we have the only other two histories or interpretations thereof that really count, the opposing, even contradictory, dispensations conventionally characterized, for convenience' sake, as Western but both, along with 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science, certainly at the very core of its unique contribution to what, in self-congratulatory mode, it refers to as the triumph of civilization but what we can now see encompasses something infinitely more inclusive. On the one hand, we have the gift from the Greeks, notably Herodotus and Thucydides, together with their notion of what Hegel calls reflective and what we now might characterize as horizontal, history, the type canonized by Aristotle and still very much with

us “in the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind” (Gibbon), at its best a description of the coming-to-be and passing-away of all things. On the other, and, as we see now, its direct counterpart: the latently four and sometimes even five-dimensional tale hinted at and maybe more than hinted at by the prophets and later, theologians, saints, philosophers and what-have-you of the biblical and post-biblical tradition (Blake, Hegel, Nietzsche), these last, if not in so many words, direct forerunners of Headlessness, certainly precursors of a change in what, once viewed as a mere climate of opinion, is now recognizable as a sphere, the sphere of knowledge become more and more visible. And this is not even to question, no less answer, *the* significance of the central figure in what was perceived, at least historically, as the greatest scandal of them all—the vertical figure slumped on a cross.

All this, of course, is old hat, old history. What is not old, however, are the new, even original, connections that we’re able to make in light of the experiments. And since he opened, though obviously didn’t christen and certainly didn’t end, the discussion, we might as well begin with Aristotle’s well-known but now seen to be mistaken claim that poetry, because more philosophical, is therefore more elevated and universal than history and this by virtue of the fact that it deals not only with the probable—with what may happen as distinct from the merely actual and, as a result, presumably more limited what did happen—but with the possible, what can happen. And, of course, within his self-imposed (as distinct from Self-imposed) limits, he was quite justified, a conclusion with which, with the exception of a dozen or so aberrant Christian centuries—from the conversion of Constantine, say, to what’s been referred to as “the waning of the Middle Ages”—world opinion or what passed for a world, gradually abandoning its pie-in-the-sky faith and returning to its senses (some might say with a vengeance), has largely agreed. Which, alone, should give us pause, as, indeed, it has, almost bringing us, if not to our knees, at least to a requisite temporary if not temporal impasse. What it could not know, however, what no-one and only no-one could possibly know or at least demonstrate with absolute certainty was that, as suspected, even prophesied and then at-

tempted by the trial-run on the cross, the significance of this absolute and certain knowledge would not only be withheld until the end of history it would coincide with it. Outrageous as it may sound to ears jaded by two millennia of presumably unfulfilled promises that even now are still found wanting as measured against the All, it all comes down to this: that the recognition of the convergence of direction and end terminating in a point that neither is one nor has one constitutes the meaning of history. Which, contrary to received opinion (a.k.a. superstition), is in no way to suggest that, like life itself, more's not on offer. On the contrary, the realization that not only the already-here but the not-yet is behind us—a mark of the Great Liberation often attested to but never quite proven by assorted saints, saviors and mystics East and West—has now been certified: signed, sealed and delivered in the person, the 1st Person, of the experiments, Its very Presence.



### Letter 13 – June 6, 2004

Despite your kind words of encouragement, I can't help recalling a classic routine in an old Marx Bros. movie, *A Day at the Races* (and I recommend it if you haven't seen it; they re-run it every so often), where Chico, spotting Groucho for a sucker, assures him that if he wants to play the horses successfully, he has to have the *Breeder's Guide*, copies of which he just happens to have on hand. The only catch, as Groucho discovers to his cost, is that his initial purchase—and it's about the size and weight of a Manhattan phone book and doesn't come cheap—turns out to be only the beginning. Because no sooner has he paid for the original than he's informed that he needs a guide to the Guide and then, as if that isn't enough—and it isn't—a guide to the guide to the Guide and so on. I trust you get the picture. I certainly did and still do as I watch Groucho, on overload and almost smothered by the scam, fade into the metaphorical sunset, poorer if not wiser.

All this by way of apologizing for, if not excusing, these guides to *The Guide* and my own tendency to get—shall we say a little complicated, certainly when compared to the experiments. But what can I do if, on the one hand, the material demands it and yet, on the other, I still want to avoid succumbing to what Yvor Winters, an old “new critic” and, indirectly, a mentor of mine (and a damn good one), brilliantly called—and it's the besetting sin of modernism—the *fallacy of imitative form*: the use and abuse of chaos come again to describe it, a mimic homeopathy which, if taken in small doses—like curing like—may just possibly heal (cf. Joyce's Ulysses) but overdone will certainly provide overkill. (Compare a good deal of what passes for modern poetry. Or am I showing my age?). Well, I'll tell you what I can do. I can do penance and try to mend my ways. To that end, and again presumptuously taking a leaf from Douglas' book, I offer this little drawing in the hope that if I can't quite reach the blessed self-defeating point of no-point with words, I can at least try to indicate it with images. Though I trust this is reasonably self-explanatory, a few clarifications, at least of my intentions, may be in order. So here I go again. The broken lines prior to the uncovering of the experiments at dead center are meant to indicate that, though operative and very much present as the outer parameters of all experience whether individ-

ual or collective, neither 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science nor 1<sup>st</sup> Person History are as yet consciously visible. This, of course, though quite in accordance with the Sufi hadith, “I was a mystery and wanted to be known” (and now is), is at the same time in direct contrast to the unbroken line marked 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science and 3<sup>rd</sup> Person History which, if it isn’t quite sure as to who or where it is or even what to call itself, obviously “knows” or at the very least senses

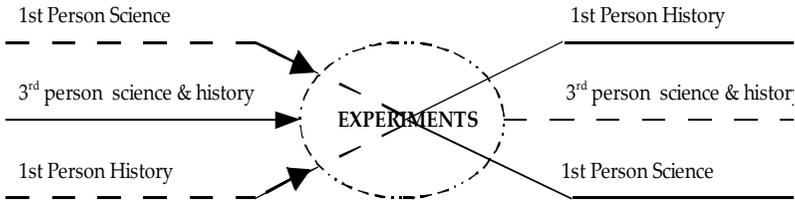


Figure 5

where it’s headed. As indicated by the arrow it’s well (or maybe not so well) on its way to the Never-Never Land of Heart’s Desire (may it rest in peace), the great joy-ride variously designated in this or that tradition as Heaven, Paradise, Nirvana—you name it. Unfortunately, or so it seems, like so many of us who start out life as Joan of Arc but, waylaid by fortune if not worse, end up resembling Minnie the Moocher, more often than not we wind up in a place that either smacks of milady’s lap or, depending on our persuasion, Daddy Warbucks’ pocket. That is, before finally tumbling into the dreaded bottomless pit however you slice it. Enter the experiments, those marvelous instruments for revealing the concealed *deus in machina*—amalgams of heaven and hell designed for a life on earth where, thank God, nothing and only no-thing stays the same even as everything changes. No words, no excuses, no explanations, no pretensions, above all—unlike what we’re doing now—no speechifying. As a result, no possibility for misunderstandings. Only the facts. Or better yet, the FACT : that what once appeared a dotted, that is to say a crooked, line, has now been made straight, vice versa’d so to speak as prophesied and all in the twinkling of an eye.

Also worth noting is that in addition to the reverse spin effecting our view of objects as well as of the Subject itSelf—righting

the retina's wrong and turning the inside out and the upside down—the schema is depicted as wide open at both ends and, like a babe in its mother's arms, in the middle, too, comparable, you may recall, to our earlier diagram where Omega is joined to Alpha courtesy of the Gap. What is it Catholic theologians used to say and maybe still do? "It takes three to get married." Interestingly enough, while enjoying (enjoying?) a short stint in a Zen monastery in Japan over forty years ago and obviously long before I ever heard of the experiments, as a required exercise I tried my hand at a haiku— as I suspect you're aware, a poem of strictly seventeen syllables—which, unless I'm mistaken, seems to describe, even transcribe precisely what we're consciously talking about now and which, interestingly enough, though for some reason I've since forgotten, I entitled "Where?"

A riddle –  
 end at the beginning,  
 the beginning in the middle.

Out of the mouth of a middling-aged babe flying high on a wing and a prayer. As to "Where?", it turns out my concern at the time—the seventeen syllables (and you can count 'em, God knows I sweated over them long enough)—was the least of it. What strikes me now is how dopily prescient I must have been and I suspect, ready or not and know it or not, we all are or else we wouldn't get it even in the last place. And I've tried to indicate this process of transformation by showing in the drawing how, beginning precisely in the middle, vision can be processed and so, filtered through the experiments and turned on its head, the world, life itSelf, can come up smelling of roses. Now it's 1<sup>st</sup> Person History and 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science that are seen and recognized for the straight arrows they are while the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person bunch—relativity theory, quantum theory, wave and particle theory and now even string theory —unable to make up their minds, no less their heads, have been politely conducted to the back of the bus where, still looking in the wrong direction, still dinging and donging away as Douglas would have it, is just where they belong. All of which, incidentally, ties in rather nicely with the latest news, specifically

this dispatch just in from the home front. It appears that due to Alaric's wholly unexpected arrival in Rome, our special correspondent, Augustine, has been called back to Carthage to complete work on his latest, tentatively entitled the City of God. For Christ's sake, will it never end? And, by the way, did I say Carthage? Are they still in the league? My apologies for having exceeded our agreed-upon boundaries.

P.S. In response to your reminder that it is not always clear from the context of a particular letter what is meant by certain terms, I include the following definitions:

3<sup>rd</sup> person science is the objective analysis and explanation of the world as it appears to consciousness, encapsulated in systems of knowledge which model objective reality.

3<sup>rd</sup> person history is our traditional, objective, narrative view and record of the series of events in time leading to our present situation.

1<sup>st</sup> person science is a participatory rather than observer-centred. Integral and time-free awareness, revealed as ground or source of 3<sup>rd</sup> person history, 3<sup>rd</sup> person science, 1<sup>st</sup> person history and everything.

1<sup>st</sup> person history is the record of the *evolutionary* aspect of human consciousness insofar as it relates to our delivery from the "Alpha of infant (archaic) awareness" reserving Omega (Integral awareness) for the end, for its *revolutionary* conclusion, "revolution" indicating nothing more (nor less) than a simple "turning-around? (Figure 4 – Letter 6 p. 33)

### Letter 14 – June 13, 2004

Considering their seductive nature and how easy it is to look rather than see and even easier to overlook, I'd like to spend a few minutes talking about the effect of history on the development of the experiments as it regards my own. And though I know I've touched on it, albeit not in any great detail, it might be helpful to review and briefly examine the various positions held by certainly four of the most formative influences on what I can only offer as my definitive conclusions regarding these extraordinary instruments that are, simply, what they point to. And if this seems a personal indulgence I can only plead it's not tendered out of any biographical concern as to where I come from, which is not the issue, but to illustrate what each represents by way of four different approaches to what one of them, Voegelin, has finally described as the perennial Question but which, on the contrary, as weighed in the balance and, for the first time in history not found wanting, we can now characterize as the Answer.

I'll take the four of them—Altizer, Voegelin, Nishitani and Douglas—in their order of appearance, at least in their relationship to me. And if, as we go along, I seem to be adopting a kind of short-hand and, in good racing fashion, handicapping them—well, I suppose I am. Since it goes with the territory I don't see how we can avoid it as long as we remember not only who we are but what we're up to: that as 1<sup>st</sup> Person historians it's our job not only to post the signs but secure the posts.

I'll begin with Altizer not only because he's chronologically closer to me than the others (I believe he was a graduate student in divinity at the University of Chicago not long after I left it as an undergraduate) but he was the first of the four I came across—my God, it's almost sixty years now. Presciently enough, it was an early book of his called *Oriental Mysticism and Biblical Eschatology* that first drew my attention to what we're up to right now, to the historical factor or, if you will, the absence of it in the so-called differences between the two great traditions of East and West, factors which have finally come to fruition in the definitive distinction we're now in a position to make between what we might call the Alpha (as exemplified by Nishitani) and the Omega approach of the experiments. In any case, though I was more or less aware of

what Altizer was about—his involvement as the titular leader of the Death of God movement, for instance, which belief, taking its cue from Nietzsche, was certainly engaging and God knows radical enough—even so, given my own bias, he seemed far too Christian for my taste. This despite or maybe because as a recently lapsed Catholic—a conversion that, under the undue influence of Tom Merton, had lasted all of a year or so—I already suspected, rather uneasily to say the least, that my bread was to be buttered elsewhere. Little did I dream that following a relatively brief time-out in India and Japan which I rather pretentiously described as a pilgrimage that same bread was to end up, not as a piece of cake (that had to await the experiments) but burnt to a crisp in a seemingly endless toast to the properties of wine. Still, though I didn't follow him all that closely I was more or less aware of his work and never more so than when, some twenty years after I'd first discovered him, he entered into a short but, for me at least, telling exchange with Voegelin, an exchange in which, as a confirmed Voegelinian by then, I was very much surprised to see he more than held his own. I'll go into that presently.

As for Voegelin, he well warrants a chapter, even a book, all to himself (as a matter of fact there've already been a few and no doubt more to follow), but since that's a luxury which, thanks to the experiments, we can now easily afford, I'll limit myself to a few remarks concerning his final hypothesis that I've come to think of as his doctrine of Equivalence. And an extremely useful one it is, too. Quite simply, it proposes and backs up with examples, the notion that, from first to next-to-last—and if there's no last it's simply because we can't know it or it wouldn't be the last—from first to the penultimate—and I'll let him complete the thought—"changes....come only through noetic advances which let more compact symbols appear inadequate in the light of more differentiated experiences of reality and their symbolization." And the key word here is obviously "differentiated," the so-called noetic advance that distinguishes yet joins the new Omega truth to the old Alpha truth, a connection that at once differentiates yet links my childish "now I lay me down to sleep..." or, for that matter, an early Egyptian or Sumerian wish-list, to the consciously child-like performance of any experiment; if the truth be told and

now it can be, to what we're doing right now: from first to last - and I do mean last—what our life on earth has, finally, been all about. To be continued.



### Letter 15 – June 18, 2004

In case you've forgotten or even if you haven't, let me pick up where I left off by repeating the last sentence of my previous letter, not that I particularly enjoy hearing the sound of my own voice (which, despite modest disclaimers to the contrary, like all of us I most certainly do), but to emphasize, to repeat and repeat over and over again the absolute centrality to our argument (if it is an argument; it's my claim that by now we've gone way beyond that) of this question of the increasing differentiation in spiritual perception, as far as I know a notion quite original with Voegelin, at least in so specific a form, and quite accurate, too, in its description of the process or, if you will, the "progress" from Alpha to Omega. That is, if, in contrast to naïve cyclical theory, going in a circle and an open one at that can be described as making anything but a progress of sorts.

At any rate, here it is: And the key word here is obviously 'differentiated', the so-called noetic advance that distinguishes yet joins the new Omega truth to the old Alpha truth, a connection that at once differentiates yet links my childish 'now I lay me down to sleep...' or, for that matter, an early Egyptian or Sumerian wish-list, to the consciously child-like performance of any experiment, to what, if the truth be told and now it can be, we're doing right now: from first to last — and I do mean last — what our life on earth has, finally, been all about.

I bring this up in connection with Voegelin not merely because I'd hinted at his importance for me earlier or even to single him out when, if the truth be told and now it can be, as regards this question of ultimate differentiation (which, thanks to the experiments, is no longer a question) his name is, if not quite legion, nevertheless not unknown in academic or philosophic circles, but merely to point out and point up the enormous resistance encountered by even the best will in the world (and a mind to match) when, failing the *sensible*, the actual physical assurance provided by the experiments, it attempts to come "face to face" not with any so-called symbolic eucharistic substance but with the very real presence itSelf. Because in the climactic and seminal chapter of the long-awaited last volume of his *Order and History*, where it comes down to a choice between a Plato, holding in

precarious balance the disparate claims between what we would call his 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Persons, and an over-the-wall Paul, all caution and boundaries thrown to the wind in his asymmetrical abandon, though far too sophisticated to suggest as someone has—it may have been Walter Pater but I’m not sure—that Christianity is merely Platonism for the masses when its historical component suggests just the opposite, much to the consternation and disappointment and, in a couple of cases, downright dismay registered by his more ardent Christian fans, Voegelin opts for the primacy of the Platonic approach. And this on the grounds—and again, absent the visible experiments, I would claim on the very legitimate grounds—that as regards Christian, or, as we might say, Judeo-Christian exceptionalism—the insistence that rather than annul, faith transfigures history—it may be so but I don’t know. Which, beginning with Doubting Thomas has been the argument against the essential Christian message all along but, given the very real Presence of present evidence (as witness the experiments), obviously is so no longer.

Incidentally, since it’s bound to come up sooner or later anyway and should, this all ties in with a point I’ve also made before: the capacity of Headlessness by its very nature and all-inclusiveness to reconcile all views and position them hierarchically in what, once referred to as the Great Chain of Being, we can now acknowledge as the Great Chain of Non-Being and so put an end to yet another bone of contention between East and West. Thus, if we can now legitimately say that Paul, in his unearned certainty (unearned because solely dependent on faith), is right to have gone off the deep-end but for the wrong reasons, we can equally say that Plato, and by extension Voegelin, with their earned uncertainty (the Socratic notion of *philo-sophia* as the love but not necessarily the possession of wisdom) are wrong for the right ones. As the experiments demonstrate and in no uncertain terms, no matter how you slice it one times one still equals One, though even here I can’t help remarking, in light of their ultimate simplicity, how quaint, not to say funny all this dithering and blathering, including my own, seems to me now. And I must say to Voegelin’s everlasting credit that, unlike so many of his colleagues, at the end he leaves more than enough room for his

“earned uncertainty” to resolve itSelf, makes justifiable pro-vision, so to speak, for some future development which, of course, was already in the works anyway, was already congealing under his very nose, though what he might have made of it we can only guess. Given the nature of the beast I don’t hold out too much faith or hope on that score, though I do try, from time to time, to exercise some charity. As they say—you never know. Could anyone have predicted, even dreamed, that the end of time (and its beginning) would make itSelf known via these common, garden-variety instruments fresh as Eden on the day it was born and this, not only because but despite all the prophesying? Go figure. A cheerful note on which to leave you until next time.



### Letter 16 – June 20, 2004

Again, to pick up where I left off with Voegelin's justifiable unwillingness to exercise absolute closure where he saw none, either in the name of Plato or of Paul. Whereas almost simultaneously, as I was to discover, precisely the opposite was happening with Douglas, the experiments foreclosing on *an* infinite opening, on *the* infinite opening, though who but the fortunate few could have been aware of it at the time? Nevertheless—and it's a tribute to Voegelin's integrity—he did leave available the possibility, however remote, of some further, if not ultimate differentiation, this last in his view being an utter impossibility, since, inhabiting as we do the Metaxy as he called it, the In-Between where, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea or, as we would say, between the prospect provided by the third and/or the first person, he could only conclude that, contrary to what we know now, better yet, to what we *see* now, there was no Where in sight from which we could possibly extract a safe and secure purchase other than on the faith that it was there. Which, despite some earlier, "mystical" episodes of my own and the consequent conviction that the tension between the historical and the trans- or a-historical I (as I then called it) could not be resolved except a man be unborn again, I more or less bought into, whether out of distrust of my own visual capacity—I simply didn't believe my own eyes—or just plain stupidity disguised as weariness I'm still not sure.

In any case, in the rather sharp, if respectful, exchange between Voegelin and Altizer that followed the publication of the last volume of *Order and History*, though I was impressed with some of the enthusiastic points Altizer made as certainly being closer to my own way of thinking—namely, his strenuous objection that so little consideration had been given to the significance of the modernity that from Blake through Hegel and Nietzsche right through to Joyce had been mother's milk to me—and though it took the experiments to show me that, for all his almost aboriginal Christian orientation, in fact because of it, he was on the right track, still playing it cautious, snug (and smug) in my virtuous neutrality, I continued to find myself favoring Voegelin and this despite his severe strictures, to say the least, towards my own

particular favorites, namely Hegel and Nietzsche with their thrust to advance beyond philosophy, beyond the mere love of wisdom, towards absolute knowledge. Who knows? Whatever it was for him (hence his unusual harshness), it may well have been Oedipal on my part. Fortunately, as far as I was concerned the discussion, such as it was and in which, though no party to it, I was to appear as a not so innocent witness, proved academic to say the most because, though hardly qualifying as a jesting Pilate, in my search for truth I, too, would not stay for an answer. Instead, it was just about this time—and remember I hadn't yet come upon Headlessness though that wasn't too far in the future either—that I stumbled on or, more exactly, rediscovered the Kyoto School, only on this occasion it was to be in earnest. What is it they say? "When the pupil is ready..." I can remember saying to myself, "A plague on both your houses." (Meaning Voegelin and Altizer). "My troubles are over." (As you may have gathered by now, for better or worse I took this stuff seriously). And, of course, in a sense, in its very real Alpha sense, my troubles *were* over. Nishida, Tanabe, Nishitani, Abe—enough had been translated even then to make for a feast and a real living for a loner like me.

And I must say that in the twenty years or so since I first discovered them in the *Eastern Buddhist Quarterly* and later in their books, at least those available in English, I've never deviated, not for one minute, from an awareness of my, of our, infinite debt to them. They built the bridge that was to prepare me, intellectually at least, for that vision of the near side which is Headlessness. But I don't have to tell you. You mentioned only a few weeks ago that you were deep into Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness*, whether for the first time I don't recall. But I do know that, aside from dipping into it more than occasionally, often referring to it almost like an encyclopedia or dictionary, I've actually read it cover to cover at least two or three times (my copy was so dog-eared and marked-up I recently had to order a new one). It's an absolutely seminal book, one that along with Freud, Einstein, Wittgenstein....But I don't want to get into that game even if, like some of my best friends, it means your preference might happen to run to that rotten bastard, Heidegger, coward that he was. (And if you don't believe me, read what Voegelin, who could decipher his

gobbledygook in the original, has to say about him). Nevertheless, at the risk of becoming combative and playing favorites I would certainly put Douglas at the “head” of any list, though, coming from me, some might see that elevation as an *al Dante* form of retribution, he getting no more than he deserves.

More to follow when the spirit moves.



### Letter 17 – June 26, 2004

To Nishitani at last, for clarity and depth unsurpassed except for you-know-who. And altogether fitting that as an exemplar par excellence of the Alpha perspective, the primordial absence of time, he should be paired with Douglas, our man in Omega, waving from across the way, from that street of dreams once known for its fullness as heaven but now re-christened the Gap. Not for nothing or, more precisely, for no-thing was *On Having No Head* originally sub-titled, “*Zen and the Re-Discovery of the Obvious*,” though, if I’m not mistaken, it’s been deleted from subsequent printings. And rightly so if on no other grounds than as marking the retreat to Alpha—and make no mistake about it, it is a retreat—Zen, by jumping the gun and negating speech, merely betokens an end, whereas, flitting through the afterlife, those affirmations of silence, the experiments, not only bespeak a difference in degree from anything that’s gone before but a difference in kind, as different as death from resurrection where, not incidentally, Omega begins.

I know comparisons are odorous but they sure as hell put us on the scent and the scent here is so distinctive as to be unmistakable. Quite simply, contrary to prevailing opinion, the current popularity of Zen in its pioneer attack on speech—the *neti, neti*, not-this, not-this, it appropriated from the Vedanta—rather than initiate a new beginning as the consensus would have it, it marks the end of the period we’re about to exit anyway though, not to put too fine a point on it, whether we arrive head-first or feet-first is still very much up for grabs. One thing, however, is for sure: following the million or so years it’s taken us to get there, or rather, here—and this with little to speak for us except a hand and tongue aided and abetted by an upright posture, “the better to see you with, my dear”—“unaccommodated man” has finally succeeded in that precarious quest that’s delivered him from the precincts of sound and smell to within sight of absolute headquarters. The rest, as they say, is history. And thereby hangs a tale, the fudging of which via the escape from nature to eternity without it has, despite the very real benefit of clergy, made bastards of us all if only by telling half the story, a story that’s had to await the belated blessing and retroactive legitimacy bestowed by Head-

lessness for its completion. Hear, O Israel? How about the whole of it? How about hearing it for “*See, O Israel*” for a change, for *the* change?

What it all means, of course, what the experiments and only the experiments are capable of revealing in no uncertain terms is that, as Douglas has outlined so succinctly on pages 224-225 of the abridged *Hierarchy* and I noted in an earlier letter: if our first concern must be “to realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for tomorrow or yesterday,” then our second must be “to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays.” Which is no more than to say that if, like all things under the sun along with those that go bump in the night, we live and breathe and have our being primarily by grace (and we do), then failing that—and God knows we do fail it and have failed it though it has never failed us—like Bogart and Bergman in *Casablanca* who, if they didn’t have each other at the end, “always had Paris,” so too, we now have providence to look back on with its dual realization that history’s progressive revelation of God as rendered in the experiments and God’s progressive revelation of history as rendered in the experiments are one and the same. What is it the Sufis say in anticipation of the last great day when, with grace blind-sided, we’ll be forced to find our way by hook or by crook? “In the latter days, one-tenth of what was required in the beginning will be sufficient.” I’d say a trip to our city of light is worth a wink or a blink any day—or night, too, for that matter. Where else will two get you One and all *pro-videre*, for the sake of Seeing?

### Letter 18 – July 6, 2004

Vertical grace masquerading as space, horizontal providence as time: the one, representing 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science and spelling out fulfillment and freedom, the infinite potential necessarily operative in everything that is; the other, 1<sup>st</sup> Person History, the manifest completion of the world we make as measured against the experiments or, if you prefer an equally immediate and accurate gauge, against the upright human body, there where the cross is inscribed—some would say written in blood—in the perfect conjunction of space and time. That ought to hold us for a while while we round up the usual suspects.

Though I've already touched on a few of them and actually named names, in all fairness we really ought to begin with your or my or our "*l'homme moyen sensuel*," to use Baudelaire's convenient phrase. Because, despite protestations that when the saints go marching in—even before—I want to be of their number, like virtually all of us I can give you no guarantee as to how I'll behave when the chips are down. And since they always are, we can get right to the serious business of a possible alternative to this multitude of sins, a few of which I've already referred to, and a fewer of which, as I've also indicated, others have even acted on.

I mentioned Voegelin, for instance, a perfect proponent of the loving skepticism first suggested by his master, Plato. And certainly he adopted an honorable and more than legitimate posture that, absent Zen and later the experiments, I might have taken for my own and, as a matter of fact, did for years. Which, when we get down to the nitty-gritty, is, I suppose, a little like saying "If I'd had the ham I'd have had some ham and eggs if I'd had the eggs." What can one possibly say that hasn't been said about a towering figure like Plato or even a lesser one like Voegelin without seeming to appear both arrogant and ignorant and combative in the bargain? Unless, of course, the appeal is made to principle rather than personality. In which case we can say anything we like as long as it jibes with the truth. And the truth is, when weighed in the balance, when (if you'll forgive the pun) the scales are removed from our eyes by the experiments, they're both found wanting to some degree. As is everyone else who has come before and I do mean everyone—saints, saviors, founders, avatars.

Because make no mistake about it, short of the experiments—Godspeak rendered in kind—the very fact we’re forced to discuss these matters in language together with all that that entails of duality is to measure in degrees, however Mantalk stands up as doubtless the best in class when set alongside the meows and moo’s and woofs and tweets and bleats and oinks and neighs of this world. And the same goes for Nishitani, beautifully on target when it comes to Alpha in all its silence if not its absolute certainty—that’s reserved for Omega—and even more so for Altizer, in a way the most interesting of the lot, who, though still stuck in speech and belief, nevertheless “knows”, as he puts it, or at least “has faith” that in the end, in the new dispensation and hope, the transcendence of transcendence will be superseded by the immanence of that immanence which is beyond hope and faith though never beyond the charity that constitutes it. And so it’s come to pass even though, like John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, absent the imprimatur of the experiments he’s unaware of it.

Most instructive of all, of course, when we come to talk about these things, is the presence or, as we might equally and even more justifiably claim, the absence of Douglas, his 1<sup>st</sup> Person impersonality so to speak. To suggest, for instance, that there are no observable facts of history or anything else which can’t be interpreted, and properly interpreted, in light of the experiments is no longer a question of his opinion or even mine or yours for that matter, but a matter, the provable and observable matter of FACT for all to see. It’s what, among other things, not only distinguishes him but the experiments from everything and everyone that’s come before. Can it be an accident, for instance, that it took the total collapse of received, traditional doctrine for the first time in history to give Providence, relieved of the accumulated overlay and detritus of millennia, its first opportunity ever to peep up and reveal itSelf as unquestionably the true center, source and end of all that is, the very existence of these simple home-and-hand-made instruments at once the testimony to and proof of it? Not what this one said or that one. Not even what this one did or that one. But simply that, having hit bottom if only by de-fault (and what greater fault than de-fault?), no-thing else would do.

Not surprisingly since he's so very close, in fact, except for Douglas, far closer than anyone else I've been able to discover as regards what we might call the historical dimension of Headlessness, Altizer, is on to this. At least in one of his more recent essays he argues for the prospect of an anonymity no longer confined to the name-less-ness of Alpha, but open, as we might say, to some once and future name-free-ness at Omega. Well, to paraphrase Peanuts, now that we've seen the future and it is us why shouldn't the not-yet already here reveal itSelf as it always has, is and will be world without end if not in the person, the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the experiments?



### Letter 19 – August 16, 2004

Yet once more into the breach only this time—to mix my metaphors—I think I’ll take a slightly different tack. I figure I’ve more or less exhausted all I have to say, at least for the moment, as regards the Voegelin-Nishitani-Altizer axis but that still leaves an indefinite, not to say infinite, amount of material yet to be explored. And a good thing, too, since it ought to keep us occupied for as far (and as near) as the eye can see. This in response to those who fear that “the end of history” in our sense of the Word—as *telos* rather than *finis*—somehow correlates with its parody, with the end of human life on earth (rather than with its direct opposite, a new beginning), and so will leave us, God forbid, with nothing to do no less say—a consummation that, running true to form, appears, on the surface at least, to be every inch as uncompromising as its Original. Which, speaking of parodies and ends and ends of parodies, immediately brings to mind the latest in that long line of mirror images that positively demands a list (and will no doubt get one, one day, if only from me): how best provide the finishing touch and, piling Pella on Ossian, square our long-anticipated arrival at our lowest common denominator with our equally unanticipated landing at – parody of parodies – Ground Zero no less, the other side of the coin? Well, thanks to the experiments, it’s now as easy as *pi*. We distinguish the two by turning an indifferent eye to the evil one with its bag of tricks posing as a wealth of viewpoints and, at the same time, reserve its opposite, the pristine and singular sighting peculiar to the All-Possible, for all things great and small. That’s assuming, of course—and it’s a rather large assumption—that our zero is a number at all and as such capable of owning up to an opposite without containing it.

At any rate, I think the best place to start is by doing what comes naturally—in this case by picking up what lies closest to hand, and, as I remarked a few weeks back when we spoke, what happens to lie closest to hand is a book called *Faith and History* by Reinhold Niebuhr, one that’s been lying around the house for I don’t know how long and I may even have read years ago but, significantly enough, don’t remember. Although I must say that, judging from your mildly tepid reaction to the mention of him—did I even detect a slight note of disapproval?—it’s probably just

as well. The point I'm trying to make here—and it's not a case for Niebuhr one way or the other who, as I suspect will, like most authorities however worthy, merely serve from now on in as at best a touchstone, a station on the way—is how it suddenly struck me and not for the first time but with a greater force than ever that, thanks to the experiments, we now have the tools—I'm almost tempted to say the weapons, alas—with which to address any answerable question or, should the occasion arise in the presence of its by far more prolific kissing cousins, questionable answers

In short, we're now in a position to take full possession of, among other things, that long-sought-after gauge of the absolute, the philosopher's stone, not so much in order to be the first to cast it, sinners that we are, but, hopefully, to hold it in our hot sweaty palms just long enough for some of its magic and mystery to rub off, if only for luck. And I do believe maybe some of it has. Because merely the prospect of having it in my possession if only momentarily set me to thinking. And what did I think of? Well, you probably won't believe this unless you've had, as I did, an extended course in free association courtesy of the strict Freudian analysis that was fashionable in the days of my youth. But contemplating the possibility of an all-knowingness and how to get it across, who should pop into my head but Niccolo Machiavelli, specifically his *Discourses* on the first ten books of Livy on which I once wrote a paper in college? Well, you might ask—I certainly did—what the hell has Machiavelli, of all people, got to do with, I won't even say the art but the science of, Seeing? Aside from the obvious fact that the format he employs—a kind of question and answer analysis using Livy as a foil, a hook to hang his hat on—might offer a congenial model for us to go him one better, indeed, go all the way, by checking our heads there as well, I could think of absolutely nothing. Which “absolutely nothing,” as it has a way of doing, immediately reminded me, in fact *pro-vided* me with the key to what appears to be a dead give-away: that if, coming from the devil's camp in the person of the so-called villain of our peace, the little one is so instrumental, even necessary in exposing the Original of which it's not even a carbon copy but a mere shadow, if, as I say and as Douglas points out in *The Trial*, we're simply

talking, in effect, about a not-god—well then, that's what this not-god's stomping-ground, history, has been all about, to reveal itSelf as the downward path in which if nothing human is foreign to it neither is anything divine. And, of course, now that we have a history redeemed by the instruments that prove it—the experiments—it makes absolute sense.



### Letter 20 – August 25, 2004

Here we go again—me starting out, or intending to, with Niebuhr and ending up with Machiavelli even before I begin and two more disparate characters or, at least, divergent points of view, you couldn't find if you tried. Which, maybe, is the point. The incredible connections that, thanks to the experiments, we're now in a position to make once we adopt the god's-eye perception of things that subjects the Subject to an appearance of airy nothing even as, at the same time, it reflects It as something else again, as the devil in the flesh.

In any case, I think I'll table Niebuhr for the moment—my comments weren't all that earth-shaking anyway—and attend to Machiavelli since the mere mention of him is sure to stir up all sorts of associations, for the most part disparaging, to go along with his own peculiar contribution to our present condition. Not that he was all that malevolent, or at least any more so than that legion of contemporaries and near-contemporaries that make up modernity and, beginning with Aquinas, say (and I'll get to him in a minute), would certainly, at least seen from a transcendent perch, include such whipping-boys as Spinoza and Descartes and Hobbes and Bacon and run right through to Nietzsche and beyond, right through to the present moment when the resultant nihilism, the accumulation of almost a millennium of doubt on its way to despair, has, on hitting bottom, immediately converted into the no-thingness of Headlessness, has, in the twinkling of an eye, literally come full circle or at least as full circle as we're going to get in light of the latest and, I dare say, the last development where, it appears, we've been heading all along: towards deliverance at the Gap, home-free at the place we never left.

So that, aside from the bogey-man connotation we've since become quite accustomed to and the comforting notion that if offense must come, it comes to confirm the ancient adage that "No one contends with God except God himself," there's really nothing that alarming about Niccolo and certainly nothing symbolic about him other than what he represents: one of the patron saints of creeping disenchantment, of the lowering of sights from the high (and failed aspirations) of the ancients, notably Plato and Aristotle, and even those of his near contemporaries, the cathedral-builders

of the Middle Ages already on their way to hinting at the inability of transcendence to deliver the goods, no less the good. On this score it's interesting to note that even a Thomas Aquinas, despite his reputation (mistaken, thank God) as the premier choir-*cum* - poster boy of all time or at least the foremost apologist for the medieval view of things, had already slipped this whole notion of transcendence a surreptitious mickey with his admission, nay his insistence, that rather than low man on the totem pole (or maybe because of it), sense experience is the primary arbiter of all knowledge, that same sense experience that reaches apotheosis in the experiments where, speaking of everyday miracles, the invisible becomes visible in its invisibility and every cell in the universe sings the same old hymn in praise of its *modus operandi*: birth, death and resurrection. Hence our task now as then: not only to recognize and acknowledge this phenomenon (which others have certainly done), but demonstrate and, if you will, prove the case for the noumenon (which, despite all sorts of martyrdoms and even a crucifixion or two, others certainly have not) and this, not only by means of a blue-print to be deciphered tomorrow or even as an imprint inherited from yesterday but as *the* Fact of life to be announced or, better yet, revealed and experienced here and now, today.

As for picking up the pieces — the sacred baptized in the fire of the profane and so, tempered and restored, made whole at Omega as it never was nor could have been at Alpha — as always the experiments say it all. That is, if to say is to articulate the Word by rendering the sound of silence, the Way out as not so much the way in as the way through. Interestingly enough, Abe in his wonderful book on Dogen touches on this: the Buddha/Mara connection, what we would call God and the devil, the little one — albeit, as is only fitting, unwitting and unwilling — in the service of re-enchantment. As Blake reported not long after while officiating at the marriage of heaven and hell, it's not possible to get one without the other. And so with us and one of those discordant voices from the angelic choir that helped propel us to this pretty pass — St. Niccolo. Homage to him in the name of truth even if he sliced it in quarters and was only able to squeeze in in the last minute through the back-door!

### Letter 21 – September 5, 2004

Here is the Niebuhr quote from *Faith and History* I referred to earlier. Although there are other passages (and not just from Niebuhr but virtually the whole spiritual anthology bar none) that might provide grist for our mill (and it grinds exceedingly fine), this one, being close to hand, struck me as particularly pertinent and central to our argument. It should be obvious why almost immediately. At any rate, here goes (italics mine):

“There are more specific meanings in the Biblical conception of history, as we shall see presently, than merely the idea that history is potentially and ultimately one story by reason of being under one *divine* sovereignty. But this Biblical conception which establishes the *unity of history by faith, rather than by sight*, is a guard against all premature efforts to correlate the facts of history into a *pattern of too simple meaning*. It is indeed one of the proofs of the ambiguity of man, as an observer of the historical process who transcends but is also involved in the process, that he can not construct systems of meaning for the facts of history, whether of a particular story in it or of the story of man-kind as a whole, without making the temporal locus of his observation into a *falsely absolute vantage point*, or without using a structure of meaning which seems to him to be absolutely valid but which is actually touched by historical relativism.”

As I've already indicated, as regards the experiments this is really worth analyzing rather closely and *in toto* since it's so revelatory of received opinion and I mean of informed received opinion both respected and respectable. As a matter of fact it's precisely the kind of thing I might very well have written myself or if not written certainly endorsed before discovering Headlessness and I dare say, for those happy or, as the case may be, those unhappy few who still concern themselves with such matters, still is.

Actually, from our perspective the most apposite sentence of the lot and the one that approximates the truth most closely is the first: “...the idea that history is *potentially* and ultimately one story by reason of being under one divine sovereignty.” Quite simply and quite obviously, we're now literally coming from a position not only to claim, as some have done, but demonstrate, that this

potential has now been realized in all its fullness, not fancifully as Robert Graves intuitively suggests in the first line of a wonderful poem, that “there is one story and one story only,” but in reality, that, when seen from its true perspective—not once or future but now and forever—all nature and all history, from the slightest blink of the eye to the bursting forth of the latest galaxy (if there is or can be such an occurrence) is merely a variation on the one theme of life, death and resurrection. Period. Any suggestions of “more specific meanings” picked up on the way are just that and as such, merely suggestions ancillary to its primary thrust, although it’s worth pointing out that, at least up to now, these suggestions, inadequate as they’ve been, are precisely what history so-called has pretended, for the most part, to be all about.

Since his second sentence supplies the meat of his argument and so, by extension, will provide ours and since, unlike so many of mine, alas, his comments are blissfully short, in order to avoid misunderstanding I’ll repeat it before beginning to parse it word for word. “But this Biblical conception which establishes the unity of history by faith, rather than by sight, is a guard against all premature efforts to correlate the facts of history into a pattern of too simple meaning.” My God, what a field day, however unwitting, this offers us, although I should point out in all fairness and as a testimony to Niebuhr’s scholarship and his honest if limited vision, he adopts precisely the skeptical hence necessarily *believer’s* point of view that, absent the experiments, one would absolutely have to take, that certainly I was forced to take until I discovered them. (Unless, of course, you happen to be a certified mystic and even here, with its wilful neglect of the implications of history, the qualification is more often than not more miss than hit). I think it’s important to emphasize this if only to indicate the absolute impersonality and *anonymity* of Headlessness (name-freeness being one of the attributes of the not-god), a sign that ever since Plato has stood for the mark of truth versus opinion.

Let’s start with this notion of “faith, rather than by sight,” an obvious echo of St. Paul’s famous pronouncement of the same name, “We walk by faith, not by sight,” a self-revealing (as distinct from Self-revealing) confession if ever there was one. As we see now and could only see now, at least on a universal scale, it’s

precisely this limitation which is as responsible as any for our having to consign Christianity, certainly in its institutional form, to a rank somewhere behind Headlessness where, by confirming as well as conforming to the norm, exactly the reverse occurs, an insight, incidentally, that though seemingly novel, is not as heady as it sounds when we consider it might very well have come from, among others, Joachim of Flora, the radical if obscure twelfth century theologian and darling of the Franciscans, whom we may or may not have discussed before. Certainly if we didn't we should have. Do you know his work or anything about his work? Interesting that so seemingly obscure a figure should end up so central. (Although can we say any less about the original Jesus or, for that matter, Douglas?) Aside from his tremendous if belated influence on people like Schelling and Hegel, he also deserves acknowledgement as one of the putative pioneers who, in spirit if not in the letter, helped prepare the Ground for, no longer the opinion but, the certainty that the experiments have brought to fruition. I think we should examine his work briefly since we, and as far as I can see, we alone represent for the moment living proof that his prophecies, far out as they once seemed, have actually been realized by means of these simple home-made instruments.

"Jesus crucified, proclaims the spirit in place of himself, that is, his resurrection." So Schelling commenting on Joachim's text and then goes on to point out that "It's as though, as the last God, Christ has put an end to an age and after him comes the spirit...the soul that rules over the new world." All of which is no more than to propose a secularized version of what Joachim had advanced six centuries earlier in his vision of the history of humankind as divided, like Caesar's Gaul (speaking of parodies) into three periods or dispensations: 1) the age of the Law or the Father (the Old Testament); 2) the age of the Gospel or the Son (the New Testament); and 3) the age of the Spirit or the third Empire, the Gospel of the Christ to be superseded by the Gospel of the Spirit which would be final and everlasting. Knowing what we know now because seeing what we see now, can there be any doubt that the *pro-vision* for the third dispensation has finally been met, not, for all the current commotion, by the one commonly expected — drums beating, cymbals (and symbols) clashing in the grand

overture to the end of the world—but, on the contrary, by the only one possible: the recognition and acknowledgement of apocalypse now, of the revelation, disclosure, uncovering, unfolding of who and what the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the experiments is and where and when it may be truly proclaimed that, literally coming from and to our senses once and for all, we've finally arrived where we started, where what makes Omega Omega—that is, awareness of Alpha (which Alpha never is which is why it's forever Alpha and always will be world without end)—we're now justified for the first time ever in laying claim, by right of possession, to our place, not so much in the sun but as the sun in us?

In light of which we can return to Niebuhr's second sentence with the assurance that rather than begin with a "Biblical *conception*" and end with a "too simple meaning," his text might read, in fact should read, "But this normal *perception* which, thanks to the experiments, establishes the unity of history by sight rather than a no longer operative or even necessary faith, is or should be a guard against all weary or overly ripe efforts to deprive the facts of history the FACT of it and so deny the much of its muchness the providential healing and completion offered by the such of its suchness, as the Zen people might say." The point being that what seemed complicated enough to take, all in all, thirteen billion years or so to come to a head, can now be seen as essentially and at heart so simple as to have taken on the appearance of simplicity itself and so self-negating as to have "willed" itself out of ex-istence altogether.

As for his third and last sentence, at the risk of overkill that, too, bears repeating, if only to demonstrate word for word that, like virtually every shibboleth that's come down to us, though seemingly perfectly on target when taken at face-value, when construed at no-face-value, it has no value whatsoever other than as a foil for the truth. So here it is again:

"It is indeed one of the proofs of the ambiguity of man, as an observer of the historical process who transcends but is also involved in the process, that he can not construct systems of meaning for the acts of history, whether of a particular story in it or of the story of mankind as a whole, without making the temporal locus of his observation into a falsely absolute vantage point, or

without using a structure of meaning which seems to him to be absolutely valid but which is actually touched by historical relativism.”

I can't imagine a more telling description of what, for the most part, has passed for history up to now, especially history concerned with so-called spiritual matters and, at the same time, a more despairing and, even more importantly, a no longer applicable confession that the possession of the limitless truth is strictly limited—and I do mean limited—to an act of faith rather than to certain knowledge. (And should you come across, as I have, those who doubt our capacity to arrive at such knowledge and what that knowledge consists of, you might refer them, as I do, to Douglas' brief but brilliant excursion into the nature of omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience neatly tucked away in *The Trial* ). What strikes me as particularly poignant and no doubt reflects the memory of my own former struggles is how seemingly accurate, despite his limitations, some of Niebuhr's analysis (and, by extension, virtually all analyses, at least as regards the one and only Subject) by means of half-truths are. Because if it's certainly true that “proofs of the ambiguity of man “ go without saying, it's also equally true and now established for the first time ever, that so do the demonstrations of certainty available to every finger-tip pointing in the right, that is the headless, direction, in regard to that same man's (or woman's) divinity. If, again, it's unquestionably true that as *observers* of the historical process we're quite incapable of constructing “systems of meaning for the facts of history without making the temporal locus of observation into a falsely absolute vantage point, “ it's also equally true that as the universally and, for the first time ever, visibly acknowledged *Participant*, we're also capable now of taking a stand and, embodying a “structure of meaning” at once absolutely valid yet untouched by “historical relativism,” of doing so in FACT and on no other ground than that as the only “thing” both in and out of this wide, wide world capable of consciously freeing itSelf from this “temporal locus,” this conscious capacity both signals the end of history and, its mission accomplished—that is to say its purpose realized—constitutes it.

Speaking of which, I'm "perfectly conscious" that I've already exceeded our prescribed limits of a page or at most two, but the magnitude of Douglas' uncovering and the conclusions associated with it literally demanded it. Sorry about this but let me know what you think.

## Letter 22 – September 20, 2004

As we discussed the other day, herewith a plan of attack for any future correspondence. Needless to say, since I've already said it, I'm grateful and more than grateful for these occasions and, as the old saw would have it, the opportunity to see what I say so I can know what I think. *Per* our agreement, then, if it's all right with you, we'll just continue this way, that "by steps the flux of time may bring everything to our attention, to be raised by reason into the zone of light." That's Lucretius and, like us, he did mean "everything," though unlike us, his everything, like so many others', fell short of being raised into that longed-for zone of light precisely by reason of reason rather than that vision (as distinct from a vision or visions) that, in accordance with the spirit of this myopic age—indeed, because of it—is now consciously and readily available to the least of us. Which in itself brings up all sorts of issues and that perennial bugbear of any study of history, especially as it pertains to its end. I mean this notion of historicism, the presumed relativity (sic!) of any conclusions we can come to about it. And since, again, we've agreed to limit our discussions to the comparatively unexplored first person historical as distinct from Douglas' thoroughly exhaustive analysis of the first person scientific aspect of the experiments (as he's more or less defined both on pages 224 and 225 of *The Hierarchy*) we could do worse than just continue with Niebuhr who, for all the hyperbole involved in the "I honour his memory on this side idolatry" is, along with many, indeed most, as good a whipping-boy as any for our purposes.

Here, then, he is again in the same chapter of Faith and History and again the italics are mine:

"While these nationalistic and imperial corruptions of the idea of universal history are the most vivid examples of the inclination of men and nations to *make themselves into the false center* of the vast panorama of history, they are nevertheless merely one aspect of the whole problem of *historical relativism*, which remains one of the unsolved problems of modern culture. The problem forces modern man, who claims to be increasingly the master of historical destiny, into periodic moods of scepticism as he analyzes his dubious position as *observer* of history. The problem is how a

man, nation, or culture involved in the mutabilities of history can achieve a sufficiently *high* vantage point of wisdom and disinterestedness to chart the events of history, without using a framework of meaning which is conditioned by contingent circumstances of the class, nation, or period of the observer."

Aside from the fact that, thanks to the very manifestation of the experiments, we're in a position to claim for the first time ever that "the whole problem of historical relativism" can now be considered a problem no longer — not only solved but dissolved — there's not a great deal here with which to differ unless it be the virtually universal but nevertheless tacit assumption that the vantage point from which that panorama is viewed is or has to be necessarily "high," a time-old but now time-worn and completely unwarranted projection that, originating in the tyrant notion of transcendence tentatively exposed by the likes of Jesus and the Buddha right down to our own faith-free Freud, is now seen to be, because totally ungrounded, perhaps the greatest single incentive to a "fortunate fall" we as a race can boast of. Indeed, if we want to get some idea of the magnitude of the range of providence and how, though all goes wrong, it still manages to come right, we can forget about our accepting the so-called wrong-headed invitation to "play at" God that presumably started with Our Majesty the baby as he or she "headed" for trouble. All we have to do is to think of the magnificent consequence that that same fortunate fall has entailed right down to what we're capable of enjoying right now. It positively boggles the mind — which, of course, is what it's intended to do. But since Niebuhr, along with so many others, seems to take an almost perverse delight in his role as the dubious *observer* rooting around and exposing the first part of the equation at the cost of abandoning the second, the now obvious *participant*, to some never-never-never-never-never land as yet undetermined, I'll turn the party of the first part over to him that he may be condemned out of his own mouth. (As usual, the italics are mine):

"There is, in short, no complete rational solution for the problem of historical relativism. Insofar as the human mind in both its structure and in its capacities of observation has a vantage point over the flux of historical events, it is possible to achieve valid historical knowledge *though this knowledge will never have the*

*exactness of knowledge in the field of natural science.* But insofar as men, individually and collectively, are involved in the temporal flux they must view the stream of events from some particular locus. A high degree of imagination, insight or detachment may heighten or enlarge the locus; but no *human* power can make it fully adequate. That fact is one of the most vivid examples of the *ambiguity of the human situation*. The pretension that this is not the case is an aspect of the 'original sin' which infects all human culture. Its essence is man's unwillingness to acknowledge his *finiteness*.."

However justified this catalogue of traditional half-truths masquerading as shortcomings instead of goads to realization ("no human power... the ambiguity of the human situation" and so on), the key, of course, lies in the last claim, in "man's unwillingness to acknowledge his finiteness" when, as we see now and *could only see now* thanks to the experiments, that it's precisely the opposite that is the case, that had Adam, instead of getting cold feet after only one bite, eaten the whole apple (as we're apparently hungry enough or just plain desperate enough to do now), and so, not only acknowledged his own divinity but understood what that divinity entailed by way of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence, not to speak of mercy and justice ("See, the man is become as one of us"), the course of history might have been different. Indeed, shielded by a conscious "omega" outlook rather than a variety of dubious insights, as with the "alpha" *Tao* there might have been no need for history at all, no less an awareness of it, a presumably ominous prospect still very much with us one way or the other now that we've come down to the wire in these parlous times. What's at once so moving and yet so maddening is how, as with all parodies, Niebuhr's reflections—and, believe me, of their kind his may be as accurate as they get—even as they mirror the real thing pretend to it by getting it, as all mirrors do, completely reversed. "There is, in short, no complete *rational* solution for the problem of historical relativism," he writes. Indeed, there isn't. There is, however, as, fittingly enough, we see now, a *visional* solution to it. "Insofar as men, individually and collectively, are involved in the temporal flux they must view the stream of events from some particular locus." Indeed they must

and, for the first time in history, they now can, there, or rather here, where, all traffic directed by a finger pointing home, the cross is made and 3<sup>rd</sup> giving way to 1<sup>st</sup> Person meet at the confluence of the one and only fixed “point” capable of enjoying the prerogatives of both the particular and the universal. “A high degree of imagination, insight or detachment may heighten or enlarge the locus; but no *human* power can make it fully adequate.” Indeed, no *human* power can, nor does it need to any longer. Which, speaking of the divine, no doubt reminds me why my far-seeing nanny—a virtually illiterate peasant and Catholic woman imported from Central Europe—intuiting my visible distress at receiving a consolation prize perfectly unacceptable at the time, would wipe away my tears or try to with a “Chorchie, God never shuts one door without opening another.” And, as it turns out, she was quite right. He, She, It doesn’t—and hasn’t.

Since our demolition work includes turning everything on its ear as well as turning it on its head before getting it right side up and, since my intention is not so much to whip a dead dog or depreciate Niebuhr who, after all, is merely just one more representative, however well-intentioned, of that long line of quasi authorities promulgating what has passed for the very best that has been known and thought in the world, I hope you’ll forgive me if I take the time to examine one final passage which seems to me at once so central to his argument, in fact such an egregiously dead give-away of ours, as almost to forestall the need for a response of any kind on our part—merely a reminder of the FACT.

“Philosophical disciplines will be judged and scrutinized on the basis of the adequacy of their guard against the temptation of the *observer* to pretend to more absolute knowledge than a finite creature has the right to claim.” (Again, please note, how deceptively right-on this is as far as it goes yet, at the same time, how, with absolutely no mention, let alone awareness, of who, as 1<sup>st</sup> Person Participant, that so-called “finite” observer really really is, the deck has already been stacked. No wonder, certainty sacrificed on the altar of faith, we’ve been blind-sided all these years). “All such efforts belong to the legitimate improvement of human culture. But none of them can obviate the necessity of using a

scheme of meaning for the correlation of the observed data of history, which is not *the consequence but the presupposition of the empirical scrutiny of historical data*. The more the whole panorama of history is brought into view, the more obvious it becomes that the meaning which is given to the whole is derived from an act of faith...History in its totality and unity is given a meaning by some kind of religious faith in the sense that *the concept of meaning is derived from ultimate presuppositions about the character of time and eternity, which are not the fruit of detailed analyses of historical events*.

Talk about putting the cart, arsy-versy, before the horse — “a scheme of meaning...not the consequence but the *presupposition* of the empirical scrutiny of the historical data... a concept of meaning ...derived from ultimate *presuppositions* ...which are not the fruit of detailed analyses of historical events,” and so on. Will detailed “syntheses” of historical events then do? What he’s offering, as I trust the italicized snippets have already indicated, is a paean—it may very well be its last hurrah—to the now outmoded dispensation dribbling away to nothingness that the experiments have come not so much to destroy (a work already accomplished by its own self-inanition) but fulfill. I refer, of course, to what was once the most useful, indeed, in many cases, the sole weapon in our metaphysical arsenal but is now as thoroughly outmoded and superfluous as the sling-shot or bow-and-arrow but even more futile in face of the atom bomb: I refer, in short, to the no longer necessary, indeed now obstructionist *concept of the a priori*. It’s simply no longer true, assuming it ever was, to claim as Niebuhr and virtually everyone else who attends to these matters do that the true meaning of history lies not in the consequence—that is, in the experiments—but in the *presuppositions* attached to the empirical scrutiny of its data. On the contrary, not only does it fly in the face, or rather the no-face, of the evidence, it fails to acknowledge that the so-called burden of proof which, as it turns out, is no burden at all, has shifted to the very bearable lightness of being associated with the pure empiricism of the FACT, to the *a posteriori*, that poor relation hitherto very much beneath the notice of the higher, transcendental snobbery that’s bedevilled us since the Year One, but now, all the returns in and quite in keeping with the spirit of the times, is, like the dispos-

essed everywhere and the last to be first, finally coming into its own. In fact, now that we recognize we're in a position to see straight and, hopefully, speak straight and with an authority not based on hearsay but looksee, we're finally free to make the judgement, unfair as it may seem, that any view of or perspective on the past bereft of what it's led us to is, to that degree, positively cockeyed and, indeed, no more instructive than the proverbial tale told by an idiot. And if it be argued that though many have pre-figured the experiments in word and deed (I think of the crucifixion), but were not in a position historically to know for certain (as we do) that what they were enjoying was merely preliminary (although certainly Jesus and others, too, East and West, had intimations and more than intimations of things to come though not quite in the way expected), we can only argue without recourse to sentimentality that that has indeed been the case, that sufficient unto these latter days has been the faith therein until such time as deprived of even that *quasi* assurance, there was no place left to go except down and out. Which course duly followed – we call it modernity – the absolute certainty only available through hitting bottom has not only revealed what all the commotion has been about but, in the bargain – and, for all the *Sturm und Drang*, it's been a generous one – the very substance of things hoped for and evidence of things now seen, namely ItSelf.

Is it any wonder, then, that we've spent these past five or six millennia going out of our heads recording and even taking to heart this latest new thing called the past only to end up, the world being round, coming to our senses and asking along with Rilke in one of Douglas' favorite passages: "And we, spectators always, everywhere/ looking at, never out of, anything...Who's turned us around like this?" To which, a little more than kin and so, equipped by right of possession to respond in kind, we're now in a position to reclaim our lost ground once and for all with a "Who, indeed, if not the same who's finally turned the turning-around around.

What I find especially poignant, even humbling since, for better or worse, I apparently take an interest in such things, is how, no longer limited or influenced by this or that one's *conjecture* including my own, positions adopted B.E. (Before the Experi-

ments) by some I formerly considered friendly enemies have, to a degree, been vindicated at the cost of what were then my own. And I include under that rubric such worthies as Augustine, Bossuet (yes, *the* Bossuet of all people; try him, you'll like him), even the magnificent Hegel whose *Phenomenology* I'd understandably tossed across the room more than once, heavy as it is, in total frustration. There was even a period there where, God forgive me, I had a falling-out with one I considered the looney-tune to end all looney-tunes, Blake. Can you beat that? Imagine! The point here being that right, even if often for the wrong reasons but right nevertheless, these true precursors—and, of course, there were others—demonstrated that the certainty formerly only available to the individual appraisal and application of this or that spiritual genius is, quite in keeping with the meaning of our time with its ice in summer and trips to the moon, now available to all. And that means even unto the likes of you and me.



### Letter 23 – October 6, 2004

Good talking to you yesterday and encouraging, too, since in my solitude it's sometimes hard not to feel I'm operating in a deadening vacuum rather than a fruitful void. (I know I've used something like that image before just as I've been presumptuous enough to call upon Meister Eckhart and his "if there were no one here I'd preach it to the poor-box" as my model, but since it's appropriate or, at least, appropriate to the Subject if not to me, why not?) In any case, though it wasn't my intention when I started on this recent series, I want to stick with Niebuhr as an occasion for a few more comments. Not, as I indicated earlier, that I particularly want to single him out—I'm sure we could arrive at equally cogent conclusions using any number of sinners: a Tillich, for instance, or, for that matter, at the other end of the spectrum, a Nishitani or even a Dogen (and we may yet)—or even because he's been that important to my intellectual life but for no reason other than, as Mallory said of Everest, because it's there. Not that Niebuhr or rather Niebuhr's position represents a so-called peak experience—far from it—any more than you or I can stand in for a Hilary or his interchangeable and trusted Tscherpa guide whose name, fittingly enough as we approach the Age of Anonymity, escapes me at the moment. It just so happens, however, that a few weeks back I caught a couple of Niebuhr's books hanging around the house more or less unread these thirty years or so, so, out of a renewed curiosity, I picked them up and found to my delight that, given the unique perspective provided by the experiments, they triggered all sorts of helpful and clarifying associations, some of which, though not all complimentary by any means, I offer forthwith. Which is in no way to suggest that despite our disagreements with him—or, shall we say, our taking exception to his variations on, I won't say "our" but, the theme?—we don't have points of view coincident not only with his but with virtually the whole run of philosophers and theologians from Plato and Aquinas in the West on the one hand, and seers and sages like Sankara and Nagarjuna, on the other, right on down to our own Ken Wilber, for example, whom we've also talked about and one of whose books you were kind enough to send me. But since my concern at the moment is, thanks to Niebuhr, this notion of faith

(his) as distinct from our certainty and why I'm convinced we're entitled to this certainty as regards present realities interpreted, not in the light of the past, of what Hegel calls "reflective" history, but in light of the surpassing Presence now available, courtesy of the experiments, instantly on contact to whomever comes calling, I'll limit my remarks to that.

I should also point out in all fairness that, had Niebuhr ever heard of Headlessness and especially this notion of "instantly on contact" (Zen's sudden enlightenment) and, of course, as only a slightly older contemporary of Douglas he could have, I suspect it would only have reinforced his adamant if mistaken animus regarding what he called mysticism, surprising because, deriving from "mystes" — closed or sealed lips — the word refers not to that which, as he insists, cannot be known (since, again courtesy of the experiments if nothing else, we know now it eminently can be) but that which, because the nature of language itself sets up an unavoidable duality (for every hot a cold and so on), cannot be spoken. I've often thought that, if it didn't conjure up such cornball and tacky associations, we might even refer to the experiments as "mysticism for the masses," except, as Douglas rightly insists, other than to begin where mysticism ends, Headlessness has nothing to do with mysticism. All of which, I suppose, is like saying "If I had the ham I'd have some ham and eggs if I had the eggs." Still, if the experiments don't, won't or can't qualify as ecstasy and advise going elsewhere for the exceptional thrill of taking the first step towards getting out of one's self, they sure as hell beat anything else I know of by way of en-stasy, of getting into one's Self and presumably, because unavoidably, settling in and staying there for the long haul.

One other point which I believe I touched on some time back but which warrants clarification, since to ears accustomed to English it may very well sound like gobbledegook. I refer to the Hindu designations of *shruti* and *smirti*, which I can never get straight other than that the one — I think it's the *shruti* — represents the inspired writings which speak by the authority of their own voice and would include, on our side of the pond, the Old and New Testaments and the Koran and, on the other, the Tao, The Gita, The Upanishads and so on, but all of which claim, in

Sankara's words, to be inspired by "direct perception," as distinct from the *smirti*, the commentaries and interpretations, the so-called secondary sources, which, in effect, if we want to be charitable, might even include what we're doing now. With this caveat, that, again thanks to the experiments, we're now enjoined, indeed required, to kick every category up or, if you prefer, down a notch. Thus, as with a crucifixion that was once myth before it converted to history and has now, in turn, been revealed to be God's own honest and literal way of life, so the canonical books that once qualified as *shruti*, can now suffer their graceful demotion to hearsay rather than the perception without intermediary of look-see, and as a result herald the new dispensation as visibly as space-travel has superseded the horse and buggy, which dispensation, incidentally, Douglas noted as long as ten years ago, when, if I remember correctly, he began indicating the rainbow presence of the various traditions in his diagrams, but always situated on the far, the observed, side which, of course, is, where they belong.



### Letter 24 – October 14, 2004

As promised, then, to Niebuhr. Here's a brief quote from *Faith and History* we can take as our text. No less categorical than ours though, obviously, not so firmly grounded (since, totally dependent on opinion it might well be construed as the latest party-line emanating from the far side), it's one I might very well have subscribed to myself if only by default some thirteen years ago, B.E. (Before the Experiments). Indeed, absent these simple extensions of mySelf how could I not? (Again, italics mine).

“There are provisional meanings in history, capable of being recognized and fulfilled by individuals and cultures; but mankind will continue to ‘see through a glass darkly’ and the *final meaning* can be anticipated only by faith. It awaits a *completion* when ‘*we shall know even as we are known.*’ ...History therefore awaits a final judgement. There are renewals of life in history, individually and collectively; but no rebirth lifts life above the contradictions of man's historic existence. The Christian awaits a ‘general resurrection’ as well as a ‘last judgement’.”

I suggest that as a description in reverse, and a perfect description at that, of the requirements the experiments have come to fulfill and do, this couldn't be bettered, at least not when read backwards. “Pro-visual meanings?” We've been living on them since Day One when, unbeknown to itSelf, Alpha began haltingly groping its way towards Omega, readying itSelf for the thing to come, which, had it only known (which is what makes Omega Omega), was already there, or rather here, anyway. And how did it prepare for the big event? Talk about miracles and what the world's had to settle for in that department, especially the miracle of seeing through a glass darkly by Word of mouth no less. It's a feat even a young illiterate Zen acolyte and kitchen-worker half-way across the world, Hui Neng, could no longer swallow either, pointing out under similar circumstances that, not only was the glass not dark, there was no glass. For which insight, indeed revelation, he was at once immediately promoted to abbot and then almost run out of town by disaffected members of the *zendo*, a fate, I can absolutely assure you, that no longer lies in store for the likes of you and me if, for no other reason, than that 1) thanks to the experiments we've now been apprised with certainty that

nobody—and I do mean No-body and only No-body—really really cares that much, thus leaving the field wide open to any and every body and 2) we're now in a position to prove it by living not so much beyond pro-visional meanings as within ample visional means. Which, as prophesied, is what, presumably, these so-called latter days are all about. No longer are we required to anticipate the final meaning or await completion now that, for the first time ever, we know it's behind us and know we know even as we're known. And this simply because, cutting through all the meta-physical red-tape, we see it and see it simply. As for a Christian or any other type still hoping against hope for a "last judgement" and "general resurrection," how else demonstrate that, stripped to the bone and reduced from fighting weight to afterlife-size, both "concepts" are now ready, willing and able to accommodate to this world in its hour of need by strutting their stuff in the flesh even unto a paper-bag?

Though, as I remarked earlier, I don't want to appear to be turning Niebuhr into the fall guy since it must be obvious that by labelling him representative of a whole cast of thought whose name is legion I'm taking him seriously enough—after all, anyone who can write that "an event in history can be of such a character as to reveal the character of history" or that "the eternity which is man's end is the fulfillment of history to the point of being its negation," or that pace Adam and Eve," the pattern of life is not corrupted by historic existence but *in* historic existence" and "thus the Kingdom of God must come in history...yet when it comes, it is the end of history," can't be all bad—nevertheless, perspicacious as his insights may be as far as they go, they just don't go far enough. Nor, absent the experiments—those silent witnesses to the absolute truth—can they. There's simply no way that, had he been familiar with them, he could have written, "These eschatological expectations in New Testament faith, *however embarrassing when taken literally ...*" when, as we see now, it's only by taking them literally and, by closing our eyes, at least for the moment, even to such elaborate embroidery as Dante's analogical and anagogical dimensions that we've been able to arrive at the truth now that, thanks to the unwitting facts in its employ, we have the FACT to prove it.

### Letter 25 – October 18, 2004

As I included in my last note and mentioned on the phone yesterday—nevertheless, let me repeat yet again that absolutely marvelous if surprising quote from Niebuhr that I fished out in passing yet, in my view, says it all: “the eternity which is man’s end is the fulfillment of history to the point of being its negation.” If, assuming they can be put into words, I had to approximate in one sentence what the experiments are all about, at least on that level of recognition, that would be it. Everything else that you or I or anyone else can say about them—and God knows we’re prepared to say a lot—turns out to be merely a variation on that theme. What’s doubly ironic is that the observation should come from Niebuhr who, within sound if not sight of the Promised Land, at least close enough to distinguish between what he calls *Finis* (the end of the world) and *Telos* (the end interpreted as the goal of history), will, like his illustrious predecessor, also be denied entrance if only on the grounds of equating past and present with the future rather than all three as aspects of the Presence.

Of course, this position is not new. Nor do we have to go back as far as Moses in the Old or St. Paul in the New Testament to see it prefigured. St. Augustine was one of the first to speculate and then state categorically that, when it came to the past, like aiming for the bull’s eye (sic!) there was only one unconditional right way of hitting the target, that in lieu of the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection (however hypothetical the literal occurrence of this last may have been held in some quarters), a suspension of judgement as to its significance was, to put it mildly, no longer acceptable because, given the reality of the Christ, no longer excusable. Nevertheless, there was still the unanswered question of the Second Coming and its delay, for which history—at worst the foil, at best the lure, in any case, sandwiched between myth, on the one hand, and the means to its own meaning on the other—still awaited full disclosure. And, despite intimations here and there and even more than intimations, like everything else—like concepts, for instance, that, in order to be true to their selves, have first to die in order to be reborn as percepts, as the real thing—quite long it was in coming too until, thanks to Douglas, it

finally struck us square in the eye. And this time there was no bull about it and no indirection or hedging of bets as in St. Luke's "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your *ears*." As if it was still to come from elsewhere, assuming, that is, it ever had.

Equally interesting to note is what history had to go through or, if you prefer, put us through to arrive there or rather here at the *Eschaton* where, its full meaning presumably disclosed, self-sacrifice, no longer a metaphysical absurdity or even a luxurious if perverse indulgence but the expression of the way things are and best exemplified historically by the crucifixion, finally comes into its own, where, mercifully deposed (the Death of God), Christ the King is now free to sport the original, the anonymous face he wore before he was born and, contrary to the claims of Platonists and assorted Gnostics and Buddhists of both sexes and all ages, announce through the person of each of us the Day of the Lord, the final redemption *through* history rather than *despite* it and so, Zen-style but without the cross-sitting rigmarole, voluntarily and consciously assume the mantle of the last, best hope, the once and future, now and forever not-god of a world whose end is in view and has been from the beginning for all to see. As Niebuhr so justifiably points out and we can now verify, there are events *in* history—the crucifixion and alleged resurrection, to name only two—that can "be of such a character as to reveal the character of history." Where he goes astray or at best lapses into a half-truth, however understandably, is when, like virtually everyone else absent the experiments, he immediately correlates his limited vision with the now-revealed whole truth. As a result he can go on to say with the complete confidence that only the all-knowing or not quite wholly ignorant can enjoy, that "No induction from empirical facts can yield a conclusion about ultimate meaning because every process of induction presupposes some canon and criterion of meaning." Which, however true as far as it goes, simply doesn't go far enough, since by implication, worse, by sheer neglect, it fobs off the so-called unknowable, mysterious *deduction* we're also entitled, indeed are now enjoined, to make and this, too, as we see now for the first time ever, on the identical ground of "empirical fact," namely, the experiments. As I touched on in my last letter, what's sauce for the goose has also, in these

egalitarian days, got to be sauce for the gander and we're now in a position to look back and from the perspective of 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science joined with 1<sup>st</sup> Person History relegate the *a priori* and all other premature if preparatory pre-texts masquerading in its name to where they belong, to the dust-bin of history. In effect, we're finally in a position to beat all claims of before-the-FACT at their own game, so to speak, and, by extension, extend the invitation of ultimate revelation to what was once known as the general revelation of 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science and the special revelation of 3<sup>rd</sup> Person History.



### Letter 26 – December 20, 2004

Since Alan has been kind enough to publish these notes in conjunction with his Nowletter and I've received a few responses encouraging enough (though still complaining of their density), I've decided to go over the material once more—in my view it's that important—and see if, having established the groundwork, we can simplify it even more in the service of accessibility. So, as in Gregorian chant, for instance, where monotony is the sign of true distinction, please forgive what may appear to be unnecessary repetition. I know for my part, as if pinching myself to certify I'm really really awake and the truth is one, I can't get enough of being a Johnny-one-note instead of having to practice my scales in preparation for a performance that never comes.

To that end, we may as well begin by reiterating what have got to be our watchwords and which I've already cited a couple of times and will no doubt do so again: the two sentences from *The Hierarchy* that, in effect, set the tone and define our mission. "To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for to-morrow or yesterday must be my first concern. And my second must be to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays." As for the first, which I include broadly under the rubric of the *experience* of the experiments—what we refer to as 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science—I think Douglas has made it abundantly clear, and if he hasn't the experiments certainly do, that as a counter-balance to the evil they outweigh yet sufficient unto their Self in their goodness thereof, they can neither be added to nor subtracted from. In Fact, containing at once all and nothing in their own right, it could be argued (if it was our business to argue) that the less said about them the better. Which is not to suggest that, as in the paper-bag or the card-experiment, once the silence of their natural habitat has been broken by our human, all-too-human curiosity, they're not susceptible like everything else to analysis and discussion. Only that their impervious and, hence, privileged position as the last to be first be recognized for what it is: the ultimate breakthrough made possible by the ultimate historical breakdown that conditioned them to begin with; indeed, if the reputed benevolence at the heart of creation is to mean anything at all, made them a mandatory prerequisite.

What we make of all this—the *meaning* of it all—is, of course, a different story. Indeed, if the play on words in English weren't so obvious and we weren't afraid of appearing too cute, we might, with complete justification, refer to it as *His-story*, which—again on the strength of evidence provided by the experiments—it most certainly is. Not, we might add, or not only “the collection of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind,” as Voltaire would have it or even the more hopeful if equivocal nightmare from which James Joyce, if he didn't quite succeed in awakening, at least heard the latent possibility thereof rumored in his dreams, but the 1<sup>st</sup> Person History, the “finding in this Now of all our tomorrows and yesterday” now available to one and all.

**LETTERS TO  
CARL COOPER**

**2005**



### Letter 27 – February 15, 2005

Dear Carl, Take this as a continuation of my letter of December 20 of last year which, if you still have it or even if you don't, you may recall merely laid out in barest outline what I hope will be our continuing project, in fact, the only one, after all the winnowing, to which we're in a position to contribute: a presumably definitive interpretation of the experiments in light of what we've come to call 1<sup>st</sup> Person History. And if the prospect of all that repetition elicits a groan since, in effect, that's all we've been talking about anyway, like the Italian tenor forced to sing one dreadful encore after another until finally and hoarsely emitting a "Thank you, but I can no more," to which a voice from the peanut-gallery responds, "The hell you can't. You're going to sing it till you get it," so much the better. No longer armed with the excuse of rehearsing for a performance that never comes, we, or, at least, I intend to sing it till I get it. So please forgive.

The tough part, of course, is to find an appropriate form—a haircut to fit the no-face—to match what, historically, has turned out to be the closest of all shaves and brought us as a race to where we are now, to the very edge of doom as they say in certain closed circles. Though without doubt your original notion that I keep these missives short—indeed, wherever possible limit them to one page—has paid off, at least like the spectacle of a dog chasing its own tail (and tale) it's spared me the indignity of being charged a public nuisance since I seem to be disturbing no one else's peace except my own. Add to that, now, another idea I've come up with that, though I think we've discussed it before but I can't be sure, hopefully meets with your approval. Following the example of an old college companion of mine, one Niccolo Machiavelli, whose *Discourses on the first twelve books of Livy* I always suspected might come in handy some day although I hadn't the slightest idea why, for reasons that will become increasingly clear I intend to utilize a similar procedure and take as my text a work by a modern theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg, entitled, appropriately enough, *Revelation as History*. Why I've chosen this particular book for examination from among a handful of others readily available, will, I trust, become increasingly clear as we go along. Suffice it for the moment that from where we sit Pannenberg, along with

Gebser and Altizer whom we've already discussed, qualifies as one of those happy few whose pathos, like that of so many deprived of the certainty of the experiments, nevertheless comes as close to the absolute truth as we're likely to get without them.

I should also point out before beginning in earnest that other than that Pannenberg is probably in his late sixties or early seventies and, I gather, a member in more than good standing of what I've come to think of as the four horsemen of the post-Nazi apocalypse—the other three, if you can believe this, being called respectively Moltmann, Bultmann and Blumenberg (is it any wonder that with tongue-twisters like that they “lost” the war?)—I know nothing whatsoever about him. Which is all to the good and, if nothing else, a nice counter to what otherwise might be considered, literally, grounds for an odious comparison to the admirable Livy, though, for all his good intentions, Pannenberg is obviously not in that class. But then, Who is? Of course, as I again hope to demonstrate but meanwhile have to insist: when, on the strength of the experiments alone we enter the realm of anonymity, these odds are all made even and the truth of the matter speaks for itself.

So, beginning with the next instalment let's let it.

*George*

### Letter 28 –February 20, 2005

Pannenberg begins his investigation with the bald claim that from its beginnings Christian theology has been aware that if revelation—the self-disclosure of God—has any meaning at all it has to be limited to the limitless (or, as we might say, the limit-free), to God His-Her-or-itSelf without recourse to the miraculous. Which, were we not aware that this has been the tenor of apologetics since at least the Enlightenment, would in itself strike us as something of a miracle. Of course, as we now know or at least should in light of the experiments, the modern exclusion of all references to the miraculous as such, has, as with so much else, providentially cleared the field and left it wide open to the appearance (as distinct from the apparition) of the one true miracle, namely to the latter-day manifestation of these literally home-made instruments designed not so much to reflect the nature of things but to render them and to do so with a no uncertain editorial comment, an issue we can also address as we go along. Suffice it for the moment that along with other honest brokers—the Hindus and Buddhists, for instance, at least in their better moments—I’m going to try, without getting too superstitious and therefore punctilious about it, to keep my references as gender-neutral as possible, choosing *the* as distinct from *his* or *her* to designate the Self (or, as the Buddhists would have it, the not-Self), always with the understanding that, however we slice it we’re still dealing in names and so are once removed even before we start. No, are once removed because we start.

He—Pannenberg—then goes right to, if not the heart, at least the soul of the matter by acknowledging Hegel as the first to characterize revelation as the Self-revelation of the absolute and make it clear (as Vico had only suggested before him) that what distinguishes the Judeo-Christian tradition from all others is not its supposedly supernatural transmission—a sop to the generality—but, for the first time, as noted in so many words by Douglas on pp.223-224 of the *Hierarchy*, the *full* because twin disclosure in history of the Absolute as spirit and of history as its medium; in other words its joint delivery and deliverance not only in the language of Fact but of facts. For which, Hegel, the great Hegel, if only on the strength of this one observation, must qualify as the

darling and foremost of all the moderns, at least for our purposes. No matter that, absent the experiments, the Gap had already been bridged by Blake who, when asked what he made of Jesus the Christ and recognizing immediately that the problem is not whether God is a person or I am, immediately replied, "He is the only God, sir. And so am I. And so are you," again answering to the expectation, as so many had before him, by proclaiming those odds all even. Which, as we see now, of course they were and are. The problem, however, is not only how to realize those odds but transmit them and, in the words of an early apologist, seek to become a Christ rather than just a Christian when, as another and later rueful wag put it, the palpable difference between the one and the other having been lost in translation approximately forty minutes after the crucifixion, it was not to be deciphered again with any degree of certainty till the advent of the experiments with their silent assurance that only god can know god and the true key to history's meaning is not the course of it but the end of it which, as it happens, also turns out to coincide with its source via the Gap. From which conclusion we're now in a position to get it both ways—coming and going—as is only fitting. While no longer having to concede that, when all's said and done, life's a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury we can, nevertheless, point to the very real fact that, signifying nothing, that no-thing represents a difference in kind and one we'd better get used to by God, even welcome.

That said, we're now prepared to approach Pannenberg with all due respect (why else even bother with him?) and see what he has to offer. Because what are we to make of the following with which he begins his inquiry in earnest? "No single act of God can cause its originator to be known completely, precisely because it is only one act among many." To which, given the direction to which they point us yet knowing what we know, we're now entitled to ask whether it's true that the experiments constitute merely "one act among many" rather than, *sui generis*, the silent yet conscious act that condemns out of his own mouth the charge he provides in his very next sentence, that "The problem of revelation in the strictest sense of God's self-disclosure has not yet come into view." Though in all fairness he can hardly be held accountable for not

being aware that the “self-disclosure had not yet come into view” *for him*, nevertheless it does provide material for a cautionary tale, the never-never’s not unknown to history. Still—and it’s what saves him or, at least, separates him from the pack—he can still offer redemption here and now as a possibility. “One can think of revelation in the strict sense only if the *special means* by which God becomes manifest, or the particular act by which he proves himself, is not seen as distinct from his own essence.” Which “special means”, are as perfect a description as we’re going to get as regards the marriage of content and container ever present in the ever-Presence of the experiments. But, of course, he doesn’t know that. All he knows is the hypothetical “If...the revelation is truly revelation so that its special form belongs totally to itself, then this form cannot...be a veiling...Only if the form of revelation reveals God and—rightly understood—does not veil him, only then is...the unity of revelation tenable.” Which, when you consider how little help we get from any of these guys, really isn’t all that bad and certainly not that far off target.



### Letter 29 – March 4, 2005

As you can see, following this letter, I'm including an appendix, a self-explanatory table (I hope) of what I suspect are the salient features of the two basic but complementary categories we're dealing in, what we might call the ways of the Self-disclosure of God that correspond to the distinction Douglas makes on pp.224-25 of the *Hierarchy* between what should be our first and second concerns, the one, broadly speaking, having to do with Seeing, the other with Being. Please understand I offer these observations as very much tentative contributions towards a working model. For instance, though I'm quite certain about the camps in which "direct" and "indirect" knowledge should be placed—the difference between 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science and 1<sup>st</sup> Person History—I'm not at all sure that the positions of the "already here" and the "not yet" shouldn't be or, at least, can't be reversed or that I'm not getting a little a-head of myself in so sharply and categorically distinguishing between "grace" and "providence" when the experiments themselves constitute nothing less than the expression of grace by way of providence. However, unless you can come up with something better or we work our way out of it, I'll just let them ride for the moment and see what happens. What the hell! What we say about it isn't going to affect *It* one way or the other anyway (although it may most certainly affect us).

To return to Pannenberg and what, I suppose, might well be taken for his watchword since he appeals to it more than once: the line from Isaiah that reads "And the glory of the lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together," which prophecy we, too, are finally in a position to relay to the world with the additional proviso that, like so many others on their way to coming true, this one—the "shall be" and the "shall see"—has now at long last been realized, fulfilled. Since, absent the experiments, Pannenberg, like virtually everyone else, doesn't have the option of that conscious certainty, it may, as it has for others since Day One, make for some confusion for which I apologize in advance. Nevertheless, he's thought-provoking enough to warrant the raising of some central issues that are worth attending to, notably the distinction he makes between direct and indirect transmission.

I should also point out that, given what I can only characterize as my own limited but “mystical” tendencies (and experiences), had I come across his work prior to becoming aware of the experiments, I would categorically have dismissed his opting for the primacy of the indirect, that is to say, of the historical, as I assume most would. And even now, though we’ve uncovered more in heaven and earth than was ever dreamt of in his or anybody else’s philosophy (with the possible exception of Hegel’s) and I still have my doubts, he does touch on points that are worth pursuing. But for starters I’m going to let him speak for himself and then see what we can see, so bear with me. For instance, what can we make of this?: “The question of the self-revelation of God must somehow be confirmed on the basis of the biblical witnesses if it is to be theologically justifiable?” Does it? How, then, account for what’s come about since the biblical witnesses which would very much include the experiments? Or this? “The Greek terms rendered by ‘to reveal’ do not in any passage of the New Testament have God as an unqualified object.” (I should hope not). “God continually reveals ‘something’ or ‘someone,’ never precisely ‘himself.’” Nor, as he goes on to point out, does He in any way reveal his essence in the Old Testament as well. All of which leads him to the following conclusion which, as it turns out, is, *mirabile dictu*, of tangible value to us and further confirmation that God really does work in mysterious ways if only through his apologists, however mistaken. Because he then goes on to distinguish between what he calls “revelation” and “manifestation,” by which last he means any appearance of God that does not involve the disclosure of essence. “Self-revelation (*revelation*: unveiling, a.k.a. *apocalypse*) as the disclosure of essence is distinguished from a purely phenomenal understanding of manifestation.” Which, at first glance, would seem to satisfy the need we might have to distinguish between 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science—revelation—and 1<sup>st</sup> Person History—manifestation. Or does it?

I don’t mean to seem unduly provocative but merely to indicate that despite his ostensibly orderly presentation he does, nevertheless, seem to offer what, at first glance, look like contradictory options. No need to go into it in any detail at this point but he immediately singles out for discussion what he designates

Name, Law and even Word or gospel, all of which avenues he finds wanting to some degree (as we do too), whether because mediated by a messenger, or set in the future or simply because, by definition, its transmission is dependent on speech. "We must not assume the gospel stems from a revelation that was spoken; rather it refers to one that has happened...the fundamental proof for the divinity of Jahweh exists in his acts in history. Instead of a direct self-revelation of God, the facts at this point indicate a conception of indirect self-revelation as a reflex of his activity in history..." Which, since it seems to be central to his argument, I'll pursue in what follows.

As I've already indicated, these distinctions are not written in stone, nor, as I would argue, are they written in water either. I certainly expect that many, if not all, are subject to modification. But let them stand for the moment as a working hypothesis. Any and all suggestions will be welcomed.



1<sup>st</sup> Person Science1<sup>st</sup> Person History

## Alpha

## Omega

*Direct**Indirect*

Immediate  
 Container  
 Experience  
 Space  
 FACT  
 Vision  
 Subjective  
 Revelation  
 Eye  
 Hindu-Buddhist  
 Fulfillment  
 Vertical  
     Grace  
 Mystical  
 Immortality

Mediate  
 Content  
 Meaning  
 Time  
 Facts  
 Reflection  
 Objective  
 Manifestation  
 Ear  
 Judeo-Christian  
 Completion  
 Horizontal  
     Providence  
 Empirical  
 Resurrection



### Letter 30 – March 9, 2005

To pick up where we left off, not only with the table I included which I hope isn't too confusing, but also with Pannenberg's rejection of the conception of Name, Law or Word (which, puzzlingly enough he refers to as direct self-revelation), in favor of indirect self-revelation as a reflex of God's activity in history. What strikes me immediately and would, I suppose, strike anyone acquainted with the experiments, is the absence of any mention whatsoever of Vision as a factor. But I'll let him speak for himself:

"Direct communication has in an immediate way just that content that it intends to communicate, whereas indirect communication initially has some other content than that which is actually to be communicated. Direct communication transmits content without a break from the sender to the receiver. In indirect communication, the path is broken: the content first reveals its actual meaning by being considered from another perspective. Indirect communication is on a *higher level* (italics mine): it always has direct communication as its basis, but takes this into a new perspective."

Well, I must say, when I first read this I almost fell out of my chair and on two counts. Setting aside as disputable his notion of Name, Law, Word and/or Gospel as direct, in which case where would Vision fit in, what really grabbed me was the at first incongruous notion that under any circumstance, indirect could qualify as higher, that is superior, or even equal to direct communication, a judgement that would seem to indicate nothing more than that he'd never experienced it. Which is no more than to question that, though from the commonly accepted transcendent perspective, Name, Law, Word and/or Gospel most certainly have passed these many centuries for a "higher" point of view, this qualifies them as the be-all and end-all in face of the no-face of the experiments whose whole thrust – and I do mean whole – has been to validate the supremacy of the exact opposite, of the lowest common denominator, whether consisting of the testimony of the manger and the cross or now of our "five and country senses." But that's another story.

In any case, what I'd like to do if you'll bear with me, and not only for the sake of your clarification but my own, is to use the rest

of our allotted space of one page more or less, to allow him to present his own argument, so that, hopefully, we can see what we can make of it and so fine-tune ours.

“The indirect communication can very easily be unmediated and received without a middleman.” And he cites as supposed instances of this seeming contradiction the Law, which “would be direct revelation if it were identical with God’s will, which is itself the essence of God... or the Word of God ... if its content were directly connected with God himself, somewhat in the sense of a self-presentation of the divinity” and so on. Sound familiar? We’re back in the gobbledegook of the late Middle Ages, of affirmation without evidence, of, in other words, the imprecise language of an “unreconstructed faith”.

The distinction between direct and indirect communication is not therefore dependent on whether the communication requires a mediator or not. It is not a question of mediateness or immediateness in the act of communication, but whether the content of a communication can be linked in a direct or indirect way with its intention.” Although this last qualification may stand us in good stead when we come to consider the nature of history itself, I’m not at all sure I understand what it signifies, no less means, in its present context. But in light of his next sentence and always something of a relief, I’m not even sure I have to. “Thus, direct communication would have God himself— without mediation—as its content, analogous to divine epiphanies in the sense of complete self-revelation...” With the caveat that, as Douglas rightly points out, divine epiphanies, that is to say, ecstatic mysticism, may be analogous but is in no way identical to what we can only classify as the enstatic, empirical, eminently shareable experience of the experiments available on demand to anyone anytime of the day and night, he’s at least coming close.

Close (by virtue of his asking the right questions) but again, in contrast to Headlessness, no brass ring (by virtue of our answering them). Still, it counts for something, if only to remind us that Self-fulfilling prophecies notwithstanding, the Self-fulfilled prophecy par excellence is very much in the air these days. Since “every individual event which is taken to be God’s activity illuminates the being of God only in a partial way “ (again the italics are

mine), then, “no one act could be a full revelation of God.” Iz zat so? Yet, “if it is only in its totality that history is the revelation of God, how can a specific event within it...have absolute meaning as revelation?” How indeed, unless it surpass itSelf by uncovering the ground of all events for all to see—precisely what takes place in the experiments? Since “no one act could be the full and complete revelation of God it appears there is further progress that must be made beyond Jesus Christ about God’s becoming manifest.” To Pannenberg’s credit, this lone remaining assertion unwittingly anticipating the experiments could not have been more prescient. Nor, fittingly enough, could the lone remaining promise prophesied to arrive these many millennia like a thief in the night have been more appropriately fulfilled—a Second Coming, indeed, but in silent commemoration of the event, without so much as a Word.



**Letter 31 – March 26, 2005**

Since it's been a while, I think I'll begin warming up with a little poem I came across years ago by Ernst Jünger that might help get me back on track. As you'll be able to see, Jünger, about whom I know very little other than that he was accused of being a Nazi sympathizer—at least continued to follow his career as a professional army officer during the Hitler regime—was a poet and thinker who wrote, among other things, a kind of Kafka-esque novel which translation I read with some interest soon after the war that revealed him to be a rather interesting man, more a career Junker, I suspect, and a fastidious one at that, than a politico. At any rate, here's the poem for you to judge for yourself:

Earth will put on a new dress  
 as it has put on many before.  
 The main thing now is to interpret the signs aright:  
 man needs new seismographs,  
 indeed new senses and new observatories.  
 His eye is still the instrument of instruments....

Deeper than any telescope, further than  
 a ray of light, the seer's eye penetrates the world.  
 It reaches to the place where beginning  
 and end meet and where the pointer falls...  
 In these visions the universe unveils itself,  
 revealing its spirit to the seer.

Interesting, isn't it, that as I was copying it just now and enjoying it again even as I had before discovering the experiments (who knows? maybe it impelled me *to* discover them), it occurred to me and not for the first time, that, however perceptive these precursors of great changes and movements can be—John the Baptist comes to mind, to name only one—and however masterful their work, they still don't, because by definition they simply can't, fill the bill. I know. I know. Comparisons are odious but though I must have re-read this sign of the times over and over again through the years hoping some of it would rub off—witness that what I would not part with I have kept and it can still send shivers

up my spine—nevertheless, though it may make a brief for, it simply can't hold a candle to the real thing which, as I had to insist with Anne, puts Headlessness in a class by itself. And the real thing is what the poem is calling for, for more than discussions and directions and recommendations and sign-posts and blueprints and, yes, even poems, but the thing itSelf—the experiments. And now we have them and everything falls into place, literally makes sense.

And how does it make sense? Well, one of its ways is by revealing history as only fully comprehensible in light of its end (and I do mean light and I do mean end), the end that prophecy promised but only apocalypse as a meaningful process has been able to deliver, which unveiling now accomplished via the experiments reveals that, for all its mysterious, even ominous connotations, the word—apocalypse, that is—has no business being Greek to us at all anymore, in reality never did since all it means and has ever meant was, like its Roman counterpart, “*revelatus*”, to do just that: to uncover, to reveal, and so deliver us, not least from the trappings of concepts themselves including its own. And knowing what we now know, what's been the most, or at least one of the most, egregious, even wounding, concepts of them all? Certainly this notion of an inaccessible divine transcendence, a.k.a. the King of Kings—Blake's Nobodaddy—so far removed from us as to appear completely out of sight. Which masquerade has also been exposed by the experiments for what it is: a conspiracy, however unwitting, to deny the invisible its rightful visibility by passing itself off as nowhere to be seen when, as the experiments demonstrate, “*nowhere*” is precisely where it's at. To which, putting put-paid to the justifiable Death of God argument or at least of *that* God who, as we *see* now, has, like us, never been born anyway, we can all join in with a loud “*Amen*,” meanwhile adding something of our own: that the immanent logos, not so much directing events from above as is generally supposed but freely allowing them to rise from within or, better yet, from below, is still very much with us and will be world without end.

To get back to Pannenberg though. What he gets at least half right and so warrants our attention is in his surprising claim (mistaken, I think, but what isn't in light of the experiments?) for

the primacy of the historical, the indirect over and above the direct approach towards our understanding of reality? Since it does touch on our subject and he's quite specific about it, it'll be worth looking into in my next—letter, that is, not life.



### Letter 32 – April 3, 2005

Just to keep us on the straight and narrow since the temptation when dealing with this kind of material is to jump all over the place at the cost of losing sight of the goal, let me remind us or at least me of what we're presumably about: a total conception of history viewed in light of its end. And if this sounds a little over-ambitious to say the least, is it any less so than what we see now as the mother-lode of all exegesis, the experiments themselves and their confirmation of what, too, seemed an equally outlandish claim when made by one Isaiah some twenty-five hundred years ago to the effect that "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together," a promise issued in face of the older though equally accurate admonition that "no one sees God face to face and lives?" And, indeed, except for those who come face-to-*no*-face and so are said to die or, better yet, come *no*-face-to-face and so are said never to have been born, the caveat still pertains. A nice distinction this and not at all incidental to how our seemingly innocent, even innocuous, instruments are capable of both dissecting and incorporating all duplicitous experience at one and the same time and so coming up with a conclusion, in this case to history itself.

And it's history, the only area Douglas has left relatively unattended, at least in its details, and which Pannenberg addresses almost by default, that we're about. But I'll let the latter speak for himself:

"...it must be concluded that the theological assertion of a direct self-revelation of God cannot be justified...Instead of a direct self-revelation of God...the facts indicate a conception of indirect self-revelation as a reflex of his activity in history."

And as if that weren't enough he goes on to elaborate:

"Direct communication has in an immediate way just that content that it intends to communicate, whereas indirect communication initially has some other content than that which is actually to be communicated. Direct communication transmits content without a break from the sender to the receiver. In indirect communication, the path is broken: the content first reveals its actual meaning by being considered from another perspective. Indirect communication is on a *higher* level: it always has direct com-

munication as its basis, but takes this into *a new perspective.*" (italics mine)

Other than to note that these and other observations—his premature and mistaken rejection of the notion that any one act, whether crucifixion or resurrection rightly interpreted, could constitute a full revelation of deity—were recorded almost at the same time as the uncovering of the experiments and so can plead ignorance of the same as an excuse for the absolute wrong-headedness of that particular call, what can we say? And yet, and yet, there is something here which, if less than meets the eye, nevertheless qualifies it for inclusion into what we can only refer to as a grand design: namely, that, contrary to the cosmic claims of Greek, say, or Hindu, the prime disclosure *in* history of the prime disclosure *of* history as at once the testament to and, at the same time, last resort of the First Person has now been realized by the very existence of the experiments themselves. And certainly though we might agree with Pannenberg that as the foremost representative of a newly-revived meaning of apocalypse he's quite justified in claiming what he calls indirection as a new, if not wholly original, perspective, it hardly justifies elevating it to a "higher level." If anything, as history itself, aided and abetted by the experiments—the very instruments forged in the fire of its own agony and arguably its reason for being—demonstrates, it's just the opposite that pertains: that it's only by taking the low road and enrolling in the "Kill the Buddha" school (as "God" himself seems to have done), that immanence, the very lowest of the lowest of common denominators, has been able to rise like the Phoenix from its own ashes in face of a burnt-out, an exploded and dead and buried transcendence.

Briefly (and *pace* Anne and her judicious reservations regarding my claim for the presence of the experiments as ultimate and definitive), it simply comes down to this (and I'm certainly aware of the outlandishness of the claim): that, as I've tried to indicate, everything—the testimony and/or examples of avatars, of saints and sages and saviors, of mystics and martyrs and, yes, even philosophers—all that up to now has pretended to ultimacy is now seen to have qualified as merely prelude, the overture at

Alpha on its way to resolution at Omega. Further than that because, paradoxically, nearer than that, we cannot go.



### Letter 33 – April 20, 2005

I know we've used it before and I dare say we'll use it again but our motto has got to be that prophetic quote from Isaiah 40:5: "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together," though even here I can't help noting that the designation "glory" seems to be more fitting for the outmoded notion of a tempting if dangerous transcendence than what we now see as a "low-down" immanence that might be more suitable for what we're up to—or down to. That the overblown connotation of all that glory was one of the factors that finally lured Christianity down the garden path to what, through every fault of its own, turned out to be its own crucifixion followed by the resurrection of its earthly body via the experiments is, of course, something else again and I hope to get to that when we re-examine Altizer's claims more closely since he, too, has a lot to say about this thing called glory. Meanwhile Pannenberg will have to do if only on the grounds that any man who can fish out Ranke's definition of history as the "holy hieroglyph of God"—to which pronouncement we're now entitled to add an equally literal "amen"—can't be all bad.

What makes Pannenberg so interesting, at least to us, is that, like so many of his theological colleagues—in fact, I'll make so bold as to say virtually all of them—when he's not wrong for the right reasons he goes himself one better by being right for the wrong ones, most blatantly in his insistence that, on the ground that the last shall be first, indirect knowledge, that is to say, history, takes precedence, over direct knowledge because it includes it. Which, coming at it as it does from a completely different angle—from the zero and/or three hundred and sixty degrees where we sit and, in reality, is no angle at all—seems, however reluctantly and whether we like it or not, to fit in very nicely with our perspective. At least if the experiments represent the very end as we claim they do we'd have to pay lip service to that notion. Since I recognize that in terms of "Seeing" and its prospective partisans stuck at Alpha, this might almost immediately call forth an anathema were we so inclined, let me explain.

It's my contention that since the experiments not only constitute but confirm the full disclosure of not so much a deliberate

plan as a divine drama that could only have been acted out historically (which unveiling, incidentally, for all its reverberations and later connotations, is all the words “revelation” or “apocalypse” mean), then, by definition, its end (its *telos* as distinct from its *finis*) has to presuppose the course by which it arrived there, which course, because it has finally arrived, is now, like its end, open and available to all. Having at long last achieved a position where, thanks to the experiments, it’s no longer necessary or even possible to imagine a definitive medium of revelation apart from them, we’re now free to look back at the future and detect that what had been more or less transparent in the past in this or that manifestation whether visible or audible, is, courtesy of the Presence, not only as present now as it’s ever been but, no longer a parody of paradise, fully and consciously so. Thus, what had once been appraised by the Greeks as a mere reckoning of the past or had beckoned those proto-Christians, the Jews, by means of a faith that, by definition, was future oriented, or simply been ignored as in the East, was, nevertheless, in its diverse ways, leading to the only watch modernity is equipped to keep and tell the time by. In a Word, by working backwards we’re now in a position not only to recognize history’s divine direction but enjoy it and this not in accounts of what he said or she said or we said or they said, but, more importantly, by immersing ourselves in what’s been revealed through its acts and events, not least its own apotheosis. Thus if, editorially speaking, all hell seems to be breaking loose on a scale never seen before, it may very well represent the ever-present invitation to learn the latest step in the dance of death, the one that, in Djuna Barnes’ words but in our *sight*, demonstrates that when it comes to performing at the Last Chance Café we’ve only to let go that selfsame hell for our fall to be broken by the roof of heaven. Which demonstration, hopefully to be engraved on every headstone in the land for “all ye that enter here” to see, can now be certified and this no longer by the seal of the prophets or only the seal of the prophets but by the seal of prophecy as well.

Since, fittingly enough, the subject lies beyond even the purview of Socratic persuasion, other than to announce it and demonstrate it and so live it—“Ladies and gentlemen I have here in my hand the elixir of the ages” and so on—I really don’t see what

good it does to peddle it or even argue it (which, if you recall, Douglas never does). Call it the higher, as distinct from its parody, the lower solipsism: that if the self knows nothing but itself, the Self knows nothing *and* itSelf. Contrary to Pannenberg's claim that no one act could possibly constitute a complete revelation (as if all of history can't now be seen as one act), I don't see how, considering how far we've come, we could convince anybody of anything by merely talking — an act of faith if there ever was one — or why, at the other end of the spectrum, "the holy hieroglyph" deciphered in and by these simple exercises, we would even have to. Either we *see* that the so-called transcendent "truths" have been succeeded by the one immanent certainty or, absent the experiments — simplicity itSelf — we don't. In which case, the devil take the hindmost as he or she most certainly will.



### Letter 34 – April 28, 2005

Interesting that you picked up on precisely the point that puzzled me, too, when I first read Pannenberg's argument. Rather than dispute it (which, of course, we must, if only on the evidence of the experiments), I'll let him speak for himself with various selected quotes and occasionally put in my two cents.

"The Greek terms rendered by 'to reveal' do not in any passage of the New Testament have God as an unqualified object." (Object?) "God continually reveals 'something' or 'someone,' never precisely himself....The one who appeared did not in any way reveal his essence. I would like to designate such appearances henceforth not as revelation, as is unfortunately the practice in the study of religion, but as 'manifestations.' By 'manifestations' I mean any appearance of God that does not involve the disclosure of essence. Self-revelation (*revelation*: unveiling) as the disclosure of essence is distinguished from a purely phenomenal understanding of manifestation...Jahweh always imparted 'something' specific, *never simply himself*." In light of what the experiments definitively reveal (which is nothing else but revelatory), I certainly think Pannenberg has a point here. The experiments certainly do reveal essence with an assurance and clarity and simplicity and certainty that no other method I know of ever has, and reveal it graphically, without words, without even that late (and later) accretion, penultimate as it turns out—the Word. We might actually argue on present evidence that, as with the content of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence, essence is all the experiments are equipped to reveal, leaving the rest for us to fill in as we go along. All of which, incidentally, ties in very nicely with the two tasks Douglas has set for us in *The Hierarchy* and which I can never find excuses enough to repeat: "To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for to-morrow or yesterday, must be my first concern. And my second must be to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays." Compared to this last at least, what's passed for either theology or philosophy — and there are exceptions, of course; for our purposes, Hegel comes immediately to mind — can only be characterized as manifestation.

To return to Pannenberg: “Only in gnostic thought does Word appear as the bearer of a direct divine revelation...It must be concluded that the theological assertion of a direct self-revelation of God cannot be justified either on the basis of the biblical equivalents for ‘to reveal’ or on the basis of the three aforesaid areas of conception, to which such a meaning has been ascribed.” (The three areas he’s referring to he denominates Name, Word and Law—not our concern at the moment since rather than constituting revelation itself they follow from revelation. Incidentally, all italics are and will be mine).

“Israel realizes the possibility of an association with Jahweh...but this is not self-revelation in the sense of a full self-disclosure...Knowledge of Jahweh (is) only to be had in the future...While the word authorized by Jahweh or spoken by him had fundamental meaning in the thought of Israel, it still had...concrete contents that are distinct from God. It never had God as its content in an *unmediated* way...The conception of a direct self-disclosure of God in the Word...is to be found in the New Testament only to the extent that gnostic concepts of revelation become clearly manifest...that Christ would be the Word by which God broke his silence...Only in gnostic thought does Word appear as the bearer of a direct divine self-revelation...If one wishes to understand specifically biblical functions and contents, then the Word of God does not have the character of a direct self-revelation of God.”

The following is in response to the point you bring up: “...it must be concluded that the theological assertion of a direct self-revelation of God cannot be justified either on the basis of the biblical equivalents for ‘to reveal’ or on the basis of the three aforesaid areas of conception, to which such meaning has been ascribed. Even if other concepts such as the glory of God did originally contain the implication of a direct self-revelation, they have been absorbed in the Old Testament tradition by the point of view that is decisive for Israel, namely, the fundamental proof for the divinity of Jahweh *exists in his acts in history.*” What’s worth noting here is that, though Pannenberg firmly closes the door on direct, he leaves it wide open to indirect, experience.

Which brings us to the crux of his argument that “we must not assume the gospel stems from a revelation that was spoken; rather it refers to one that has happened,” a finding that certainly jibes with the secondary aspect of Headlessness. “...It must be concluded that the theological assertion of a direct self-revelation of God cannot be justified either on the basis of the biblical equivalents for ‘to reveal’ or on the basis of the three aforesaid areas of *conception*” (as distinct from ‘perception’),” to which such a meaning has been ascribed. Even if other concepts such as the glory of God did originally contain the implication of a direct self-revelation, they have been absorbed in the Old Testament tradition by the point of view that is decisive for Israel, namely, the fundamental proof for the divinity of Jahweh exists in his acts in history. Instead of a direct self-revelation of God, the facts at this point indicate a *conception* of indirect self-revelation as a reflex of his activity in history.” (Note his insistence, however unconscious, on the correlation between “conception” and “indirect.”) He then goes on to point out that this indirect self-revelation of God is typical of all Israelitic *apocalyptic* (of which it is claimed Jesus is the foremost exponent), and primitive Christian history.

In any case, what, according to him, has emerged as regards all previous Alpha experience represents a new direction towards the Omega point (to steal a phrase from Teilhard). “Direct communication has in an immediate way just that content that it intends to communicate, whereas indirect communication initially has some other content than that which is actually to be communicated. Direct communication transmits content without a break from the sender to the receiver.” (the experiments) “In indirect communication, the path is broken: the content first reveals its actual meaning by being considered *from another perspective*. Indirect communication is on a *higher* level (!!!! ???); “it always has direct communication as its *basis* but takes this into a new perspective.” (italics, exclamation points and question marks all mine).

I must confess that when, fresh from the experiments, I first read this last I thought he was crazy or, at least, so confused by his “pro-Christian” anti-mystical prejudice that like virtually all his colleagues since if not Day One at least the Year One (A.D.), he

was incapable of distinguishing the wood from the trees and so would never “get it”. (And for all we know he still may not. God knows I’m not a bit sanguine when it comes to these “Word” guys). But thanks to the two indications of at least some aspect of saving grace I was able to detect—his reference to indirect communication as on a “higher” level, and the suggestion that direct communication could at least provide a “basis” for a new perspective—I paused long enough to give him or, at least, his argument not so much the benefit of a doubt but of certainty. First off, there’s no question, at least from our perspective—that is the perspective of Headlessness—that anything and everything over and above original, virginal perception which, if not, by definition, blind, is at least deaf and dumb to extraneous and undue influence, has got to qualify as “higher” since the experiments themselves, undistinguished by so much as a grunt, begin and end at rock-bottom level. And if that sounds like casuistry or sophistry, it’s meant to. How else explain this essentially new, that is original, phenomenon wherein it can now be *seen* for the first time in history that history itself is not simply the exclusive preserve of man’s encounter with man but also the record of that which takes place between man and god, a notion that, belatedly coming current in Greek tragedy though already long proposed by the Jews and soon to be claimed as realized by the Christians, with all due apologies to Hegel has only now been absolutely confirmed by the demonstrated Presence of these—what shall I call them?—these sacred, *because* profane, instruments?

Obviously, this paradox calls for an explanation and I’ll get to that in time. For the moment, what startled me when, on reading Pannenberg, I came to my senses yet again, was the realization that, hit or miss, lucky shot or no, he was, at least for our purposes, if not exactly on target, certainly onto something. Because, if the experiments were demonstrating what it was evident, even Self-evident, they were demonstrating—who we really really are—then, not having been born full-blown like Athena from the head of Zeus, there must have been a way they got that way. And as, in strict conformity with Douglas’ rule—that our second task is “to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays”—it also became apparent—if not im-mediately then, suiting the action to

the word, mediately — that that way lay history, a pursuit we were now in the enviable position, because we'd reached its end, of being able to look back on consciously and so see, not piecemeal in light of this or that particular event, however significant — the crucifixion, for instance — but whole. Quite simply, had there been — like sin or, if you prefer, ignorance or maybe just plain curiosity — no indirect path, no past, no future, in effect, no history, there would have been, by definition, no experiments. Had there been no experiments (and, lest we forget, until a few years ago there weren't), there would have been, again by definition, no way in the world to absolutely confirm, not only for ourselves, but ourSelf, what some have sworn to or sworn by or, more lately, even sworn at and even a rare few acted upon to the point of allowing themselves to be put to death for its truth: that there is a direct way for faith to survive the collapse of its own identity — “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — and at the same time be reborn in the certainty and assurance of its own existence and that that direct way, hinted at and often approached, is now sealed by means of these literally home-made instruments which, though admittedly arrived at indirectly are, for that very reason and for the first time ever, available to all. And if, like the meaning of modernity itself, this movement has an all too circular feel to it, it's because, like the road-map from Alpha to Omega signifying no-thing, it's meant to. We really have come full circle or as full circle as we're going to in a circle that never closes because, its structure sustained by a now visible Gap, it cannot, thus confirming the source of these all-seeing, all-knowing instruments. Can it be an accident that, ever since Aristotle, history as a serious, not to say ultimate, pursuit has, for the most part, been found wanting or that, even as totally ignored in a metaphysically biased East or, as with the exception of the likes of a Hegel building on a naïve Christianity whose capacity to reveal essence had already been systematically devalued, it turned out to be the last to be first and thus the means whereby the great reversal that are the experiments could reveal itself

P.S. If I've run over our agreed-on space, blame it on the extensive quotes.



### Letter 35 –May 6, 2005

It's extraordinary — quite magical really — how, like a buzzing fly, the mind let loose will manage to land, if not on the one thing necessary, at least on the one thing necessary for it at the time and that's what I've just done. I was sitting here thinking of Pannenberg and what his meaning represented for us and how best to finish up with him and his contribution, however unconscious and unintended, to Douglas's great uncovering — at least to the interpretation of it — when a passage popped into my head that I hadn't thought of in maybe thirty or forty years and which, though I can hardly claim it's been sticking in my craw all this time, nevertheless, must obviously have been puzzling me since I still remembered it. It's from Henry Adams' *Mont St. Michel and Chartres*, a delightful and seminal book, incidentally, and one worth looking into if you haven't already. Anyway, here's the brief passage and, as usual, the italics will be mine:

"The foundation of the Christian Church should be...always the same, but Saint Thomas (Aquinas) knew better. His foundation was Norman, not French; it spoke the practical architect who knew the mathematics of his art, and who saw that the foundation laid by Saint Bernard, Saint Victor, Saint Francis, the whole, mystical, semi- mystical, Cartesian, Spinozan foundation, past or future, could not bear the weight of the structure to be put on it. Thomas began by sweeping the ground clear of them. *God must be a concrete thing, not a human thought. God must be proved by the senses like any other concrete thing "nihil est in intellectu quin prius fuerit in sensu..."* Nothing exists in the mind that hasn't previously existed in the senses. There it is in a nutshell, the whole kit and caboodle of the experiments and this time — its absolute proof already bred in the bone and just itching to be seen — beyond conjecture and speculation. Not that it's everybody's cup of tea, at least not yet, but, since old habits die hard and we still prefer our transcendence neat and the neater the better no matter at what cost to its holy and wholly immanent ground, it'll take some time yet. Think of how, just when Adams was writing — the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — modern painting with its Manets and Monets and Cezannes was getting ready to take off and how its ubiquitous influence now present, however attenuated, in virtually every

material article we use, has been filtered down from the furniture we design to the advertising we're forced to look at. No great recommendation, perhaps, as regards the prospect for a heavenly future but there it is, the best that's still on offer. And I suspect that in that sense, despite the ultimate reversal the experiments represent, the past will still act as prologue.

What's really interesting and again, though its effect may be limited at first to the few—think of the gestation of Christianity itself or any of the other great movements spiritual or otherwise—is how concretely the experiments come across once the invisible is made visible and indeed, positively palpable and constant, the only stable “thing” there is and, how they help us perform the one thing necessary by teaching us to see straight. And their influence will hardly stop there as consciousness of them—“caviar for the general”—begins to seep into every crack and crevice of the body politic forcing it to sit up and take notice. It's all very well to slough this stuff off as just too too esoteric for words when, as these simple home-made remedies demonstrate, it's the contrary that's the case: it's the words that are just too too esoteric—and for what? Why, for the Word itSelf. And the same goes for the flip side of the coin. As Hegel who, if not the first was certainly the most eloquent to point out as regards the so-called mystery of it all, *mystes* translated simply means “closed lips”—that which cannot be spoken—not that which cannot be known. On the contrary, it's only that which, because it cannot be spoken and so automatically rendered dual, can be perfectly known. And now we have it, the absolute key to the absolute mystery of the Absolute itSelf, itSelf patiently and dutifully and, yes, lovingly waiting all these thirteen billion years or so for our dreams to come true and as simply as in a Mother Goose rhyme and even more presciently.

“For want of a nail, the shoe was lost.  
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost.  
For want of a horse, the rider was lost.  
For want of a rider, the battle was lost.  
For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost.  
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.”  
And now we have it—kingdom, battle, rider, horse, shoe,  
history itself finally nailed, as on a cross.



### Letter 36—May 17, 2005

There was an interesting review the other day in the *Wall Street Journal* of all places—though not all that surprising since it seems to have become, if only by default, the most literate, if not quite literary, of all the dailies—of a book called *The Cube and The Cathedral* by one George Weigel. Apparently at once a critique of modernity and an apology for the Church and offered, coincidentally, in commemoration of the recent investiture of the new Pope, it provides us with a marvelous jumping-off place from which to examine this whole question, not only of what the religious types are about these days but what, conversely (and I do mean conversely), we're about or should be. So with all due apologies, a short excerpt to get us going:

“What is the deeper source of European antipathy to religion? For Mr. Weigel, the problem goes all the way back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when scholastics like William of Ockham argued for ‘nominalism.’ According to their philosophy, universals—concepts such as justice’ or ‘freedom’ and qualities such as ‘white’ or ‘good’—do not exist in the abstract but are merely words that denote instances of what they describe. A current of thought was set into motion, Mr. Weigel believes, that pulled European man away from *transcendent truths*.” (italics mine). One casualty was a fixed idea of human nature. “If there is no such thing as human nature,” Mr. Weigel argues, “then there are no universal moral principles that can be read from human nature. If there are no universal moral truths, then religion, positing them, is merely a form of oppression or myth, one from which Europe’s elites see themselves as liberated.”

As I’m sure you’ve detected by now, there’s enough here—or would be—to keep us busy till doomsday if it weren’t for the Fact that, thanks to the experiments, we’ve already been there and done that, in effect have answered to what, as it turns out, was no false alarm, but merely a warning shot across the bow. As a result I’ll simply look back and limit my remarks to the most salient points that, for our purposes, began with Augustine for whom redemption lay beyond history—“you do not belong here, you belong somewhere else;” were then somewhat modified to suggest that maybe, just maybe that somewhere else lay closer to home

than was at first imagined or thought, only to have both versions knocked into a cocked-hat by virtually everybody's villain of the peace, the above-indicated bad actor who went by the name of William of Ockham, the godfather of the show-me school of modern empiricism no less. No matter that, much like another Brit of our acquaintance, Ockham and his nominalism merely picked up where Aquinas with his "God must be proved by the senses like any other concrete thing" left off and took it to its logical or, if you will, its blessedly illogical conclusion. Or at least began the demolition that was to come to a head, to, literally, *the* head, only yesterday and so, setting everything right side up, was able in good Hegelian fashion to succeed in subverting the original subversion. As Henry Adams, whom I mentioned in my last letter, speculated and we now see with absolute certainty, *it is possible*, with the help of these built-in tools, to prove unity by means of multiplicity, i.e. by means of history. But that we can take even that conclusion a step further and walk the last mile with it on the low road to Nirvana, we owe to these consoling instruments which instead of joining in mourning for our lost transcendent truths welcome our new-found immanent ones, and declare without benefit of clergy (or of words as well) that, if, indeed, the world is a wedding, then very much like the father of the bride, rather than lose a daughter we've gained a son. In short, *pace* Mr. Weigel the only thing fixed and absolutely certain about that most arguable of subjects, human nature, is not so much its vastly overrated diversity but its diversion from the absolutely singular and constant divinity now exposed at its very root for all to see. Can you believe that, despite our modern marvels—sonar, radar, moon-landings and so on—and the obvious correlation we're now in a position to make between extremes, between beginnings and ends and the simplest and most complex of things, it's nevertheless taken us and our company of surrogate arks, quarks and atoms these billions of complicated years to arrive at this now most obvious and simplest of truths? As with 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science, there's a lesson here, too, that we're going to have to learn.

### Letter 37—May 31, 2005

I don't want to linger too long with Pannenberg as he hops along on his one leg and that one wooden. As Douglas concludes in the *Hierarchy* and I've cited a couple of times myself, the indirect, the Omega factor, even though we may label it as the last to come first, has got to take a back seat, at least at first glance, to direct perception. Still, as my father used to say, we can learn from anybody, even a fool, and Pannenberg, by latching on to the one thing necessary for *him*, is far from being a fool. Thanks to the very existence of the experiments, his thesis can now be certified indisputable: that rather than "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," the historic process, provided it ends up with its finishing touch, namely the experiments, can now be seen to be the bearer *par excellence* of meaning as it negotiates, mediates if you will, the perilous path from sacred myth to divine vision via profane history which, though still bottom-fishing in its native habitat, still exercising its prerogatives by signifying nothing, can now switch sides with a straight face—indeed with no face at all—and, looking out of its single eye, square the circle. So—miracle of miracles—past becomes prologue and Presence, in the person of those same experiments, its own reward.

Again, as Headlessness demonstrates (and, fittingly enough, it seems capable of demonstrating any-and-everything in addition to nothing—that's what it's there for), only when seen as a Whole can history reveal that like God it has nothing and precisely nothing to hide and that half-truths, that refuge of the so-called wise, will no longer do. Thus, we have the egregious spectacle that's been making the rounds since the Year One, in fact initiates it: that it's precisely because the Whole, the total view, is inaccessible to finite eyes like ours it doesn't exist at all or, awaiting us, presumably in some other world, might just as well not exist. So mystery as the unknowable rather than the merely unspeakable (*mystes*—closed lips) becomes the stock in trade and foundation on which innumerable careers and quasi-legitimate beliefs, even religions, are erected to the greater glory of ...I'll leave it to you to fill in the blank. The heart-breaking fact, of course, is that the epigones of received opinion—in this case, the historicists, even the poets or, at least, some of them—are literally quite right as far as they go but

as usual just don't go far enough. Because, as a pop-tune might have it, who could ever take a pair of bewitching eyes, however black or blue, quite seriously again when it's now demonstrably certain the language of Fact neither winks nor blinks out of its single one? And the same goes for the chorus of tropes, of analogies and symbols and metaphors now relegated to playing walk-ons in the provinces but still basking in the reflected glory of a god (or, as is now rumored, a goddess) who, like some transvestite beauty-queen, is claimed to have exposed his or her bare ass to Moses once in a fit of derring-do. Hegel got it exactly right. Reflective history reflects; philosophic history—what we might call theonomous or absolute history—sees.

On this score, Pannenberg has a rather remarkable and surprising foot-note—a lengthy and incisive quote from another important scholar, Hans Jonas —which, if you'll forgive my exceeding our agreed-upon limits, I'm going to include almost in its entirety. I believe you'll see why—it's that illuminating:

“A telling symbol” (sic!) “of what happened to the Biblical word through him (Philo Judaeus) and his successors is unwittingly supplied by an *allegory* which he (Philo) evolves from an etymology of the name ‘Israel.’..The name is taken to mean ‘He who sees God,’ and Jacob’s acquiring this name is said to represent the *God-seeker’s progress from the stage of hearing to that of seeing*, made possible by the *miraculous* conversion of ears into eyes.” (As usual the italics are and will be mine. And if I pause here it's merely to underscore not only the significance of conceiving the movement from hearing to seeing as a progress rather than a reversion to an original state, albeit conscious this time, but also to note the use of the word “miracle” for what, as we're now aware, thanks to the experiments, is a perfectly normal condition. Which is in no way to suggest, of course, that “normal” itSelf doesn't constitute a miracle. In any case): “The allegory falls into the general pattern of Philo’s views on ‘knowing God.’ These rest on the Platonic supposition that the most genuine relation to being is intuition, beholding. This eminence of sight, when extended into the religious sphere, determines also the highest and most authentic relation to God—and with it also to the *word* of God. To this Philo indeed assigns a nature, which makes vision, i.e., intellectual

contemplation, and not audition, its genuine criterion. Referring to the phrase in Exodus, 'All the people saw the voice' (20:18), he comments: 'Highly significant, *for human voice is to be heard but God's voice is in truth to be seen*. Why? Because that which God speaks is not words but works, which the eye discriminates better than the ear.' "

On second thought, since there's so much that specifically concerns us packed into this one small paragraph, I'm going to reserve any remaining comments for my next.



### Letter 38—June 6, 2005

A follow-up to my last where I ended with that marvelously revealing footnote that Pannenberg extracted from Hans Jonas' book, *The Phenomenon of Life*. In fact it's so instructive and so central to our thesis that, if you'll forgive me, on the chance you don't have my letter handy (and even if you do) I'll repeat its most salient points since they bear repeating. (Again the italics are mine): "...A telling *symbol* ...unwittingly supplied by an *allegory* which he (Philo) evolves from an etymology of the name 'Israel' ...The name is taken to mean 'He who sees God,' and Jacob's acquiring this name is said to represent the *God-seeker's progress from the stage of hearing to that of seeing*, made possible by the *miraculous conversion of ears to eyes*...The *allegory* falls into the general pattern of Philo's views on 'knowing God.' These rest on the *Platonic supposition* that the most genuine relation to being is intuition, beholding. This eminence of sight, when extended into the religious sphere, determines also the *highest* (sic!) and most authentic relation to God...To this Philo indeed assigns a nature, which makes vision, i.e. *intellectual contemplation*, and not audition, its genuine criterion. Referring to the phrase in Exodus, 'All the people saw the voice' (20:18), he comments: 'Highly significant, *for human voice is to be heard but God's voice is in truth to be seen.*' Why? Because that which God speaks is not words but works, which the eye discriminates better than the ear.' "

As I say, I find this short excerpt quite literally and absolutely extraordinary for our purposes and well worth parsing virtually word for word since, speaking of perfectly natural phenomena like miracles, we now know, thanks to the experiments, that, with a few minor though telling alterations (like the deletion of *symbol* and *allegory*), it only took two thousand years or so for Philo's seemingly arcane libretto to be set to its appropriate music by Douglas. I should also point out on this score (no pun intended) that though my copy of the Jonas book indicates I read it soon after it appeared more than forty years ago and, as is my wont, underlined a good deal of it or at least that which appeared to me most pertinent, when it comes to the above passage, appropriately enough given my condition at the time, there's not a mark to be found on it anywhere in sight. And with good reason. Not

having discovered Douglas' work yet I can only assume that like most readers, like Jonas himself and later even Pannenberg, I took it, I won't say with a grain of salt, but as I can only suppose most modern readers—I dare say almost all—must have taken it: as a charming descendant, if you will, a poetic relic of that heroic period in which, it was reported, there had been “giants in the earth in those days” to go along with folks who lived to be as old as Methusaleh. That its “telling symbols” and “allegories” meant to “represent the God-seeker's progress from hearing to seeing by means of the “miraculous conversion” of ears to eyes were, in reality, rather than “Platonic suppositions” or the ambiguity of “intellectual contemplation” with its kindred association of, if not deep meditation at least deep thought, no more (nor less) than concentrated looking on its way to a simple seeing now available to any and all at will and as easy as turning on a light-switch, hadn't, obviously, appeared on my screen as yet. Nor with the exception of Douglas and perhaps a few of his earliest friends, on anyone else's.

Which is not to oversimplify if that's possible and “head” the other way since, at the other end of the spectrum, we have the traditionalists, Guenon and Schuon, for instance, who, though I can't cite chapter and verse at the moment, might very well have made the case or tried to—Guenon especially—for the above, for a Methusaleh really really having lived nine-hundred years if only on the grounds that, quite suitable for the childhood of the race, time was experienced more slowly in those days when the atmosphere was young which, for all we know—and thanks to the environmentalists we know more than we used to—might very well have been the case, at least to some degree (the virginal absence of pollution and so forth), but, nevertheless, doesn't even begin to address the central question. Or should I say the central answer that once implicit in its hope of heaven has now turned explicit in its realization—not in the way expected, of course, but in the only way possible: via the experiments where, as we recapitulate our journey from Alpha to Omega, we literally do “see” the voice that speaks in silence to “all the people” and, what's more, see what it says? And what does it say? Why simply this: that, no longer solely dependent on a mystical “intuition” blindly

feeling its way towards a place it can't quite put its finger on, or an "intellectual contemplation" constantly at odds with itSelf and the temptation to add an inch to its stature rather than simply subtract eight in the kindest cut of all, all that remains for us, if only by attrition, is to grow smaller and, setting our sights lower not "higher," put an end to transcendent aspiration in order, paradoxically, to attain it. Which, as we both know if the rest of the world doesn't (at least for the moment), for all intents we already have. "In the latter days one-tenth of what was required in the beginning will be sufficient." But although, like Philo, this Sufi *hadith* may say what the *nostrum* is, typically it doesn't and can't show us *where* it is—or isn't. That had to be left to the experiments, to, when all else failed, no-thing making its non-self available to one and all in person when All, including itSelf, seemed lost. Which, of course, it had to be in order to be found.



**Letter 39—June 14, 2005**

Many thanks for your seconding my appraisal of Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, a truly extraordinary figure and, although generally acknowledged as important, nevertheless somewhat underrated if not overlooked, at least in light of what the experiments confirm. If it weren't that I might be leaving myself wide open to wise-cracks from the peanut gallery as to "Why don't you?", I'd almost be tempted to throw in the towel right now and call it quits, he comes that close. I mean, other than to appeal to the experiments themselves as the final arbiter, our natural inclination might well be to ask—not quite rhetorically when we consider Aquinas' ultimate silence—what is there left to say after such knowledge now that we see what a Philo, though still understandably encumbered with his culturally conditioned "symbols" and "allegories," could come up with, only comparable in its way to what was going on just up the road with his neighboring country-cousin and co-religionist, an almost exact contemporary who, though fully equipped with the same instruments, was, in addition, quite prepared to "act out" the problem and, in the name of precision, explore and eventually uncover a way to fulfill rather than destroy, first the human, then the divine possibility of what was to turn out to be no dream. But because, however, the crucifixion and resurrection merely prefigure the experiments it is these last that close the Book once and for all, not only on the Seal of the Prophets as later claimed but on the Seal of Prophecy itSelf. At least close it enough to enable us to speak with certainty about such formerly moot issues as the distinction between words (not to speak of the Word) and works or whether we even have the right any longer to "walk by faith and not by sight," now that the single eye (I hesitate to say "ours" or "my") has finally gone public. And not a moment too soon (or too late either) but just right, considering the end in view.

That said, though I'd love to linger, even luxuriate with Philo—he's that accessible—it's time to move on with what we can only call our theology of history, more convinced than ever that we're on the right track. But rather than take as guides a Burckhardt or, in our own time, a Voegelin, both extraordinary figures in their own right and both joined by their mutual taste for island-

hopping, for settling, out of a reputedly vast sea of indifference, on the high spots shored up as “fragments against our ruins” (a Renaissance Italy, for instance, and/or an ancient Athens), much to my surprise (since I was largely under their influence) the discovery of the experiments literally forced me to take a completely opposite tack and opt for the object of their mutual distaste, especially Voegelin’s. I refer, of course, to his constant whipping-boy Hegel who claimed he saw, if not “good in everything” at least purpose, meaning, direction rising out of the great teleological land-mass seen from the only historically universal perspective available to him at the time and, as it turns out, since we’re now in a position, thanks to the experiments, from which we can specifically underwrite his claim, for all time as well. Given that assurance, how could I choose not to join with him, especially now that, tellingly enough, he’s completely out of fashion? I know that, I, for one, aided and abetted by our marvelous instruments that literally pick up where he left off and confirm his perspective, in fact, adjudicate all perspectives— “the astrolabe of the mysteries of God,” Rumi might have called them— I can and have.

Which brings me to, I won’t say one of my own whipping boys or fallen idols but, like Voegelin himself, though certainly not in his class—in fact, as I recall, when I mentioned him last week, you hadn’t even heard of him— another formative (but now former) influence who, for reasons obvious to me now if not then, has also, again in light of the experiments (what touchstones they are!), not quite measured up. But then, with very few exceptions, who or what has? I’m speaking of Richard Weaver, a teacher at the University of Chicago not long after I left, and author, surprisingly enough, of something of a best-seller right after the war, a semi-popular but nevertheless serious book called *Ideas Have Consequences* which I’d have to put, at least as far as its effect on me, in the same category as von Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*, a critique similar in style and outlook that also appeared around that time and also represented an opening volley against the still prevailing though already-beginning-to-wane influence of what we can only call the Whig hegemony with its theory of history that as far back as the French Revolution and even before had already begun to opt for the latest rather than the last word as the measure of all

things. At any rate, along with Huxley's wonderful anthology with commentary, *The Perennial Philosophy* which, though on another level, also intimated and more than intimated that, perhaps, there was not as much good in goodness as we liked to think, both books were to serve as something of an eye-opener for a child of the century like me.

But, since I've run out of space, I'll have to reserve my appraisal of that shock of recognition, especially as regards Weaver's work both then and now, for my next.



### Letter 40—June 20, 2005

I mentioned Weaver in my last letter for a reason. Not that his work was all that important although, symptomatic of a sea-change in certain quarters, it represented something of a turning-point for me, a marker that indicated I was still capable at a relatively early age of looking the other way if pressed. And under his direction (and others'), look the other way I did. Following Hegel's blue-print for the triadic turn from thesis to antithesis to synthesis, I moved from the received opinion of what I've already called the prevailing Whig hegemony—what in plain English or, better yet, plain American we now refer to as common garden-variety liberalism—to its antithesis, a modified conservatism that, if not quite as pugnacious as Weaver's, resembled something on the order of Voeglin's or Leo Strauss's, until aided and abetted by the experiments, indeed, impelled by them and again in unconscious obedience to Hegel's iron-clad dialectic, I was once more forced to reverse my field and so land fat, deep and in the middle of Nowhere, from which burrow (as distinct from perch—literally a whole in the ground), I now propel these, I won't say missiles but, missives. And also apologize for this inexplicable fit of archness.

In any case, if, for Voegelin, the villain of the piece (and peace, too), was Hegel (with Nietzsche thrown in for good measure), and for Leo Strauss, Machiavelli (all of whom will figure favorably in our sequence if I ever get to it—but that's another story), for Weaver the front-runner and odds-on favorite for the booby-if-not-more-sinister prize was William of Ockham, he who in the name of nominalism first seriously questioned, even challenged the reality of transcendence and universals some six centuries before another Englishman of our acquaintance administered the final *coup* with a mere flick of the wrist. "Entities are not to be multiplied without necessity and what can be done with fewer assumptions is done in vain with more." So went Ockham's watchwords which, largely responsible, they say, for the collapse of the "medieval synthesis," for, in effect, the cathedrals tumbling down, were finally translated into the language of absolute silence and officially pronounced dead only yesterday by the experiments. Whether Weaver, had he lived, would have seen it that way is, of course, something else again, but since he died young and

avoided the fate, we have no way of knowing, though I suspect that, given his comfortably doctrinaire and stubborn despair at the course of modernity, nothing would have or even could have changed his mind, that is to say, would have or could have encouraged him to look the other way and see what his so-called “collapse” had presaged, indeed, made pro-vision for.

Now I don't want to start getting cute and playing with words but it seems to me that, stacked up against the straightforward language of silence, the ambiguous, even parodic, nature of speech—its two-faced duality designed to conceal as much as it reveals—is so pervasive and so insistent that it's worth bringing it to our attention, especially in this instance which is ripe for analysis. For example, here, with all its hidden ambiguities, is a direct quote and, in effect, the sum and substance of Weaver's entire, if unwitting, argument: “The practical result of nominalist philosophy is to banish the reality which is perceived by the intellect and to *posit* as reality that which is perceived by the senses.” Please note the pejorative and more than pejorative insinuation of that “posit” with its unabashed implication that a superior and highfalutin Mantalk—the intellect—passing itself off as Godspcak can take precedence over the lowly language and logic of the body however that precedence had already been established, first on a cross and then seconded by the Thomist pronouncement that God must be proved by the senses like any other concrete thing—the “*nihil est in intellectu quin prius fuerit in sensu*” I quoted a few letters back and which Weaver was either ignorant of—doubtful—or simply ignored. It is, of course and as the experiments incontestably demonstrate, the *nihil*, the no-thing, that provides us with the essential key: whether to take all this dithering at its face or, as we see now, its no-face value, which choice I, for one, was not even aware of until after I'd made it and saw, almost three score and ten into the finish line and with the help of our simple exercises, that, rather than a dirty word, reality as *truly* perceived by the senses—that lowest of the low—is simply the way things are. From which, as acted out in the experiments, everything *naturally* follows: the demotion of transcendence along with the “logical realism” propounded by its name-calling camp-followers; at the same time the promotion of truth to the bottom line, not higher but lower

than the lowest thing so as to include it. And if, according to Weaver (and others as well whatever their persuasion), this “lowest” was only a presage of the disaster we’re now enjoying, well, isn’t that just what we’ve been heading for and are at last in a position to welcome — the long-heralded apocalyptic catastrophe that coming in like a lion will absolutely, positively and literally, like the revelatory turning-round it spells out, be hoist, like everything else, by its own petard and go out like the lamb it really really is? Can it be an accident that, as if to cover all these bases and so play both ends against the middle, the two foremost and most popular heralds of what was promised at Alpha as the original dispensation but has only now come to total consciousness in, through and by means of the flesh at Omega, have had as their role-models, Gautama,,the king Self-demoted to beggar and, at the other end of the spectrum, Jesus, the beggar Self-promoted to king?



### Letter 41 – July 7, 2005

I want to stay with an analysis of Weaver, again not because he's that important but because he represents the classic protest, or at least one of them, to the decline and fall of transcendence until even that perspective— antithesis responding to thesis—is rendered cockeyed by the arrival of the synthesis, the experiments. Let me go into more detail since, absent these literally miraculous instruments, I suspect I'd still have to agree with him as I did for years along with the many so-called "thinking" as distinct from "seeing" people that still do. In any case, given his diagnosis and what might politely be called his prescription for recovery (as distinct from uncovering), that's exactly what I did do following a first dis-illusion. Like him and so many others who couldn't "see" the no-thingness for the *nihil* in nihilism or the *deus* for the *devilus* in the ape of God, I just assumed that our "progress" indicated it was to be downhill all the way rather than the downward path to wisdom it later proved to be when, by virtue of being reduced to less than no-thing and smaller than the smallest thing, I was able to squeeze through and—talk about saving grace—virtually come out unnoticed on the other side along with the assurance—no, the guarantee—that so might everyone else.

At any rate—and this is the point of my little excursion—it's this development, the death of transcendence or, as it later came to be known, the Death of God, that filled or would have filled Weaver with horror had he lived. Witness his very pointed casting off of Ockham, the patron-saint of empiricism, long before the alleged Self-slaughter really took effect under the aegis of Altizer via Nietzsche. Incidentally, it's interesting to note as a sidelight that, not long after I left, the two—Weaver and Altizer— might actually have met at Chicago where Altizer, though still unpublished was a graduate student and the slightly older Weaver an instructor.

Since the subject is so vast or could be, what I would like to do and still stay within the bounds of our agreed-upon format is to take note of some of Weaver's more salient points and briefly show how, once apprised of the nature of reality by the experiments, all misses, even near-misses (and he's certainly capable of those), assume the characteristics of parody, a development not all

that surprising when self-effacement, denied its *original* meaning, is more closely allied to modesty than humility. Which, I dare say, might very well account for the limited rightness, even attractiveness, of some of his diagnoses — “there can be no truth under a program of separate sciences” — but complete and total wrong-headedness as to his prescriptions. For instance, he talks about and censures the “endless induction” of empiricism, forgetting for the moment that it’s precisely the lure of that supposed endlessness that, in the words of his (and, I might add, our) darling Shakespeare, has led us to that “place” where time not only does, but indeed “must have a stop”. And never more literally and graphically and pointedly than in the experiments, any experiment, where Alpha is finally “faced” with Omega at the Gap. But I’ll let him speak for himself and so be, if not condemned, challenged out of his own mouth:

“Since the time of Bacon the world has been running away from, rather than toward, first principles, so that, on the verbal level, we see ‘fact’ substituted for ‘truth’, and on the philosophic level, we witness attack upon abstract ideas and speculative inquiry.”

To which we’re now in a conscious position, thanks to the experiments, to reply with certainty for the first time in history that, reality being demonstrably round, it’s neither physically nor metaphysically possible to run away from first principles — not to speak of that Hound of Heaven, *the* first principle — without, at the same time, running toward them. Which — again witness history and its downward path to wisdom — is not to deny the cost in time and trouble it’s taken us to arrive at an end-point which, fittingly enough, also signals its beginning, in effect, its all in all. As must be obvious by now, one result of the experiments, and certainly not its least, is that contrary to Weaver’s claim, rather than too empirical we haven’t been empirical enough. Despite our evolutions and revolutions, with few exceptions we simply haven’t had the courage or (desperation) to go the last mile and beard the lion in its den. But now the predicted end of the world, or at least that world, very much at hand (literally), we’re being forced to. As for substituting “fact” for “truth” — 3<sup>rd</sup> person sandwiched, like a hunk of baloney, between thesis and synthesis — has it been other

than a temporary (and temporal) though necessary stop-gap to be offered up on the altar of Silence, the truth as demonstrable Fact, when the time was ripe? As for “the attack on abstract ideas and speculative inquiry” which, in the name of removing “all barriers to immediate apprehension of the sensory world” he deplores, it seems to me that simply to substitute those terms, however unwittingly, as surrogates for concrete truth and visible certainties is a dead give-away and merely confirms in practice that the good, in the person of Mr. Weaver and all those others whose name is legion, is indeed still very much the enemy of the best.



### Letter 42 – July 20, 2005

Once more with Weaver till we clear up the remaining perspectives he so conveniently sums up for us by listing the sins of modernity: its inordinate, indeed inhuman, speed as if designed for precipitous descent (which, of course, it is); its elimination of degree whether as consequence or cause, its deterioration of language, its obscenity by way of enacting that which should be performed elsewhere—all the usual suspects since Plato's day and a few more of our own thrown in and all repeating the same necessary pattern and arriving at the same necessary end, the end of a world and if not the hope, in Eliot's words, of "faring well," at least of "faring forward." And faring forward we certainly have till, come full circle (the world being round), we've ended up where we started, capacious enough, because empty enough this time to "know the place"—again in Eliot's words—"for the first time," and know it with a certainty never available before.

Take the notion of "objective" truth (as if there were such a thing), that darling of 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science and the reputed loss of which Weaver mourns even as he sees it sacrificed daily on the altar of the relativism he despises, forgetting, of course, or just plain ignorant of the now demonstrable fact that, pose as man may as the measure of all things, God is still the measure, world without end. And that world, however you slice it, is still a wedding where for a Father to lose a daughter is still to find a son and never so patently obvious as when a hitherto virgin observer is uncovered to reveal, not just any old "I" but the once mythic I AM, the very Participant and Subject itSelf now a candidate for the celebration of the flesh come to term.

And we could go down the list. For instance, he quotes with favor Goethe's dictum directed against didacts that "one may be said to know much only in the sense that one knows little." Which vision, if it can be called that, doubtless accounts for Goethe's own overblown reputation for wise resignation, that is to say for one who has not gone far enough and come out the other side. How else describe what can only appear to be his timid half-way measures when compared, say, to a Rumi's wild celebration of one who knows *all* simply because he really really knows *nothing* and

knows he knows no-thing? And why settle for less, that is to say, merely more, when the whole Monty is available?

Or what are we supposed to make of the “threat “ that Weaver sees as the inordinate “desire of immediacy...its aim..to dissolve the formal aspects of everything and get at the *supposititious* reality behind them?” (italics mine) As if, with the exception of that ill-assorted bunch we know as mystics, saviors, seers and saints (and they unable to transmit the Word except by mouth if even that), it wasn’t all supposititious B.E. (Before the Experiments). “It is characteristic of the barbarian...to insist upon seeing a thing ‘as it is.’ The desire testifies that he has nothing in himself with which to *spiritualize* it; the relation is one of *thing to thing* without the intercession of *imagination*. Impatient of the veiling with which the man of *higher type* (sic!) gives the world imaginative meaning, the barbarian and the Philistine... demands the access of *immediacy*. Where the former wishes representation, the latter ...impatient of symbolism, of indirect methods.. insists upon starkness...” And so on. Can you believe it? Aside from the Fact that’s it’s literally impossible to see a thing—any thing—“thing to thing” (since he or she who has eyes is not a thing but merely a surrogate for no-thing), we really have come full circle and if it’s only to emerge into Vico’s new barbarism, so be it since we have no choice anyway but to “fare forward” and end up where we started. What’s interesting for us as an object lesson (or should I say Subject lesson?) is that it would be practically impossible to find a clearer text in which virtually every recommendation is at odds with reality as demonstrated in and through the experiments: as if, absent no-thing, the relation of thing to thing were even possible, no less required the intercession of the imagination to spiritualize it, to—get this—spiritualize spirit as it were; as if the veiling indulged in by our higher types (and, of course, I include my former self in that category) hasn’t exacerbated what’s been the problem all along? If I didn’t know better I’d almost be tempted to raise a glass to what passes for the new barbarism which isn’t new and isn’t even barbarism but the answer to the parody of the real true thing that’s made the experiments possible in the last place.

That said, what else can we do except keep on dancing?

### Letter 43 – August 1, 2005

Having disposed of Weaver (I trust), I'm sort of at an impasse and, although convinced, like Vico, that, despite all the philosophers and theologians, the notion of God is far too simple to be "proved" a priori but by the same token can't be denied a posteriori (in our case, by means of the experiments), I'm still not quite sure which way to run with it or whether to run with it at all. In which case, we might very well find ourselves right back where we started or if not right back certainly closer to the beginning rather than the end, to Alpha rather than Omega. But then I recall a biblical "tradition" I came across somewhere, that what Ezekiel once saw in heaven was far less than what all Israel was about to witness on earth and I realize that's just where we are with the sea about to part and the Promised Land in view — redemption in and through history, rather than from it as Augustine believed, the means to its own meaning not just limited to the chosen few but available to all, at least to all those willing to strike their tents and take a chance on getting their feet wet. As I've tried to clarify so often in the preceding, the fact that we have the experiments must mean the end of history, not in the sense that it's all over but in the sense that *we* are, that in reality the Already Here has always disguised itSelf as the Not Yet only we didn't know it because we couldn't see it. Which Self-revelation of the Day of the Lord, of the eschaton with its promise of full disclosure, calls for a celebration served not too hot, not too cold but just right and, it literally goes without saying, ready to delight the eye as well.

That said and the perpetual passover we're now prepared to enjoy acknowledged, there are a few points I'd like to clear up before proceeding with the main menu which, as I think we've already discussed, will certainly include, among others, all those who approach our conclusions in one way or another yet none of whom can match the experiments for their all-inclusive and absolute certainty. I'm referring, of course, to Jonathan Edwards and Altizer, to Gebser and Tillich and Nishitani and Masao Abe's seminal work on Dogen, always, of course, as regards each of their viewpoints, as measured against the ultimate, because immeasurable, measure, the experiments. For instance, just as we were able, in an earlier letter, to take on Einstein and his unrequited search

for the thing itSelf simply on grounds that, expert that he was (God help him), he, too, persisted in looking the wrong way for his Unified Theory, his “final solution” so to speak, so too we’re now in a position -*the* position, arrogant as it may sound — to award the imprimatur to any and all comers who warrant it. That’s assuming we can find them. Does a Newton with his now demonstrably certain “no action at a distance,” a stance quite suitable for one who “would feign no hypotheses since hypotheses, whether physical or metaphysical, whether of occult qualities or mechanical, have no place in experimental philosophy,” qualify any more than those of faith used to? Well, like just about everyone else — certainly like his companion band of third-person brothers — yes and no. Yes, certainly, if only on grounds of his true humility in face of the facts that “these are things that cannot be explained in few words” — or, we might add, in any, including these — “nor are we furnished with that sufficiency of experiments” — (though we certainly are now) — “which is required to an accurate determination and demonstration of the laws by which this electric and elastic spirit operates.” But, then again, no, by virtue of his, if not ignorance, at least neglect of the Fact that, as his persistent yet respectful critic and counter, Bishop Berkeley, pointed out a generation later and the experiments confirm: “an unperceivable reality is unthinkable” and, as we’re in a position to point out with absolute assurance, no longer even desirable, is, in Fact, our very watchword. And so, thanks to that long longed-for “sufficiency of experiments” Newton called for and to which he contributed more than his share by helping to exhaust all possibilities that side of paradise, all has come true and we find ourselves back with William of Ockham, only this time on a firm, a demonstrable footing. It’s really uncanny: first Ockham, then Berkeley and — not to speak of Blake — now Douglas. Saved at the bell yet again by yet another Brit.

Since I mentioned him and, appropriately enough, still have a little space left and I’ll need somewhat more for that arch foil and fool I’ve reserved for my next — that hero in his own way, Giordano Bruno — why don’t I give the somewhat neglected Bishop Berkeley his due by just letting him speak for himself or through one of his chief interpreters, Alexandre Koyre? Here’s

Berkeley: "He (God) is omnipresent not virtually only, but also substantially because virtue cannot subsist without substance." To which Koyre comments: " 'In Him we live, we move and we are,' not metaphorically or metaphysically as St. Paul meant it, but in the most proper and literal meaning of these words. We—that is, the world—are in God; in God's space and in God's time. And it is because of this ubiquitous and sempiternal co-presence with things that God is able to exercise His dominion upon them; and it is this dominion or, more exactly, the effect of this dominion that reveals to us His otherwise unknowable and incomprehensible essence..." All of which words —and I never get tired of repeating this— can now be vouched for, indeed confirmed for the first time ever in and through their medium of exchange, the flesh—literally Godspeak—once and for all.



#### **Letter 44 –August 6, 2005**

Why, you might ask—and you’d certainly be entitled to—why include so anomalous, even so obscure a figure as a Giordano Bruno in any serious discussion as to how we got from there to here, from a total commitment to what has been characterized as the objective transcendent goals of an ancient and medieval spirituality now turned inside out or, better yet, upside down, to, thanks to the good offices of Headlessness, a totally dedicated realization of an immanent subjectivity? A good question and, considering the nature of the Subject itSelf, deserving of not only a better but the best answer which, conveniently enough, I happen to have right here in my hand, in the person of my pointing finger.

Seriously, though we could no doubt pick and choose between any number of representative figures, Bruno, by virtue of his position in both time and place, seems to me perfect for the job, the classic case of the antithetic advocate sandwiched in between thesis and synthesis, the man in the middle caught somewhere between the devil and the deep blue sea or, if you prefer, between the conception of the world seen as a finite, closed hierarchy (the medieval view) which he opposed, and the wide open spaces of an infinite universe which still current, if popular, belief he not only promoted but endorsed and was finally burned alive for. And quite justifiably, too, as it turned out, if only according to the lights, such as they were, of the Counter-Reformation Church which, intent on recovering from the onslaught of the new 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science, took these things seriously. That, as it turned out, the Church was right for the wrong reasons since, by definition, it’s not the universe or any created thing that’s infinite but only God or a reasonable facsimile thereof just as, by the same token, Bruno was wrong for the right ones by reason of his refusal to accept the notion of a closed hierarchy. As we know now, all this had to await further adjudication, indeed, had to await the final judgement of the experiments for its ultimate resolution. Quite simply, though “boundless but finite” (Einstein’s temporary and temporal compromise) may have served for a while and still does in some quarters, on the strength of the experiments alone it still doesn’t appear good enough, at least for the likes of a simpleton like Me.

The upshot of all this—and, of course, it's become the seminal issue of our time if not yet quite a commonplace—is how, by losing his place in the world, not to mention the cosmos—“the center of the universe which we do not know where to find or whether it exists at all” (Galileo)—alienated man was literally driven by despair to find that center in hisSelf and so, speaking of providence, arrive at the truth quite despite himself. That we have arrived at it, that having lost our place in the world we've ended up by finding its place in us, is, thanks to the experiments, an absolute certainty available now to everyone, in retrospect a phenomenon not all that surprising when you consider what's been going on since the first fortunate fall. On this score, if you'll forgive a slightly personal note, I'm reminded of what an eye-opener it was for me when, in Paris during the War and long before any of these issues became a reality for me, I came across a line of the poet, Paul Eluard, to the effect that, “There is another world and we are in it.” At twenty-two I thought that was the cat's pajamas and I suppose I still do. But imagine what I felt almost fifty years later when to my surprise I discovered that, like the Lesser in regard to the Greater Mysteries, he—we—had only been half right: that there is indeed another world but it is in us and the experiments demonstrate it like nothing else ever has or can.

In that sense Bruno, as witness a few brief excerpts from his work which I intend to append in my next, assumes the symbolic role of something like a wrong-headed yet pioneer figure. “Let us not be embarrassed by the old objection that the infinite is neither accessible, nor understandable,” he boldly (and rightly) suggests as he takes on the entire establishment. “It is the opposite that is true: the infinite is necessary and is even the first thing that naturally cadit sub intellectu.” And, of course, there's the rub. Along with Galileo, for instance, with his self-appointed task of making “the world's essence manifest to the senses, but even more to the intellect,” the appeal is made to the mediate, to Mantalk, rather than to the immediate, to Godspoke, and so, off and running with the mixture as before—literally the rationale of 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science—he as well as his colleagues and just about everyone else in the mix continue to head in the wrong direction and so miss, yet again (this time by a mere three or four centuries), the one combi-

nation that will open all locks. If, as Bruno rightly claimed, the infinite is the most accessible and understandable because, as we now know because we now see, it is the simplest and only constant among “entities;” if as he also rightly assumed that to return to that blessed state all we had to do was “expand ourselves infinitely, “ then the only problem was and still remained until only yesterday how accomplish that two-faced operation without, at the same time, falling on our double-edged sword and, if you’ll pardon the deservedly mixed metaphor, literally keep from blowing ourselves up by bursting with pride. “Great wits being sure to madness near allied” it’s been the problem ever since, as witness the course that is laughingly referred to as history. How return, by squeezing in between the interstices, to our natural habitat (now known as the Gap) and so avoid the spectacle of getting stuck in a wilderness of swelled heads? How follow the lead of those great pioneers—Lao-Tse, Gautama, Jesus—and, finally resolving the transcendent-immanent puzzler, grow bigger than the biggest thing by simultaneously (and paradoxically) becoming smaller than the smallest? How indeed!



### Letter 45 – August 10, 2005

Before offering up a few choice tid-bits from Bruno himself which can certainly illuminate more than I or anyone else ever could the pathos of his position, at least in light of the experiments, I'd like to address, briefly but nevertheless succinctly, what we might call the pathos of our's. I'm referring, of course, to the almost total lack of interest in, no less response to, what, taking our cue from Douglas' observation on page 225 of the *Hierarchy* to the effect that our *second* concern—and there's no question it is our second concern—must be to find in the Now all our to-morrows and yesterdays, we've agreed to designate as 1<sup>st</sup> Person History. To tell the truth, with the exception of Alan Mann in Australia who's been kind enough to reprint some of the material on his website and has offered pertinent suggestions of his own, the response has been virtually *nil*.

Now I know this must sound an awful lot like sour grapes and maybe there is that element in it. After all, like limiting the significance of Waterloo to a stop on the Brighton Line, nobody likes having his little darlings, no less his sacred cows wandering to and fro in the earth and up and down in it untended and unacknowledged. But I think it goes deeper than that, deeper than watching the bonfire of our vanities go up in smoke. In any case, the best I've been able to come up with in my quest to find a suitable image to describe the condition – and it's a universal condition – is that of a Don Juan pretending to ply his trade with absolutely no idea where babies come from and caring even less. Which, though it may constrain his personal responsibility, is in no way to suggest it limits his enjoyment – look, Ma, no hands – or even the ecstasy that goes into the making of them. It's merely to suggest that if kissing has cousins and one thing leads to another and, as Douglas rightly contends, any way is the right way home, then some ways are “better” than others. Better in the sense that it's now demonstrable, courtesy of the experiments, that the world really is a wedding, that Providence coupled with Grace is faster and surer and, if equally fulfilling, more complete, than either of them taken separately and covers more territory. As a matter of fact, covers *all* the territory – the Word as well as the Silence, the Word *by means of the Silence* – in a way that nothing ever has or

can. And if you're wondering, and justifiably so, what all this has to do with Bruno or Bruno with it, it's my contention that our, literally, happy ending would or could not have come about – I won't say without him specifically or solely – but without people like him, people who, martyrs to motions not their own and all unknowingly as they may have been, were, nevertheless, instrumental in breaking ground that led to the breakdown that led to the breakthrough that are the experiments. As we'll see when it comes time to discuss Altizer – and he, above anyone else I know of, with the possible exception of Gebser, is sensitive to this issue – though the prospect from Alpha, presumably available from the beginning of time, may arguably be the one thing necessary, only the view from Omega is capable of providing the finishing touch, the absolute confirmation that includes it.

In any case, following, just for the record, are a few excerpts that, in light of the experiments, leave our putative hero condemned out of his own mouth, illustrating, as Koyre describes it, “the decisive shift (also adumbrated by Nicholas of Cusa) from sensual to intellectual cognition in its relation to thought,” that is, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Person perception. Thus, though we now know better, “Bruno asserts that sense-perception, as such, is confused and erroneous and cannot be made the basis of scientific and philosophical knowledge...that whereas for sense-perception and imagination infinity is *inaccessible and unrepresentable*, for the intellect, on the contrary, it is its primary and most certain concept.” Indeed, *concept* it is. But why not let him speak for himself and so stand condemned out of his own mouth?

“No corporeal sense can perceive the infinite.” (!!!) “None of our senses can be expected to furnish this conclusion; for the *infinite cannot be the object of sense-perception*; therefore he who demandeth to obtain this knowledge through the senses is like unto one who would desire to see with his eyes both substance and essence.” (Indeed he would. In fact, could we come up with a more succinct way to express what we mean when we say we see both ‘content and container’ simultaneously? Though note, in the following how he does leave himself an out of sorts). “He who would deny the existence of a thing merely because it cannot be apprehended by the senses, nor is visible, would presently be led

to the denial of his own substance and being. Wherefore there must be some measure in the demand for evidence from our sense-perception..." There must indeed and for the first time in history that demand (and, given who we are it's altogether a reasonable one) has been met, revealed for all to see.

I don't suppose that from where we sit there's any point in pursuing this any further despite his generous if unwitting offers. For instance, in the same Dialogue, one of the interlocutors asks: "If the world is finite and if nothing is beyond, I ask you where is the world? Where is the universe?" To which comes the immediate response: "The world will then be nowhere. Everything will be in nothing." Or as we might say, "in No-thing." Since 'a la Tertullian, this appears an obvious impossibility, the answer, though now seen to be absolutely correct, is immediately rejected. And so we're to be sentenced to our explorations for another three or four centuries.



### Letter 46 – September 1, 2005

“Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.” So said Dr. Johnson. And so say we all (or a reasonable facsimile thereof), when “faced”, as I’ve been these past couple of weeks, with a comparable fate. As a result, despite some fuzziness around the edges, I’m anxious to muster whatever strength I can and get back to our theme, I think it’s that important. In fact, judging from the recent interest and increased volume of the exchange on the Internet (which, on the surface at least, is encouraging), it appears to me to be absolutely vital. Because despite the enthusiasm and even commitment which is becoming increasingly obvious as Headlessness catches on, I still don’t get the sense that most of even its most devoted enthusiasts really realize not only what an *Open Sesame* they’ve uncovered – how the reward of what individuals have literally died for is literally in the palm of their hands, as readily available now as ice in summer – but are aware of its equally collective significance. I know I’ve touched on this before but it bears repeating. Although during these latter days (and make no mistake about it, they are latter though not in the way generally intended) the Prince of Darkness no longer even bothers to resemble a gentleman – witness Auschwitz, witness the atom bomb – the *telos* of history, its end and reason for being, can no longer be mistaken for its *finis* and this by way of the demonstrable fact that having finally revealed its true “face” we’ve nevertheless lived to tell its tale. Thanks to the experiments, the long-heralded Omega-time is now a conscious and universal presence in our midst in a way, for all its Alpha intimations from the headless cave-drawings through the Buddha and Jesus right up to our own Nishitani, it has never been before.

That said—and admittedly it’s a mouthful – we can light wherever the spirit moves and still make sense. Which, when push comes to shove, has got to be the name of the game. To that end and because it’s so central to our theme at least as I make it out, since I know we’ve both discussed this, just for the record I want to spend some time on Jonathan Edwards. “On who?” I can hear the protests arise and not necessarily from the cheap seats. Certainly it would come as no surprise if even our British contingent

including Douglas had never or barely heard of him, not to speak of our European no less Far Eastern colleagues, when he's only now being recognized as one of the few, certainly the first American theologian worthy of being mentioned in the same breath as an Augustine or an Aquinas. No matter since, native considerations aside, that's hardly the point either, any more than that, long before I discovered the experiments – in fact, while Douglas was still debating whether or not to publish them – I wrote a completely unrelated paper on Edwards for my Master's, or that, briefly before he died relatively young, having just been installed as the third president of Princeton College, he was and is buried in the local cemetery about a mile or two from where I'm writing and where my wife and I quite innocently and with no symbolism intended recently purchased one of the last remaining plots, not far from his neighborly headstone under a ginko tree. As I say, I would hope that none of these personal considerations would count against my appraisal of him as in any way prejudicing me any more than that my first wife's name was Edwards or that, by some strange coincidence thirteen years ago in 1992, the year I discovered the experiments, I came across the prophecies of one Malachi (apparently a worthy companion to Nostradamus), in which he claimed in no uncertain terms that this was it and the next Pope (the one we've just seen installed) would be the last in preparation for the Great Event, which, however you slice it, would signal the long-awaited end, the about-face so earnestly desired. I can only insist that none of these factors, barely removed from superstition, have anything whatsoever to do with my final appraisal of him or his relationship to our work any more than that in my late teens, long before I'd ever even heard of him, I spent, again quite coincidentally, a good deal of time visiting my mother in Western Massachusetts only a few miles from where he was born, lived and completed the bulk of his work.

That said, what does count, though – and this I would insist on – is the influence, effect and help I've received from a scholarly study I've mentioned before, a work I happened to pick up merely by chance (if there is such a thing) a couple of years back and which, as you'll see, since I intend to quote from it repeatedly, extensively and unabashedly, I might almost claim was expressly

written for me, for us, for Headlessness. I'm referring to a book published locally by the Princeton University Press called *Jonathan Edwards' Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of the Enlightenment* by one Avihu Zakai. Other than that, judging from the credits, Professor Zakai is connected with Hebrew University in Jerusalem (though I suspect from his perfect familiarity with English and from his interest in Edwards especially, he's in all probability a transplanted American), I know absolutely nothing about him. Certainly, had it been my younger days, I might have searched him out. In fact, even now I've debated about getting in touch with him and no doubt would have and may yet if my strength holds out, but I wanted to get this down first, it seems to me that important.

Anyway, like setting you up for a blind date only to have you disappointed (and, believe me, I've been there — "My God, what a dog!"), I'll cease and desist. Just read and relish.



### Letter 47—September 5, 2005

I suppose as good a way as any to address the problem (which, thanks to Douglas' millennial work via the experiments, is now no longer a problem) is to address it as Zakai addresses it in describing how for Edwards "the matter of constructing time and history proved... difficult because" — and the italics will be mine — "from the beginning he found it necessary to establish a connection between the operation of saving grace in the personal experience of conversion as the manifestation of God's redemptive activity in the soul" (what we refer to quite simply to as 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science) "and the *external, providential scheme of time* showing that this personal salvation is *inextricable* from sacred, providential history. Having found the *evidence* of saving grace during his moment of con-version" (or, as we might say, during the 'turning-round' characteristic of any experiment) "Edwards attempted to *construe the whole space of time* according to this saving experience. The outcome was the formation of a philosophy of history based upon the divine agency in history." To put it as bluntly as possible: are we called upon to do any less? Indeed, other than to certify that what, from beginning to end, has up to now been offered as at best hypothesis and a hope, in a Word, faith, can we do any more? It's my contention that, grounded purely on the certain evidence provided by the experiments, we can. In fact, it's my view that, with all due apologies to that great master, Hegel, it's now incumbent on us to go him one better and, by way of offering the world what's "oft been thought but ne'er so well expressed," present it, not so much with a mere philosophy as he did but with an air-tight *theology of history*.

And lest there be any confusion or doubt concerning this contention, let's just take as our text the two seminal axioms from pages 224-225 of the Hierarchy which I've referred to more than once and apply them to the above: "To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for tomorrow or yesterday" — what we might call, using Edwards' and Zakai's vocabulary, 'the individual and private spiritual experience of saving grace' — "must be my first concern. And my second must be to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays," that is to say, the workings of providential history. Which history is now

seen to be no longer non-existent and, as a result, ignored as in the East (at least, under the influence of the West, until recently), nor merely confined to the past as, beginning with the classic tradition, is still generally assumed, nor even extended, as in the biblical monotheisms, to a promised future where presumably God's mode of being will be all in all, but is very much present and operative—witness the experiments—as the continual and abiding Presence it demonstrably is.

What never ceases to amaze me though—and I suppose it's as good an excuse as any for my starting to clutter up the low-road instead of continuing to contribute to the now superannuated mess known as transcendence that's blocked off that once serviceable high-way—is how even those of us close to Headlessness simply take all this for granted, as if the significance and meaning, not to speak of the ramifications, of a finger consciously pointing inwards towards a certifiably absent no-face happened just like that instead of taking upwards of, by latest calculation, thirteen billion years or so to achieve. And as I've mentioned more than once, it's this aspect I want to pick up on: what, as I indicated in the tables I drew up a few letters back, I've called for want of a better term, Omega completion as distinct from Alpha fulfillment. Admittedly, it's this differentiation in which is distinguished, and not so much in degree but in kind, the *totally conscious* and *universally accessible* experiments from any and everything that's come before, from the headless cave-drawings through the models of the Buddha or Jesus right up through the claims of exemplars like Ramana or, on an intellectual level, a Nishitani, and which *ultimate* differentiation seems so extreme, even outrageous, as to elicit protests from so faithful a partisan as Anne. But as I still have to insist, the experiments really really are different, not so much because of what they represent but, on the contrary, because of what, in their absolute correspondence to reality, they *don't* represent but rather, spared duality and mediation of any kind, make consciously present for the first time in history and even beyond: namely, that which from time immemorial has been unconsciously available to the birds and bees but is now both delivered in and of its silence by the testimony of the absolute nothingness now *seen* to be at the heart of all creation.

In any case, my immediate problem is how, given the shortcomings of language not to speak of my own, to present the wealth of material, in this instance the marvelous and instructive approximations of an Edwards (or later an Altizer), or even to sort out adequately what is, by necessity, a very complex field and all in the service of illustrating how the dimension of history, seemingly so indifferent and even alien to that of spirit, can, if we're still on the lookout for miracles, be miraculously converted in the twinkling of an eye and—what more natural?—reveal itself as more persuasive than reason and more comprehensive than nature, not only because it includes them but, even more important, because its task has been to pro-videntially bequeath us, precisely for the sake of seeing, the experiments. To that end then, what follows.



### Letter 48—September 14, 2005

First off, thanks for catching me up on my misappraisal of Edwards which, in my enthusiasm for Zakai's treatment of problems similar to those we have to deal with—rare enough in itself—I'm certainly guilty of. Not that my analysis, as far as it goes, is a complete bust any more than his—and I'll get to that in a minute—but there's no question that, encouraged by both their interests and mine in, and even insistence on, the significance of the historical factor I did go overboard in welcoming them aboard. What I failed to see but you did was that their, or at least Edwards', ship was headed in an entirely different direction from ours. Quite simply, despite his concession that "God's redemptive activity is secured and his *immanence affirmed* within the whole fabric of the universe"—a position, on the testimony of the experiments alone, we can certainly confirm—his out and out commitment to an overwhelming and overriding transcendence as set forth, say, in his *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* should have alerted me, if only by its tell-all and tall-tale fire-and-brimstone title, that for all his considerable and forward-looking contribution to history theory, we're still dealing essentially—dare I call it by its name?—with an out and out reactionary, someone on the order of a de Maistre or de Bonald operating a generation or two later. What this suggests, of course, is that, if we accept as we do, and as I claim we must, the experiments as the end-term even beyond the last word, then however right we sinners in the hands of an angry Edwards, let alone an angry god, may have been for the wrong reasons, we would never have nor ever could have arrived at those saving instruments. We would have been stopped dead—literally—in our own tracks, if for no other reason than that of the sabbath strictures directed against such an approach. Instead, continuing on the wrong path for the right reasons, we gave ourselves over to Edwards' villains of the peace, to the bloodied if more relaxed hands of a Gibbon with his history no more than the "register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind" or a David Hume content to discover the universal principles, if you can call them that, of human rather than divine nature. Which retreat from the *corpus mysticum Christi* to the *corpus mysticum humanitatis*, from the top-down to the bottoms-up approach,

turned out to be—dare we say providentially?—just what the doctor ordered, the necessary dedivinization instrumental in leading us along the downward path where history, seen only yesterday as a vacuum but now twinned with the void, has finally come home, converted to its true meaning as realized eschatology.

Thus forearmed, I'd argue we're now prepared to take on all comers and pick (and pick on) anybody's brains, not least so tempting a subject's as Jonathan Edwards. Setting aside whatever bones we may have to pick with him—and God knows, judging from Zakai's book and the point you make, they're ripe for picking—the question of transcendence aside, there's still enough there by way of historical goodies to keep us busy for a month of Sundays or, for that matter, every other day in the week. And it's that aspect I mean to address: that, in effect, when all is said and done, the work of redemption which, after all, is Edwards' principal concern (and ours), is no longer simply a private affair—"the operation of saving grace in the personal experience of conversion"—but, as we see now, given the very existence of the experiments, "inextricable from sacred, providential history." Not that these instruments constitute the only agents, of course, but all things considered—and we're finally in the parlous position where, the end-game in the process of being played out, we have no choice but to consider all things—they seem at once both the most all-inclusive and all-conclusive not only for this time and place but for any and every time and place. No frills, no figures, no tropes, no symbols—above all or, below nothing, no misunderstandings. Simply the remains and distillation of those Johnnies-come-lately, the bare bones of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science and History drawn to their logical or, better yet, their illogical but, nevertheless, surprising, if not unexpected, conclusion. Though failed like everything else, they still constitute the last to be first in that long procession that begins with the so-called trivium from medieval days consisting of grammar, rhetoric and logic right through to the quadrivium of geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy, making in all the seven-fold liberal arts so dear to our forbears along with their dogged companions, those hounds of heaven known as the seven deadly sins, all sent to remind us and on all counts—good and bad—that as a Sufi *hadith* I've cited before would have it,

“In the latter days one-tenth of what was suitable in the beginning will be sufficient.” And so, as prophesied, it’s come about, not in the way expected, of course — what has? — but the only way possible.

In any case, given my own somewhat depleted physical state and the much of a muchness that Zakai-*cum* -Edwards provide both by way of exposition and explanation, if it’s all right with you what I propose doing, at least for the next couple of letters, is to let him (or them) do most of the talking and I the commenting. As you’ll see why, I think it’s that important.



### Letter 49—September 21, 2005

As I mentioned on the phone, I've been reviewing (yet again) Zakai's book on Edwards and I can't help marveling how fruitful its ideas and suggestions are and this absent any acquaintance whatsoever with the experiments. My God, it's almost possible to imagine that had he known Douglas' work he might actually have come up with our conclusions, he's that close. As for the one fly in the ointment—his views, reflecting those of Edwards himself, on the issue of transcendence—I think we can safely table those on the grounds that, "wrong-headed" as they may be, not only are they not overriding or central to his argument but, in light of the experiments and as we've discussed, are quite unnecessary to ours. In any case, since there's so much material here without it—what's there to transcend?—I'm going to postpone any treatment of it till we get to Altizer who does away with the notion so neatly and completely as to lay it to rest forever. Suffice it for the moment that as the experiments demonstrate, transcendence at best, at least as it's generally construed, is merely an *uber*—notion, no more and no less, and, at worst, a hangover from the bad old days.

At any rate, here are a few tid-bits chosen at random from Zakai that describe what will serve as parameters to what follows. Again the italics will be mine: "Yet Edwards' quest was more ambitious: to find a *plausible historical agent* which he could claim to show the vivid presence and *immediate* influence of divine agency in history...One of the main problems he faced in developing his philosophy of history was how to establish a close association between the personal experience of saving grace in the soul"—what we would call 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science—"and the operations of redemptive activity in history as a whole"—what we would now designate as 1<sup>st</sup> Person History—"for his own tremendous conversion experience had convinced him that God's work of redemption is inseparable from the working of saving grace in conversion." For which "con-version" I suggest we read, quite literally, the "individual" turning-round set in motion by any experiment. Likewise for redemption: again quite literally, the "collective" atonement, that is to say at-one-ment, attendant on any and all of these Self-same experiments.

“From the beginning he found it necessary to establish a connection between the operation of saving grace in the personal experience of conversion, as the manifestation of God’s redemptive activity in the soul”—again what we refer to as 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science—“and the external, *providential* scheme of time, and to show that personal salvation was inextricable from *sacred, providential history*. Having found the evidence of saving grace during his moment of conversion, Edwards attempted to construe the whole space of time according to this saving experience. The outcome was the formation of a philosophy of history based upon the divine agency *in history*.” (Interesting, isn’t it, if only in passing, his use of the word “space” : how, in setting precedents if not priorities, the concept of duration lends itself most readily to, almost demands, spatial imagery. For instance, we speak of “lengths” of time and so on).

“Edwards’ invention of an ideology of history signifies an important stage in the development of his thought: the move to define the power of divine agency in shaping the historical process. What had obviously been lacking up to then was the dynamism entailed in the order of grace, the power of divine agency and redemptive activity in time and its relationship to history. In other words, Edwards’ previous theology of nature referred to the essential nature of reality”—what we refer to as the province of 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science—“but not to the nature of time or the meaning and goal of history. Nor did it account for the role of God as the Lord of history, or for the *theological teleology of order inherent in history*. Accordingly, in constructing the dimension of time, Edwards’ main goal was to establish an association between redemptive activity in the soul and its manifestations in time”—what we in Headlessness might now refer to as Alpha-directed grace in conjunction with Omega-oriented providence. “His aim was to transport the dynamism revealed in saving grace from the inner sphere of the soul into the whole realm of history, and thus to show the presence of God’s redemptive activity within the whole of history.”

Could our claim that “the theological teleology of order inherent in history”—his and others’ hope and conjecture but our reality—be more clearly announced than in the testimony pro-

vided by the experiments and this, not only by what they “say” but by what they “are,” indeed by the very fact that they exist at all and so provide us with “that plausible historical agent” whose “vivid presence” demonstrates “the immediate influence of divine agency in history?” That this has been realized and realized in a way it’s never been realized before—its “last word”, so to speak, which is no word at all since it’s been delivered not only *in* but *by* that very silence that certifies it’s authenticity—merely constitutes, as if we needed it, one more assurance of its culmination, its difference not only in degree but in kind from anything that’s come before and yes, we dare say it and advisedly, anything that could possibly come after. And, for all their hypotheses and approximations, also applies to the testimony of the saints and saviors and avatars —you name ‘em and I’m sure we could, by the dozens—as well as to Edwards himself with his suggestive but nevertheless passing-shows—crowd-induced revival meetings and awakenings as he called them—premonitory, if you will, of our gatherings though not quite, since gatherings, however helpful, are hardly, indeed are most certainly, not required (witness your experience). And it applies, too, a generation or two later, to a Hegel or a Blake, precursors all as we draw ever nearer to the all-inclusive and all-conclusive dispensation offered by the experiments. But we’ve been through all this before. What I want to establish, indeed, as far as I can see it’s the only thing left *to* establish by way of credentials, is how it—we, the lesson of history itSelf—got that way.



### Letter 50—September 26, 2005

Though seemingly disjointed (for which I apologize in advance), following are some reflections on our subject, on—if the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth we're now in a position to tell be told—the Subject, the complete and final scoop on the meaning of history, as we observe Old Chronos, temporal clock-time, transformed in the twinkling of an eye from “a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing” into Kairos, the Johnny-come-lately who, enlisted to tell the right time, not least what that *canard* “signifying nothing” really really means, knows what he's talking about when it comes to redemption and its related concerns. The only problem as we track this conversion of history to its true meaning lies in the much of a muchness of the material, not only as regards the questions answered as the answers questioned. How can we do justice to them and to the names, the names, the names that keep popping up out of nowhere, those skeletons haunting the grave-yard of history and demanding not only attribution but in some cases — as we'll see — retribution? Isn't it revealing that, as Douglas was the first to insist, the very essence of the experiments in their role as reflections of beginnings and ends lies in their anonymity, their no-nameness and consequent refusal to leave so much as a trace, a remainder behind, yet at the same time to observe how the road to them is paved, not only with the bones, but with what we can only ascribe to the intentions, honorable or dishonorable, of who said what?

Forgive me but I can't help but offer a few random samples—in homage if nothing else—and if they're accompanied by editorial comment on my part it's merely to point out how, thanks to the experiments, we're actually and finally in a position to come to definitive conclusions about selected issues, certainly as to how and why, whether out of ignorance or self-flattery or sheer sloth, we were mistaken about this and that but are now free to let them go and so aid in that “consummation devoutly to be wished,” our own liberation. And if it be pointed out that the examples I'm going to pick seem, at least at first sight, relatively arcane — “caviar for the general” — well, so much the better since the whole purpose of the exercise is to demonstrate that, as I've indicated elsewhere, ideas have consequences, however little at first glance they may

seem to. Witness that crazy and rather obscure formula known as the Beatitudes that apparently popping up out of nowhere has had some effect, to say the least, if only as a gauge of what, presumably, we are not, yet see now we decidedly are. I might cite, by contrast and just as an example, Augustine's insistence in his *City of God* which, breaking with the consensus even then, told the sad story that rather than indispensable to collective redemption as well as to individual salvation as even his forerunners, the earlier Christians believed, history was not, as we see now, the story of God's unfolding providence but on the contrary had nothing to do with it, in fact revealed no pattern whatsoever but was at best moot if not in all probability merely the occasion for evil all the way. And so, assured, like its non-existent counterpart in the East, of no place but Alpha to come home to, conspired to set the tone, however inconclusive, for well over a millennium until the Reformation came along. And even then, before the issue could be definitively decided—and make no mistake about it, thanks to the experiments it finally has been—split again: on one side Luther's dour and very Augustinian *Deus absconditus*, very much a hidden god, and, on the other, Calvin's *Deus revelatus* who, though hardly possessed of a sunny disposition—the presumption being He had no reason to be—was nevertheless able to muster enough of an eschatology of hope to recognize, if only unconsciously, that, like the alchemical formula to which it's often compared—like curing like—freedom from history would only be possible, not by ignoring it, but by somehow getting through it and converting it. And so, for all of Luther's reputation as a mover and shaker and despite his mistaken observation that “that person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as if it were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened” (a judgement, we see now in light of the experiments, than which nothing could be further from the truth), it's come to pass.

And if all this seems, at best, to be no more than an excursion, however informative, or an opportunity to exercise my own particular hobby-horse, I would have to insist not so. Admittedly, it may look like I've rigged my argument by bringing in that arch-Calvinist, Jonathan Edwards, from left-field since, other than to

help prefigure, like so many others, a suitable climate of opinion for the emergence, even the necessity of the experiments, and, if not anticipate their methods, at least some of their conclusions, there's no obvious connection between him and the evolution of Headlessness. Can the same be said of Douglas? And since you can't tell the players without a score-card and for the moment at least, we seem to have descended into this business of name-calling, could there be anything more Calvinist, if only in its later and admittedly watered-down versions, than the Plymouth Brethren from whose doctrines he emerged, indeed escaped and arguably transfigured but which, nevertheless, as he's the first to admit, indelibly and providentially suggested what was once a notion but is now a demonstrable fact and so provided him (and us) with the twin pillars of Seeing: that, however you choose to interpret it, if the immediate structure of reality is a reflection of grace, then its mediate structure — witness the very presence of the experiments — is attuned to a beneficent providence.



**Letter 51 – October 5, 2005**

Just to review briefly in order to remind ourselves of what we're about: that like Edwards we're trying to find — indeed, in the person, the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the experiments have already found — the link that binds grace and providence, the concrete agent that at once reveals both the personally-experienced vivid Presence combined with the immediate influence of divine agency in time, in history. In Edwards' case, he thought he'd found it in revivals, "awakenings" as he called them, which would transform history into the dimension of "realized eschatology," the salvation of individuals that would necessarily converge with their redemption. What we see now is that his methods, though indicating a step in the right direction, were far too ephemeral and emotionally geared and, most telling of all, crowd-oriented to have a lasting, no less a definitive effect. Not so, of course, the experiments which, singly or in company, answer and more to all such objections by directly responding both to the personal experience of saving grace in the "soul" (Alpha) and the operation of redemptive activity in time (Omega). And this without any fancy embroidery or poor man's natural longing for a presumably wealthy symbolism when deprived of his birthright. Thus, by suiting the action to the Word conversion means just what it says: a literal turning-around, no if's, and's or but's, just as apocalypse, despite its accrued connotations of doom, is no longer Greek to us but literally translates into revelation, that is to say, like the good eye-opener it is, fits every face that his or hers may behold in all its pristine glory that eschatological holy of holies, the science of last things. Which is no more than to say that history is not just the narrative of human but of divine activity as well. (Witness the very existence of the experiments themselves). As Zakai, puts it: "Without conversion there is no redemption, and without redemption there is no history....the urgency of redeeming the soul cannot be separate from the issue of redeeming the time, that is to say, the redemption of history as a whole. Behind the personal issue always lies the historical one." Unless, I might add, you believe in Santa Claus or the tooth-fairy or that babies are delivered by the stork.

What I find so telling in all this, if only as a side-light (and I've touched on this before), are the parodies it suggests, a few of which I've already referred to in the course of these letters. Like Flaubert's Bouvard and Pecuchet we could draw up a whole list of howlers which, nevertheless, by their sheer naked honesty, couldn't help but reveal what happens to those unwilling and unconscious patron saints, sinners all of the new dispensation, who, stripped to their sensibilities by a mechanical universe deprived of its sacred dimension find themselves with no place to go except down and this not only to the beginning but to the end of wisdom where they connect at the Gap. I'm referring not just to my own experience but to something I stumbled across the other day in our local newspaper of all places, an observation attributed to Oscar Wilde of all people that "there is nothing that can cure the soul like the senses," a remark that, if hardly out of the mouth of a babe, nevertheless if read aright, and—in light of the experiments it can be—not only signals the end of a tyrannical transcendence but even honors, however covertly, its beginning. Who could have predicted that the expulsion from Eden signalled not so much the end but the beginning of a movement that was to initiate both sacred providential history and at the same time convert and literally incorporate its ostensibly terrible loss, together with its subsequent deviations, into a Grand, into *the* Grand Design, in order to issue, finally, into the experiments and so, taking the long way round to Nirvana, literally play into "God's" hands? To think otherwise and deprive it of its meaning—and I did for years—is, to put it quite simply, to assume that those hands, like those of a clock are there for no reason or rhyme other than to chime, no less tell the right time.

Speaking of which—the right time that is—let us now praise famous men and return to a few of our heroes, whether sung or unsung as the case may be, whether in or out of favor. I've already mentioned a few at random: Ramana, of course, and Nisargadatta; William of Ockham who prepared us for the pure empiricism of the experiments—no guess work, no conjecture, above all, no need for faith but only certainty—even Calvin. Now how about adding Nicholas Malebranche to the mix? Malebranche once a disciple of Descartes, who struck out on his own with his notion of occasion-

alism and took his lumps for it, not least being relegated to the back of the bus in textbooks dealing with philosophy? I think we discussed him briefly on the phone. *Occasionalism*, the doctrine that claims, as Zakai sums it up, that “finite created beings have no causal efficacy and that God alone is the true causal agent;” that states that “natural causes provide only the *occasion* for the operation of the one and only real cause, which is God,” a.k.a. as the 1<sup>st</sup> Person Singular, and that, “in reality, what we call the cause is merely the *occasion* for God to exercise his efficacious will.” Could anything be more patently obvious after the experiments than that this demonstration of the “inherent teleological and theological structure of order in the world,” is a fact, *the Fact* in which “God’s redemptive activity is manifested” and so knocks into a cocked hat all those more well-publicized claims that say different, that suggest that somehow God “governs” through secondary causes rather than directly through divine immanence? And, not incidentally, what could be more flattering, not to say conducive to being on one’s best behavior (at least if you’re as vain as I am), than to be first introduced and then acknowledged as God’s occasion? At which, I won’t say I’ll rest my case—although I’m getting there—but I’ll take the “occasion” to pause for breath in order to rest His which, of course, needs none.



### Letter 52 – October 10, 2005

It would be nice (I guess) if things were as straightforward as the Malebranche example I gave in my last note to which, speaking of unjustly ignored figures, I might add (as merely one among many), his younger contemporary, Bernard Mandeville and his *Fable of the Bees*, another neglected but interesting piece of business in which Mandeville demonstrates how “private vices” — like eating forbidden fruit, for example — can, if you chew your food properly and are sure to spit out the pits, lead to “public benefits,” like — shall we say? — the experiments. Unfortunately, however — or fortunately, depending on where you’re coming from — “things” by their very nature are never quite as simple as they seem, only as they’re *seen* and then only by you-know-Who or, if you prefer, you-know-What. But that, of course, is another story, is, in fact, *our* story, the one Hegel anticipates as exhibiting the “cunning of Reason,” but we’re now positioned, thanks to the experiments, to go him one better by pinpointing it more precisely as the “cunning of History,” for all its “contrived corridors” the shortest (and sweetest) way we’ve found so far to the Land of Heart’s Desire.

All this by way of referring to an interesting example — and, of course, there are many but we’ll stick with only one as, perhaps, the most egregious — where the simple one-to-one relationship doesn’t quite hold, there being on *occasion* not only a good deal more than meets the eye but, as Malebranche might have instructed his master — “I’m right, Descartes, and you’re wrong” — a good deal less. I’m thinking of the well-known (though not well-enough known) confrontation between Newton and Blake which, though the two were separated by almost four generations, still resonates down those same contrived corridors. We all know or should Blake’s “Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau; /Mock on, Mock on; ‘tis all in vain! / You throw the sand against the wind, / And the wind blows it back again “ to which the last verse reads: “The atoms of Democritus / And Newton’s Particles of light / Are sands upon the Red sea shore, / Where Israel’s tents do shine so bright,” a howl of protest that has finally been vindicated by you-know-Who operating through you-know-What. But in light of these same experiments, and this not only in what they “say” or

even represent but how they got that way (which is our concern), are things quite as simple as that? Is the road that has led us to them completely devoid of the ambiguity, that poor man's excuse for paradox, that characterizes just about everything else including all of history? Or as a poetess whose name escapes me at the moment once wrote of the gnarled trees of both Knowledge and Life, "Is it thus so plainly shown/ By twist or turn which way the wind has blown?" What I'm saying or trying to is that Blake's *declaration* along with so many of his others, absolutely on target as they were, would not, could not, have led us to the experiments (nor did they), if only because, his truth *believed* or even *known* (as distinct from being demonstrated), there would have been no need for them. Conversely, it was precisely because of his arch-villain Newton's thesis, partial as it was and subsequently, if not exploded, at least superseded, that's helped lead us mere mortals to this unexpected if pretty pass, and I say "helped" advisedly. To have stayed with Blake and be both solely and souly beholden to and dependent on the "genius" of his insight would have been to be deprived, however indirectly, of proof—and definitive proof at that—of our own, not the least of the collateral "worldly" gifts promised by those watch-words, "liberty, equality, fraternity," now realized for the first time ever in the only way possible: on a universal scale where geniuses—and it is certainly one of the great collateral gifts of the experiments—need no longer apply. And why? Because they're no longer necessary. And this we owe—dare I say it?—as much to the wrong-headedness of the failed Newtons of this world, despite the nobility, even majesty of their projects, as to anyone. As a well-known Newtonian once put it, as usual taking a step in the right direction for the wrong reason: "The truth is revealed not in God's word but his work; it is not based on the testimony of scripture or tradition but is *visible* to us all the time and is understandable only to those who know *nature's* handwriting and can decipher her text." True enough but it's precisely therein that lies the rub, enjoined as we are to bow now to Nature's handwriting instead of "facing" the other way in order to decipher our own. So, as with Einstein three centuries later, participation—1<sup>st</sup> Person Science at home in "Israel's tents"—is sacrificed at the altar of observation, 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Science, and along

with 3<sup>rd</sup> Person History goes on its not-so-merry way from breakdown to breakdown to breakdown, from heteronomous to autonomous to theonomous until, hoist by its own petard, it finally succeeds in breaking through by breaking down and, fittingly enough, hitting bottom at anonymous—the experiments. Which is no more than to say—and it has—that God will not be mocked, not even by the Newtons and, yes, even the Blakes of this world.



### Letter 53 – October 16, 2005

I don't mean to be chewing my cabbage twice or even three times but at the risk of becoming tedious I do want to clarify what might appear an unwarranted, even unjust critique of Blake in my last. God knows, as should be apparent by now, I loved, if not the man, at least the work "this side idolatry." I merely wanted to make clear, if only for the record, that had we stopped with his insight, searching as it was (and not only his but anyone else's), we still wouldn't have come up with the experiments and so completed the task of history. Just as "seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil," (Hopkins' phrase) a deflowered nature was no longer capable of acting as a primary source of inspiration, not to speak of knowledge, and had to be succeeded by a so-called man-made history, so, in strict conformity with Hegelian logic ( from thesis to antithesis to synthesis), that, too, had to be superseded by the once merely prophetic but now pledged vision provided by the experiments, the final stage in which deity totally reveals itSelf or, if you prefer, is at least totally revealed.

Now I recognize that in certain quarters, for instance those that harbor partisan views ranging anywhere from defenders of the cave-dwellers through the Buddha and Jesus right up to Ramana, Nisargadatta and Nishitani or anyone else you might care to name, these are fighting words and I'm going to get some flack for this, but, since the facts or, better yet, the Fact proves otherwise, I can't help it. On this score it might be worth taking as our text a recent note from Richard which he calls, *Sharing Seeing*: "...The headless way is not the only way home to God, and maybe not the 'best' way, whatever that might mean. I'm sure God has lots more tools in its toolbag. But to myself and many people who value their headlessness, it is a superbly simple and direct way. In my own view, as a tool for sharing awareness of who we really are, it is second to none...Given that, it is not however exclusive to any other way that is genuine...It's just that I'm meditating at Home, not meditating to get Home."

Despite the "second to none" and "I'm meditating at Home, not meditating to get Home"- neither of which can be bettered— despite, I say, this admission of the primacy of Seeing at least for him, I might be even more insistent and point out that just as in

bowling a spare is not a strike or in archery there is one bull's eye and one bull's eye only, so with the experiments. Unlike anything else I'm aware of, they constitute the one medium I know of, in fact the only medium—if they can even be designated as such—in which God unmistakably speaks in his native yet universal tongue clearly and succinctly and definitively and this, paradoxically enough yet fittingly, by means of the language of silence. And it's this, I have to insist, that, avoiding the ever-present danger of dualism, even of the Word, especially of the Word, makes all the difference and awards it preference over even so accomplished a translation as a crucifixion or, to go from the sublime to the ridiculous, a slap in the face as in Zen.

That said we can return to Edwards and finish up with our homage to him as one of the true pioneers in this conversion of history to its meaning, as one who was able to cut through the so-called "eschatological fiction" and reveal it to be not, or at least not only, as Joyce and so many others had experienced it, the nightmare from which, however fitfully, we've been trying to awaken, but the dream come true to which we've succeeded. Can there be any doubt that the rampant nihilism of the past century or two, a total nihilism surfacing for the first time in history, was merely a preparation for the revelation of the holy nothingness that, powerless to do anything except, like the flip-side of a coin, play into God's hands, underlay it? Or that concurrently, on one side of the globe, the so-called Buddha/Mara and, on the other—specifically in Kabbalah—the supposed Jesus/Judas confrontation was merely a forerunner of the about-to-be conversion, the turning-around and definitive reconciliation of 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Persons, the one inextricably bound, in fact, inconceivable without the other and both raised to their nth degree by our miraculous, because utterly simple, instruments?

On this score, here's an anecdote for you. Towards the end of the war—my war, that is, the one that was still going on in Germany—I found myself billeted in—of all places short of heaven on earth at least for a conquering hero—Paris. As a result, hanging around the Luxembourg of an afternoon I had the opportunity to meet a lot of the students and artists and poets also starting to stream back to town to resume their studies or work. Not surpris-

ingly, I heard a lot of names I'd never heard before, nor, for that matter, aside from the French, had anyone else: Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir, de Montherlant, Anouilh and so on. I even managed to get to know some of their work when I wasn't discovering those marvelous café's and even more marvelous girls. One of them I came across—poets, I mean, not girls—was Paul Eluard, an early and at the time still flourishing Surrealist—specifically a line from one of his poems which I've never forgotten. Forgotten? For fifty years it was my mantra, my watchword. "There is another world—and we're in it," I used to repeat, especially at parties, in the hope of making myself interesting. I thought that was the cat's meow until I came across the experiments and graduated, as we all have and must, from the Lesser to the Greater Mysteries and saw in earnest that if there is another world—and, indeed, there is and it's the only really real world—it's in us.



### Letter 54 – December 1, 2005

As you can see there's been quite a hiatus since my last letter, most of which I'd like to blame on my health or at least my gradually diminishing energy. Nevertheless, though hitting eighty-three a few weeks ago as well as being just back from the hospital one more time, I still suspect the greater part of the delay is simply due to the much of the muchness of the material, in this case my recent immersion or, as we've already touched on, my re-immersion in Altizer's work. Not that I mean to give him, provocative enough and certainly learned and exciting and difficult, too, more than his due. As the sequence will indicate, from our standpoint, he, too, like just about every one else on the hunt for the meaning of it all, can't help but come up short absent the experiments. Not, I might hasten to add, because like Moses he's killed a man (at least so far as I know) and so has been condemned to remain all ears in sight of the Promised Land but, as history makes plain and the experiments certainly testify, words, words, words—and God knows he's got an abundance of them—even *the* Word simply won't do any longer. But we can go into that in more detail later on.

What I do want to avoid right from the start, however, is any suggestion of what's usually referred to as the historicist error, the claim that simply because we've survived the past and, thanks to the experiments, have collectively arrived just in time at what we can now safely call the Omega point—at, in effect, at least the possibility of a conscious completion of our destiny via 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science as delivered by 1<sup>st</sup> Person History—this somehow awards us a priority or privilege over all those benighted folks who had the misfortune of being born too soon, who, from the cave-dwellers to, say, a Nishitani—and, what the hell, why not throw in the birds and the bees for good measure?—were stuck in various degrees of unconsciousness or, at best, were conscious of mere fulfillment at Alpha, whereas climbing over all those dead bodies has positioned us at the top of the heap. On the contrary, if anything a case can be made and has been by traditionalists of all stripes that in accordance with the Sufi *hadith* that “In the latter days one-tenth of what was required in the beginning will be sufficient”, precisely the reverse has occurred, that in the course of

the great devolution it's we who've been buried *beneath* them. Which, of course, however you slice it, may be just what the doctor ordered, the cost of the pearl of great price precisely and paradoxically paid for by, coin of the realm, the lowest of the low, the only medium of exchange acceptable if the ultimate in differentiation is to be achieved and the last to be first not only encouraged but empowered to hit bottom and so learn, or re-learn, to look the other way.

In any case, though Altizer suspects what for the first time ever we're in a position to confirm: that what was formerly known, literally, as the *pro-verbial* gulf between East and West—"the never the twain shall meet"—is about to be bridged in the *coincidentia oppositorum* of vertical fulfillment at Alpha and horizontal completion at Omega, indeed already has been; though, as I say, he talks about it and, like just about every other interested party, continues to hope for it, absent the certainty *pro-vided* by the experiments, he fails to see it, fails to see that the ultimate union has already taken place with this final offer of marriage between a 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science, the workings of grace, and its providential opposite number, 1<sup>st</sup> Person History. Absent these simple instruments, simple because offered up in a becoming silence, though acknowledging and more than acknowledging both—at once the dynamism and historical orientation of the Semitic monotheisms and the more static because ahistorical perspective of the East, especially Buddhism—he's still hung up on their differences, when in reality both have now been surpassed, indeed, one might dare say, superseded. And so, to use one of his favorite phrases, in this definitive reconciliation all has now become all in all. In regard to this melding, isn't it interesting to note that Douglas subtitled *On Having No Head*—what, for all intents, is the introduction to the experiments -*Zen and the Re-Discovery of the Obvious*, when, at the same time—and we've discussed this before—his uncoveries are inconceivable without his rigid Christian indoctrination and background? Indeed, as I've addressed in a few of my earlier letters, our nodding acquaintance with, not to speak of our entire knowledge of Zen and the East generally, is entirely dependent on and connected to the historical breakdown of the Christian synthesis, its high and mighty universal mission of propagating the

Word to one and all watered down, first by voyages of discovery, then by the concomitant exploitation of the natives, only to conclude, in this pre-view of One World, with the incipient transfer of power to a couple of burgeoning empires of their own, this last in the presence of an obscure and transplanted Brit literally looking to survive during a world-wide economic depression. Well, I suppose stranger things have happened. Think of the emergence of Christianity itself. But more of this in my next.



### Letter 55, December 14, 2005

I've just finished re-reading Altizer's *History as Apocalypse* which, in light of the experiments and our own work might just as well be called *History is Apocalypse* (apocalypse here, absent its ominous connotation at the hands of those who weren't quite up on their Greek—the four horsemen and that sort of thing—corresponding no more and no less to its Latin derivative, *revelatus*, the pure and simple seeing that ends all revelations)—as I say I've just finished re-reading it and am so snowed with notes, ideas, possibilities, suggestions and, yes, doubts I can even begin to handle them, that I literally don't know where to begin. So I might as well begin at the end and repeat what I've already suggested more than once: that, for all the blind spots I can only attribute to his not having the experiments—for example, his persistent, if understandable, reliance on faith, in effect, on words (not to speak of the Word), when pure and simple seeing will do—Altizer, representing the very best from the Judeo-Christian, the Omega perspective so to speak, is, when it comes to describing the parameters that apply to us, as good as it's going to get. His misses—and God knows there are many, mostly having to do with his necessary reliance on said faith (and I do mean "said" as distinct from our certain sight and I'll get to that, too, by and by)—still come as close as anybody else's hits. So I'll handle them in some kind of order as best I can.

The first that comes to mind occurs right on page 2 in his Introduction where he confesses to a persuasion he adopted early in his studies and has never abandoned: "the conviction that Christian theology can be reborn only by way of an immersion in Buddhism." Could, in effect, anything be more on target from our point of view yet at the same time more Western, in a sense more ecumenically "Christian", especially when you consider—and I've noted this before—the sub-title to Douglas' *On Having No Head* sounds precisely the same note: Zen and the Re-Discovery of the Obvious? No wonder Altizer had me practically eating out of his hand right from the get-go, at least when it came to his diagnoses of the dis-ease which more or less agreed with ours: that the only if essential difference between the two worlds and not only world but cosmic views—both offshoots of even earlier traditions, the

one, Hinduism, the other, Judaism—lay in their prescription for the cure: the one, Buddhist, content and not only content but insistent on harking back or at least remaining in a time-less, essentially static and ahistorical, primordial perspective— what I refer to as the Alpha state; the other, historical minded and so, in its dynamic forward-looking, far-ranging looking-forwardness ever on the prowl in hopes of discovering some time-free never-never land which, of course, in the person, the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the experiments, it finally and essentially and, despite or maybe because of every fault of its own, it providentially has.

Which statement of our case immediately raises all sorts of questions and a good thing, too, or else, the essential issues settled, what would we have left to talk about? For instance, does the plethora of historical interest so characteristic of our post-modern era, register a genuine concern, not so much with past or even present as with its true meaning, the revelation of Presence, or is it merely indicative of a drowning in the last throes of total recall trying to remember what it will shortly no longer be required to? Or does it, as I've already suggested more than once, like the coupling of antibiotics and the atom bomb or the nothingness of heaven moving hand in hand with the nihilism of hell, reveal at once both possibilities, the coming erosion of historical consciousness already begun indicative that its work is essentially done? Because, make no mistake about it, one way or the other, as the relatively new kid on the block, indeed, the necessarily last to be first, history *has*, as the experiments if nothing else demonstrate, done its work. And to some degree, though absent these incredibly simple instruments, these stop-watches on eternity, Altizer obviously can't quite put his finger on it, he senses this, he knows something is up: that just as in the headless rock-art of the Magdalenian hunters 15, 000 years ago "the very presence of primordial deity foreclosed the possibility of the presence of the human face" (which face, in fact, didn't even begin to put in an appearance until some ten or eleven thousand years later when—surprise, surprise—history proper is said to have begun), so the present thrust towards its reversal, towards a universal anonymity, a genuinely name-free, face-free immanence as distinct from its name-less, face-less because transcendent parody, may, nevertheless, however

unwittingly and even unconsciously, presage for the first time ever a preview of things to come. After all—and I do mean “after” and I do mean “all”—stranger things, like the notion of history itself or the very real recognition of “one world,” have happened. But more on this as we go along.



**LETTERS TO  
CARL COOPER**

**2006**



### Letter 56—January 1, 2006

Dear Carl, One of the advantages of having come to an end and, thanks to the experiments, knowing it, is that one can begin anywhere and speak with authority about all those goings-on reputed to have happened in the middle, a middle pre-determined by the necessary, never-ending crucifixion and resurrection indigenous to every breath we take, which breath together with its repetition—its death and rebirth—not only enacts but, it now appears, also provides its own meaning. And to some degree Altizer, given his essentially Christian orientation, is onto this. Witness the following taken from Chapter One of his *History as Apocalypse* where he discusses the significance of the transition from the seminal faceless and eyeless sculpture of the archaic period to the better known exemplars of Greek art of the sixth century B.C.:

“...these eyes release a new vision, a vision which simply and purely sees... a vision in which the seer is the center of the world... a visual revolution, one that is no doubt born with Homer and therefore initially realized through voice...but what is about to explode before us is body itself...the realization of the birth of vision, of a pure vision, a vision which is a totally *immanent* vision (italics mine)...Thus the birth of vision is the birth of body...the full actual-ization of body...In the grace of this moment of vision, the life of the Great Goddess is incarnate not only in the bodies of these goddesses, but in our bodies, too—an incarnation awakening our bodies...to an incarnate perception...that can fully occur in the immediacy of pure perception” and so on.

I don't mean to appear ungenerous or even ungracious and maybe my reaction is conditioned to some extent by the fact that, for want of anything better, this kind of substitute, however passionate and committed as far as it goes, passed for mother's milk to me, but I can't help being reminded of the poet Roy Campbell's swipe at the prevailing tone of the verse of his (and my) day—of Spender's and Auden's and that bunch: “They use the snaffle and the curb all right;/ But where's the bloody horse?” Or as my father who, having been forced to go to work following the eighth grade, used to respond to some of the more fanciful opinions of his not quite wayward son, “That and a nickel'll get you a

ride on the subway.” In any case, though, as I say, I don’t mean to be unkind (even to myself), nevertheless I think we can agree that absent the infinite exactitude of the experiments—“the minute particulars,” Blake might have characterized them as distinct from the “General Good, the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite and flatterer”—Campbell’s critique could well be levelled at virtually the whole theological, philosophical and literary canon that’s come down to us through the ages, what the Germans used to call its *schwarmerai*, “the let ‘em eat cake” syndrome when our plea all along has been for bread.

Am I being too harsh on what, after all, is Altizer’s perfectly justified intellectual appraisal of a real and decidedly palpable phenomenon? If I am it’s only because it reminds me of an incident, a kind of modern morality tale I witnessed played-out some sixty years ago now, and since I think it’s pertinent and, I would argue, quite relevant to what we’re talking about, if you’ll forgive me I simply must share it with you. It was right after the war—my war—and I was living on the fifth floor of a cold-water walk-up in Greenwich Village just off Washington Square park to which, like most of my fellow inhabitants, I used to repair on nice days, for, as we used to say in the army, rest and recuperation. It was a lovely place then, still peaceful and quiet; the north side bounded by the houses dating from the leisurely Henry James era along with the Washington Memorial Arch itself, the east and south by N.Y.U. and, to round it all off (circling the square if not squaring the circle), the recently constructed apartment-buildings, one of which was inhabited by, among others of the rich and famous, Mrs. Roosevelt whom we could see virtually every day as she dispensed the largesse of her friendly smile while walking her even more well-known, indeed world-famous dog, the scotty Falla, also formerly of the White House. For the rest, there were young mothers and/or nannies with their charges and old men playing *boci* or chess and checkers and the students, of course, along with the artists and writers and other assorted bohemians who could still afford to live in the neighborhood: the early Beats and pioneer Abstract Expressionists (I wish I’d bought more of their work; I’d be rich today). For instance, on any given day I might see the poet E.E. Cummings sunning himself on a bench or even on occasion a

really mad and wild-looking Djuna Barnes (who, it was obvious from her constant blinking, really didn't care for the light) but did write one great novel. It was quite a place to live in if you were young.

And then, of course, there were the Goths as we called them, the young Italian kids—anywhere from eighteen to twenty-five—the aborigines dressed in their trade-mark lumber-jackets who essentially did the heavy lifting and whose parents and grandparents coming from the old country in search of the American dream, still spoke with accents as they performed a good deal of the services and now owned not only most of the tenements in the neighborhood but virtually all the little shops and restaurants and deli's. My landlady, for instance, a Mrs. Previtali, ran one of the best bakeries in town right under my very nose. As for the kids, though they may have talked tough, except for the occasionally wayward and loose cannons or just plain evil ones who ended up in Sing-Sing or the Chair, for the most part they turned out no better nor worse than any one else: decent, hard-working law-abiding citizens. Which is not to say the young bucks couldn't be a mild pain once in a while as witness the following encounter. I was sitting minding my own business when a couple of them came along and, squeezing behind a park bench onto a small patch of grass, began tossing a rubber ball around. And tossing, not throwing, is the word for it. It was no big deal. It wasn't a big ball, not even a heavy ball, just a little rubber ball which, of course, as balls will do, occasionally got out of hand and bounced onto the sidewalk. At which, one of the boys would hop over a bench and, retrieving it, start all over again, all this, of course, accompanied by the usual patter. It was the kind of thing that if you found it annoying you could have picked yourself up and moved a few yards away with no trouble at all. The park wasn't that crowded in those days and certainly there were no infants around in baby carriages or old folk for whom it might have constituted a hazard. There was, however, a young college student at the other end of the bench I was sitting on and though I hate to resort to stereotypes or pretend to—witness my description of the Goths—there's no question he looked like your typical N.Y.U. student of the day: serious-looking with thick glasses and sporting a heavy brief-bag

obviously loaded with books, one of which he was trying to read when, for the second or third time, the ball bounced either near or onto his lap.

Here begins the drama and the whole point of the story—and it is a story and a true story if there ever was one.

As the student reached down and picked up the ball, one of the Goths came over to him and, holding out his hand, waited for it to be returned. When this didn't happen, when, in fact, the student just sat there and, you might say, rather than merely hold onto the ball seemed actually to be defiantly guarding it, the Goth, like a puppy being played with and not yet realizing that this was getting serious—that it was not so much a ball that was in contention now but a bone—almost smiled. "Gimme da ball," he said good-naturedly. "No," the student replied firmly. You could tell by his tone he was quite serious. You could also see by the look on his face that the Goth still couldn't quite believe it. "Whaddya mean no?" he said in some wonderment, turning in disbelief to his buddy who'd come up to join him. "Gimme da ball," he repeated, his voice rising. "No," the student insisted. "This is a park for everybody. People have a right to sit here undisturbed. And besides," he continued, holding up the ball, "this is dangerous." Now I can't swear after all these years that those were his exact words but they're close enough to the gist and you certainly get the tone. What I can swear to, however, is what immediately followed. Without saying another word, though I do remember him glancing momentarily at his buddy—I can only assume for an approval that apparently was immediately forthcoming—the Goth reached down and, with one deft motion, grabbed the student firmly by the wrist and with the other extracted the ball.

Now if that were all this would merely be the description of yet another metropolitan encounter, one of your "doesn't it happen to everybody?" kind of daily occurrence that so marks modern urban life as the most natural thing in the world. But, as it happened, it turned into something much more than that, at least for me. Why else would I remember it so vividly after all these years? Because as the two Goths were leaving—and I recall they did leave though not without the mandatory and threatening standing over their victim much like, as Konrad Lorenz describes

it, the victorious wolf will, quivering and shaking, stand over his conquered rival, before, constrained by God knows how many hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of years, of built-in safeguards against killing his own kind (would those restrictions have extended to us) he'll urinate on his victim and then move on, presumably to get the girl -; as I say, I remember the outspoken one saying as he stuck his mug—and it was a mug—in the student's face: "Ya know de trouble wid you. Ya fight wid your mout(h) and not your hands."

Given who I am or, looking back, I can only assume I was in the process of becoming—a kind of amalgam of the two—you could have knocked me over with a library card. Talk of intimations of Plato or the Gospel, not to speak of the Gita or Machiavelli or even a Winston Churchill with his "better to jaw jaw than war war" (though, when pressed, he, too, was forced to make his exceptions) and all this in the shadow of an august university no less. As our acute young Goth instinctively intimated, laying it out as it's existed from the beginning, do we fight with our mouths and/or hands, or do we, by extension, turn ourselves upside down and revert, if not to our origins, at least to, presumably, our Origin, to, deeper than the Word because, delivered in silence and so more inclusive, the third thing, the Deed? Is there a way to fight with our hands without striking a blow, what, in deference to William James' essay, "The Moral Equivalent of War" (sport, business and so on) we might call its Speculative Equivalent? And, if so, will it come about, as the prophet Isaiah hoped, by divine intervention, by the lion become a vegetarian lying down with the lamb—or, more likely, by a reverse twist, by the lamb, living paw to mouth anyway, lying down with the lion and, a procedure commonly known as sacrifice, giving in one fell blow, not only the devil his due, but the gods, too—a sacrifice which, however vicariously, is taking place anyway whether we know it or not or like it or not? As Blake would have it in one of his more perceptive observations in the canon: "The cut worm forgives the plow," to which we might add, since, according to the Gita, the whole kit and kaboodle is all food anyway, "and the fish-hook too." In any case, will this largess, if it does come about on a universal scale, extend to "wanton boys who kill us (like flies) for their sport?" As we've

discussed before, not bloody likely when you consider that even a Father Abraham could, after some haggling, extract no better than a reluctant assurance, if not an absolute guarantee from the Man presumed upstairs, that in a pinch a quorum of ten *might* do—just about the number, give or take, we manage to muster at our average gathering. Still, if there's no easy answer to this there is a simple one, one that if it cannot be solved may, nevertheless, be dissolved. But that will have to come from at least something resembling the experiments with their demonstrations of a voluble silence combined with answerable hands that demand our compliance in everything we do and the absence of which exacts its price which, of course, we may, at least judging by our behavior, be willing to pay, in fact, one way or the other, must pay: that if this pretension to a head we call human and the demonstrable absence of one we now see constitutes divinity are to be reconciled, it will, like a river emanating from its source, have to spring from somewhere in the neighborhood of its first sighted and habitable land, the heart, and work its way *down*. Is this, speaking of parodies, what we mean by a "fall," a fall *into* grace, a place where, according to Djuna Barnes, if we "let go hell our fall will be broken by the roof of heaven," or where, the sound of silence sanctioning its message loud and clear, God will be seen to have "no hands but mine " as St. Teresa of Avila would have it? And now we have it, too, in a way even she never could, instantly on contact, immediately accessible to all and beyond even the need for verbal transmission since, impersonal and anonymous, we now *see* it's who we are anyway.

But I've detoured on this main road long enough in celebration of the New Year. So back to Altizer.

*George*

### Letter 57—January 6, 2006

In retrospect I apologize for my last which, I see now, not only disregarded our agreement to limit these exchanges to a page or, at most, a slight spill-over when necessary, but on re-reading seems to me not only all too personal, perhaps, but not as clear as it might be. Other than to blame it on the holiday spirit, I really don't know what got into me. In any case, as penance and in keeping with my New Year resolution to limit my remarks as much as is practicable to the allotted space, I've decided to let Altizer and others speak for themselves and, to paraphrase Ben Franklin, acknowledge that where we don't hang together, we must, perforce, hang or, at least, hang out separately.

Which said, how can I resist commenting on his (Altizer's) for the most part masterful, treatment of the material in his *History as Apocalypse*, from the recognition and, where not exactly recognized, the intimation that the passage from pre-history to post-history (where we are now), from the face-less through the naming of face to the final liberation of being face-free, consists of a voyage from a center of consciousness presumably located within the body to its reverse, to the awareness of the body as existing within a center of consciousness (otherwise known as God), the kind of thing the French poet, Paul Eluard, also touched upon to some degree (and forgive me if I've already quoted this though it certainly bears repeating); that "there is another world and we are in it?" Where, of course, absent the experiments, he misses like just about everyone else and tells only half the story—and again forgive me if I've already cited this—is in the ultimate realization that there is, indeed, another world but it's *demonstrably* in us. All of which can only combine to explain why, though it certainly had or even continues to have its place, the whole shootin' match of faith-based knowledge, however quaintly, even aesthetically pleasing and reminiscent of the good old days, can no longer shed sufficient light for our needs any more than that other holdover from a superseded era, candlelight can.

No accident then that, to give only one example, early on in his discussion of the *Oedipus at Colonnus*, he (Altizer), for all his insightful comments but, nevertheless, absent the closure the experiments represent, is unable to zero in for the kill so to speak,

any more than, in the name of Oedipus or even the chorus, Sophocles himself could but, mirroring the prevailing limits of the time, was condemned to dance, not only around the problem but its solution as well. But I'll let all of them—Altizer and Sophocles (and Oedipus and the chorus too)—speak for themselves. Here, summing it up in a nutshell is the chorus: “Not to be born surpasses thought and speech. The second best is to have seen the light. And then to go back quickly whence we came”.

Could, in light of the experiments' absolute and universal confirmation of what, up to now, has been no better than a relatively recent and parochial Zen claim (and moot at that)—could, in effect, anything be clearer than that “not to be born not only surpasses thought and speech” but, whether we like it or not or are aware of it or not, is our natural condition, the very air we breathe and, other than represented by its conscious acknowledgement, not so much a consummation devoutly to be wished but the very ground of our commencement? Could, in light of the experiments, anything be clearer than that, both individually and collectively, we've had it upside down from virtually the beginning but now, thanks to them, are literally in a *position* to set things right-side up by, finding, as Zen enjoins us to do, not only the face we had before we were born but, by merely turning our attention around, play the last trump as prophesied and, in the twinkling of an eye, instantly convert what was formerly experienced as the half-truth of Sophoclean, indeed of all, tragedy into the whole truth of the divine comedy it is?

Is the so-called secret really and truly all too simple for words?

### Letter 58—January 11, 2006

Just finished talking to you on the phone and it's given me a real lift since, as I explained or tried to, if I'm suffering from anything it's from this absolute wealth of suggestion and material (and I do mean absolute and I do mean wealth) just from going over my jottings on Altizer alone which, given their nature, almost defy any kind of ordering or systematic arrangement. For instance, what am I to make of the following which, more than just a passing observation on his part however accurate, reveals how intimately connected all the material is that's led us to this pretty pass? I'm referring to the fact—and it is a fact and, thanks to the experiments, as distinct from Altizer's conjectures, now a demonstrable one—that, as Aquinas was the first to suspect, far from supernatural, the revealed with its total and primary dependence on the senses, is perfectly natural, a notion that, picked up a few generations later by the Englishman Ockham in the name of a pure nominalism—the revealed as natural, the natural as revealed—has, despite many protests and much carrying-on, not only been passed on to us but, thanks to another Englishman of our deliverance and acquaintance, been refined to the point where, beyond argument, beyond even the gospel truth, it's finally prevailed. And prevailed by virtue of the absolute certainty both intrinsic and extrinsic to these simple, anonymous exercises whereby we're now in a position, *the* position to claim that it's not what I say or you say or even what Douglas says that determines the truth of any matter or even of matter itself, but what they—the experiments—say and this precisely because they say it in the only medium capable of telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth: the pure immediacy of the actual, factual language of silence that, in Wallace Stevens' phrase, bespeaks "the no-thing that is and the no-thing that is not," beyond the bug-bear of the Word with all its built-in contra-dictions.

That said—and it's as simple as that—we're free to proceed with our analysis safe in the knowledge that what's not in line with the above-said but, nevertheless, unspoken truth is, to whatever degree, simply out of line with it and that in this game of cowboys and Indians we play with ourselves—"so and so or such and such went that a'way"—is only helpful and, indeed, true, if it

“heads” us in the right direction and the ultimate realization that every act we make, every gesture we take, every word, every thought is merely the repetition—interior or exterior—of a crucifixion and resurrection no longer mythical or historical—in a word no longer symbolic—but in every sense as real and constant as the very air we breathe. As Altizer conveniently and justly characterizes it, it is the one eschatological event and, paradoxically enough, has been, world without end, from the beginning. And since what lies within his recognition also happens to be the very backbone of our thesis, it might be worth examining, not so much where we agree as where we differ and, if not differ, demur as demur we must if only because it is now we who are not only in possession of but possessed by the ultimate imprimatur—the experiments—and he isn’t any more than a supreme and unsurpassed and unsurpassable figure like a Dante was when he claimed for the *Commedia*, justifiably at the time, the ultimate integration of imagination and thinking when all the while it was the thing itSelf—vision, not imagination, not thought—that was waiting in the wings to be uncovered. Put as plainly as possible what it all comes down to is this: what Altizer and greater than Altizer envision we’re now in a position to see and see that things are not other than what they are. As a result we no longer have to “evoke that original divine sacrifice which is the mythical (sic!) origin of the world” since, thanks to our pilgrimage from myth to Fact via history, we see and see by means of our bodies that, in reality, other than to frame and make it palatable given our condition at the time, there’s nothing mythical about it. Contrary to his hope as well as claim that “the power of ritual language is inseparable from its own enactment,” we’re finally in a position to see that the literal reward for hitting bottom is that we no longer have to accept any substitutes, symbolic or otherwise, however “divine” their pretensions. To paraphrase the Milton of *Paradise Lost* (II, 145) we’re now in a position to verify that it’s not God who has to lower himself to our level, but we who must lower ourselves to his, to the condition, as Douglas describes it, of a “not-god.” And can this no longer conjectural “sacrifice” be depicted, no less enacted, more graphically and with more certainty and assurance than through the experiments? To explore, then, the nature of this sacrifice

which constitutes the very essence of the experiments must be our next project.



**Letter 59 January 21, 2006**

I suppose if we had to resort to words (and we do) we could sum up the essential “teaching” of the experiments, of the paper-bag, for instance, and what it has to “say” about sacrifice, with these simple lines from Blake’s *Milton* and let it go at that: “Such are the Laws of Eternity that each shall mutually Annihilate/himself for others good,” the only difference being that Blake’s observation, presumably one man’s opinion however desirable, is still open to discussion, I suppose even to dispute, whereas the experiment, indeed any experiment, with its universal indicative—what is—joined to the absolute imperative of what should and must be—and this beyond language, beyond even a question of choice—is not. On a more complex though no less acute level it’s what Nishitani suggests when he refers to the “reciprocal interchange of absolute inequality” as the inescapable condition, conscious or not or even like it or not, that pertains to any and every conceivable encounter, whether of man meeting dog or, handily enough for our purposes, of dog spelled backward (at least in English) meeting man.

All this ties in nicely with Altizer’s thesis as far as it goes, but as we’ve seen before and will see again and not only as regards Altizer, the problem still remains that, absent the experiments he’s still operating in the human, the all-too-human bang and/or whimper school in which we’ve enrolled ourselves since Day One: the fundamentalist temptation of either going too far or, at the other end of the spectrum, not going far enough, that is to say all the way. The future is still relegated to, if not a never-never land, at best a not-yet waiting to be discovered instead of being recognized for what it is and always has been, an already-here waiting, indeed dying, to be uncovered.

“Man is born a Spectre or Satan & is altogether an Evil, & requires a New Selfhood continually & must continually be changed into his direct Contrary.”

So Blake again and here’s Altizer’s not so surprising comment on what, essentially, is, as we see now, if not a detailed *prescription* designed to induce a heavenly state of health—that’s reserved for the experiments—at least an accurate *de-scription* of this New and hoped-for Selfhood. “But only in the apocalyptic

situation of the end of the world does either the possibility or the necessity of our continual transformation and transfiguration into our direct contrary become manifest and real." Indeed it does which, stripped of its accrued *qua* ominous connotation ("apocalypse" signifying in Greek no more than "revelatus" in Latin: our "revelation," that which can be seen), can only lead us to recognize that, setting aside the presumably long-awaited and, in some quarters at least, long-welcomed cataclysm that, it's supposed, will bring it about, turns out to be no more (and no less) than a simple turn-around, the literal about-face required to provide the perspective as seen by a conscious 1<sup>st</sup> as distinct from a necessarily unconscious 3<sup>rd</sup> Person. Quite fitting, too, that, if history has taught us anything and it's taught us a great deal if only by way of culminating in the experiments, it's that an "immanent" god—in effect, a not-god—would not, indeed, given its own first-personal situation as lowest of the low and smaller than the smallest thing, could not stoop to so unseemly or even so unsightly a ruse as to exercise a supposedly transcendent prerogative. As for "the end of the world," though that, too, as predicted as well as prophesied is also most certainly waiting in the wings for its cue, if past is still prologue in this game of turn-about fair-play, it will first have to be preceded by its own second act, the one we're living through now, the end of which, though it may be mistaken for, even conceived of as *the* end, the end of *the* world, signifies, in reality, no more than the end of *a* world, the world *we've* made. No surprise then that like virtually everyone else's, Altizer's analysis, though provocative enough, even incisive—why else would we be talking about it?—is, nevertheless, slightly off-center even when it ends up right for largely the wrong reasons. Quite simply, his misses, like those of so many others, like those of virtually *all* others, can only be attributed to his not having the experiments.

The result: the literal contra-dictions, the mixed signals we're sent when those delivered by vision are, sight-unseen, rudely interrupted by those delivered by voice. But we can address that question in our next.

### Letter 60—January 30, 2006

I'm in something of a dilemma. Encouraged by my reading of Altizer I want to address a question he touches on and that's certainly central to Seeing, this whole business of distinguishing between Voice and Vision. Or, putting first things first, should it read Vision and Voice? In any case, I've so much material or, at least, tell myself I do, that though I know or think I know it's all going to end in the experiments, I'm not at all sure, not so much where it begins as where I should. Should I take my cue from the Welsh David Jones (a wonderful but neglected writer from an older generation, the one that bordered on Eliot and Joyce and Proust) who claimed that all story—and that would certainly include history—was nothing but a variation on the theme of "It was a dark and stormy night and in order to pass the time we decided to tell ourselves a story that began 'It was a dark and stormy night...?' "Is the road we've taken from an at first inchoate Alpha to rumors of Omega and beyond any less circular?

What strikes me at first sight or at least at first thought is how, though representing opposite sides of the same coin, the two components nevertheless relate and are finally reconciled by the twin aspects of the experiments: Vision to 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science and, broadly speaking, Voice to 1<sup>st</sup> Person History, the equation corresponding at the same time to the distinction Douglas makes in *The Hierarchy* and which, though I know I've referred to it more than once, still bears repeating. "To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for tomorrow or yesterday, must be my first concern." (1<sup>st</sup> Person Science) "And my second must be to find in this Now all my tomorrows and yesterdays," this last an obvious invitation to explore 1sPerson History.

I suppose the most evident distinction we can make between the two, at least to begin with, is to recognize that Vision, the pure unmediated immediacy of the silence that, as Mohammed would have it, is "nearer to us than our own jugular," represents a presence which, like the child within us (to which it's not unrelated), should be, indeed, can only be seen but not heard, whereas Voice, even when it seems to come from Nowhere, especially when it seems to come from Nowhere, is always other, distant, foreign and so, as with a parent, subject to the idolatry of the transcendent

temptation. I don't think we can repeat often enough or loudly enough that just as "Je est un autre" as Rimbaud would have it, the snake also knew that the Voice—that is to say, concave, receptive, suggestible ear, not convex outgoing and searching eye—lies at the root of all our evil and is never so clearly and definitively articulated as when, announced by the justly famous "I AM," it offers the first step towards that which will not only separate my Me from mySelf and I but, by raising it to the eminence of a Word, announce to all the world my necessary separation from, indeed, the temporary termination of my original Self-hood. Though certainly apparent to the likes of a Paul and Augustine, I don't think we recognize often enough, not so much the enormity of but the enormous step that that declaration of independence, the "today I am a man, " represented until tempered—or should we say "refined?"—signed, sealed and delivered in and by the fires of hell it found itself equipped to return to its senses and literally not so much trace but scratch and grope its way forward back to where it came from. But with this difference. As Eliot would have it, now it knew the place for the first time.

And to some degree—at least as much as is *humanly* possible absent the experiments and as thoroughly as any I know of—Altizer is on to this and recognizes that it, too, the Self-annihilation typified by modern history with its concentration camps and atomic bombs and chemical warfare, itself a product of the negation created by the birth of self-hood, is itself, in good Hegelian fashion, about to be negated, though how the means towards that reversal are about to come about, indeed, has already taken place in his own back-yard, he's as ignorant as virtually everyone else. Quite simply, ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny, what is experienced in infancy as look-see before necessarily succumbing to the blandishments of a hear-say made necessary by a so-called "mature" imagination has now come full circle as the visible become proudly audible for the first five or six thousand years of its existence and calling itself civilization has now reached a dead end. Witness the inundation of an uneasy and exhausted speech as it tries to straddle the great divide by enrolling its own visible echo—writing—to explore and mine the original and silent mother lode. I know I've used this example before but, without

going into the content but merely noting the container, we've only to compare the subtlety, the intricacy of our own Declaration of a mere two centuries ago to the current U.N. Charter which, like measuring a Mozart aria alongside a well-meaning, even a contented grunt, can only reveal what a mighty fall there's been, yet, at the same time — an antidote to pessimism — reveal, as with Eden, what falls are for, if only by pointing to the experiments? As Milton well knew and not only Milton, God never shuts one door without opening another, and what appear at first as disasters, whether of angels hurled from heaven or humans banished from paradise or, come to think of it, crucifixions here on earth, are not without their saving graces. Is it too much to claim, that like the drowning about to be saved even as all history passes before their eyes, this parody of total recall is about to lead them to the real thing?



### Letter 61—February 12, 2006

To pick up where we left off with the notion that the seeming drying up of historical consciousness—to employ an over-used Marxist term—an element in which, paradoxically, we seem to be drowning, may not necessarily be a bad thing, any more than our current incapacity or even desire to build a fire by rubbing two sticks together or predict the weather by means of a finger in the wind necessarily indicates, rather than loss, simply supersession and a recognition that our present needs are being met elsewhere. Indeed, isn't the gradual relaxation of the need for a genuine historical consciousness implicit in the very existence of the experiments indicative that, the last to be first, history, by forcing us back to where we started, that is, to our senses, has done its work? Certainly Hegel whose prophetic theology was, according to Altizer, justifiably grounded in the apocalyptic certainty that, rather than the world it was merely history that was coming to an end, that history in which Spirit, realizing itSelf as absolute freedom and the very essence of reality (and this on far less evidence than our own), was, contrary to the common expectation, about to reveal itself as the very embodiment of the Kingdom of God presided over by its temporal ruler, the putative Queen of Heaven herSelf. In which case, don't the experiments, translated back into their original, offer even greater assurance than any fancy symbolism or speculation, however pure, can provide?

All this, given his—Altizer's—limited tools among which we might number the precedence he awards traditional Intellect over the evidence of the unfashionable Senses, or a now outmoded because no longer useful because unnecessary hypothetical *a priori* over the sure, indeed certain evidence of the *a posteriori*—discussions, like the very usefulness of history itself, now ended forever—all this Altizer touches upon and treats as well as he can. But since, absent the experiments, his method is necessarily incomplete, so are his conclusions. For instance, here he is at the end of a very difficult passage in which, in effect, he sums up his position and which, at the same time, we can only note as its limitations:

“Unlike the chaos of an actual primordial mythology”—the chaos from which, presumably, we've originally emerged—“the

chaos released by this discordance"—that is, our modernity—"embodies in itself a certitude of its own actuality. Once it has been *heard*, it can never be forgotten, and once it has been fully heard, no pure harmony is ever *hearable again*." (Italics mine)

Indeed it isn't, assuming it ever was—hearable, that is—nor need it be since, as the experiments demonstrate without question, it's as seeable now as it's ever been. And it's precisely here that our position is summed up in a nutshell, the priority of Vision—Godspeak—over Voice—Mantalk—and the very real fact that, as Aquinas noted, the senses, properly interpreted, are every bit as adequate and even more certain than the Intellect and its mouth-piece, despite or maybe because of its pretensions, could ever be. Why bother to go through the motion, not to speak of the commotion, of in one ear and out the other, when a single eye will demonstrably permit us voyage to that place where duality, like time itself, must have a stop?

Which, without opening me too obviously to the invited or even uninvited wise-crack, suggests it may be time for me, too, to have mine—my stop—at least for the moment. I mean how often must it be repeated without sounding like a Johnny-One-Note that the Word, the famous I AM, no longer audible in Babel or merely audible by way of its presence in a series of reasonable facsimiles—Scriptures East and West, Gitas, Bibles, Korans and so on—now reveals all history as consisting of a long voyage home to a center of consciousness once mistakenly assumed to be situated within a body but which body can now be seen, not only for what it is but, by an absolute reversal, who and where it is: the prized stand-in for and expressed echo of an original silence finally made visible?

P.S. Today is Douglas' ninety-seventh birthday.

## Letter 62—February 14, 2006

I've just had a nice exchange with Alan Mann in Australia who publishes his Nowletter on the Internet ten times annually and who's been kind enough to include some of my things over the years, the latest being letter #37 which I sent you this past June 6, the one that begins with that marvelous and perfectly appropriate passage Hans Jonas wrote about Philo Judaeus which you may or may not recall. If you don't and no longer have a copy let me know and I'll forward you another. Or you can just tune in by bringing up Alan's website, [www.capacitie.org](http://www.capacitie.org) ("capacitie" being an affectionate reference and homage to his favorite, Thomas Traherne) and, zeroing in on the section devoted to Douglas, locate that particular letter. Incidentally, although I'm almost certain I must have told you, at Alan's request I've been sending him copies of our correspondence which he apparently wants to publish in one form or another and, indeed, has been re-printing for the sake of those who are interested: namely, at latest count, his wife, himself and, between you, me and the lamp-post, that no longer mythical if somewhat sub-rosa presence familiarly known as No-one. Aside from us, then—making in all four—and the fact, as I think we've discussed more than once, that I find being overlooked in this context almost encouraging in a perverse sort of way since it leaves up for grabs the possibility that what we have to say, rather than not good enough, is, on the contrary, too good, if not for this world, at least for some appraisals of it, you might just want to browse through some of the material he manages to fish up, if not quite from the deep, at least near enough the bottom to make it worth our dropping down a line once in a while to come up with what we can find.

In any case, what's triggered all this and temporarily interrupted my ongoing analysis of Altizer is that first paragraph of Hans Jonas' treatment of Philo which, frankly, I won't say I'd forgotten but merely overlooked until, reminded, I realized once again how incredibly prescient it is. As I pointed out then and can only repeat, with the exception of his (and Philo's) understandable if no longer necessary commitment to the combined use of "symbolic" and "allegorical" which we're now in a position to do without and the use of "highest" when, in no uncertain terms, we

mean “lowest,” the passage offers an almost perfect hypothetical presentation of the problem that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus presumably “solves” but the experiments essentially and existentially settle once and for all. But I don’t know what I’m being so coy about. Since anything worth having, except for maybe life itself, is worth repeating, why don’t I just jot down the original passage and save you the trouble of having to look it up:

“A telling symbol...unwittingly supplied by an allegory which he (Philo) evolves from the etymology of the name ‘Israel’...The name is taken to mean ‘He who sees God,’ and Jacob’s acquiring this name is said to represent the God-seeker’s progress from the stage of hearing to that of seeing, made possible by the miraculous conversion of ears to eyes !!!!!” (How can I refrain from setting up exclamation points to that one?) ...”The allegory falls into the general pattern of Philo’s views on ‘knowing God.’ These rest on the Platonic supposition that the most genuine relation to being is intuition, beholding. This eminence of sight, when extended into the religious sphere, determines also the highest’ (sic!) ‘and most authentic relation to God...To this Philo indeed assigns a nature, which makes vision, i.e. intellectual contemplation and not audition, its genuine criterion. Referring to the phrase in Exodus, ‘All the people saw the voice’ (20:18), he comments: ‘Highly significant, for human voice is to be heard but God’s voice is in truth to be seen.’ Why? Because that which God speaks is not words but works, which the eye discriminates better than the ear.”

Aside from that rather suspicious co-mingling of “intellectual contemplation” with vision—the kind of dubious shot-gun wedding mystics are tempted to enter into and which Jonas almost immediately annuls when he presumably recognizes, along with Philo (indeed, as we mentioned in an earlier letter, along with Jonathan Edwards as well), that only “simple seeing,” works, not words will do—could we ask for a more precise and literal preview than that for which we can now provide the definitive account? And yet, and yet, I have to use the word or, better yet, the almost-phrase “pre-view” advisedly, since, though Jonas agrees with Augustine that ultimate satisfaction rests in Presence and recognizes along with Philo that the “new type called Israel” will manifest as the “seeing one” and though he verbally acknowl-

edges that seeing “fulfills and redeems its symbolic intention” whereas hearing is merely “pro-visional” (for the sake of seeing), absent the experiments he still persists and must persist in referring to that conversion from ears to eye as “symbolic” instead of the reality it is and so can only conclude that though “myth taken literally is crudest objectification and taken allegorically is sophisticated objectification, taken symbolically it is the glass through which we see darkly,” as if, as certified by St. Paul, the matter ended there along with the subject, not to speak of the Subject. And, with the rare exception—a Meister Eckhart here, a Rumi there and, at the other end of the earth, the fifth patriarch who, in good Zen fashion, insisted that not only could we see through that glass darkly we could see through it clearly because, in fact, there was no glass there to see through at all—it has, until Douglas came along and put the finishing touch, the imprimatur, on the whole business.



### Letter 63—February 24, 2006

“Once more unto the breach, dear friend, once more,” not so much in order to cross the finish as approach the starting line, all questions answered by the certainty that God is not present beyond us but present beyond us only insofar as we’re not present to ourselves, that is to say, our Self. And how do we become present to our Self if not by cancelling the third person’s lease and restoring to the first its rightful ownership? According to Altizer—and he’s certainly not original in this—we have to recognize and acknowledge that, given our place in the time-line, there’s only one way open to the likes of us, only one way that every evil can be eventually converted to the good even if that good masquerades as damnation, especially if it masquerades as damnation, and that’s the doctrine of hitting bottom which I, for one, would have found impossible to accept and did had it not been for the turnaround, the supreme con-version provided by the experiments. For which sanction—and it’s what makes him interesting to us—he turns, as we do, to the testimony of history and, parodic as ever (at least on the surface), to its prime and latest witness, modernity itself with its concentration camps and gas chambers and atomic bombs and germ warfare, first manifestations ever, at least on a universal scale, of a total and worldwide horror story thus inviting its countervailing balancing-act, indeed, insisting on it. What endears him to us and certainly qualifies him as a companion to Headlessness—why else bother?—is—and it’s the mark of his own spiritual gifts—how close he comes to the template of all existence even without benefit of the experiments. To which end the following pertinent, if somewhat lengthy excerpt bears witness:

“Blake, even as Hegel, ultimately came to see the whole of history as a *redemptive totality*. For even though the actuality of history is a world of violence and horror, and is so for both Hegel and Blake, nonetheless that horror is finally a *redemptive horror*.” (as usual, the italics are mine).” It is a redemptive horror because it is a total horror drawing ‘all Eternity’ into itself. Not only do ‘The ruins of Time build Mansions in Eternity...’ (cf. the experiments) ...’But Jesus, breaking thro’ the Central Zones of Death & Hell, Opens Eternity in Time & Space, triumphant in Mercy’ ...Luvah, who is the *Violence and horror of history, is also the atoning Lamb of*

*God because he has entered the State of Satan and Death*, a state which is universal to our fallen history, but which must be *passed through* if Spirit or 'The Eternal Great Humanity Divine' is to be and become itself."

Given what we know now, I find this analysis quite extraordinary, in fact am more impressed than ever that, absent the requisite tools and solely dependent on intuition and a genius for observation, Blake and others as well as their interpreters like Altizer are able to re-present what, as we're now in a position to see, only the anonymous, name-free experiments are in a position to pin-point with absolute certainty and in detail because they render it unambiguously in silence. Yet at the same time, though filled with admiration, I'm nevertheless forced to admit that though I may have saluted their findings with a dutiful if somewhat skeptical, even, on occasion, incomprehensible respect, without the witness of this, our silent partner, neither I nor anybody else could ever have been quite sure we weren't still circling the round-about of truth in the guise of words, words, words, even *the Word*, instead of having arrived in one fell swoop, indeed, in one fallen swoop, at a destination and destiny beyond impersonation. To be as blunt about it as possible, could we in all our wildest dreams have imagined a better bet—win, place and show, the perfect *trifecta*—than that the sickness unto death would, in the person of the experiments, provide us with the winning ticket, not only the diagnosis and the prescription but—all hell and healing breaking loose at the same time—the cure as well?

From which seeming anomalies virtually everything else comes clear, not only the end of symbolism, for instance, but the end of the need for it. Unless, of course, like me your hobbies—and quite legitimate they are too as a way of passing the time—run to island-hopping, collecting butterflies like philosophy or religion or exploring old haunts for remains of the fountain of youth or the land of heart's desire or even, as we're doing now, mining, digging deep for the meaning of it all. Take Altizer with his seemingly endless pages and interesting ones, too, dedicated and committed child of Calvin that he is, to the hot pursuit of predestination: its significance, its location, its life, death and rebirth when, talking about parodies and the total end of tran-

scendence, it all comes down to nothing *but* and nothing *and* a finger pointing, not at the moon as the Zen people note, but in precisely the opposite direction: to the visible fact that we're built for loving and there, literally — everything else embroidery — is not only the beginning but the end of it.

Which, speaking of embroidery, reminds me I recall reading somewhere that in his consulting room Freud had hanging, sewn in what used to be referred to as fancywork and framed, a favorite quote from the *Aeneid*, one that read: "If heaven prove intractable, I will move all hell." And so he did. And so do we all now and, surprise, surprise, look what or, if you prefer, who we come up with at the bottom of the pile.



### Letter 64—March 2, 2006

Though we've covered a lot of ground and though I may have "miles to go before I sleep" (though not as many as I'd like and certainly not sufficient to exhaust our explorations), looking over my notes I see we still have some unfinished business with Altizer. I trust this doesn't alarm you too much or in some way indicate I want to get through with him. On the contrary, for our purposes and from a certain perspective he's as good as they come and capable of startling and quite unexpected insights but there are others out there whom we've talked about—Nishitani, for instance, and Abe from the Buddhist tradition, Gebser from ours—whose work also warrants measuring by the, literally, incomparable gauge of the experiments. Which prospect, assuming, of course, I have the strength and stamina to get through it, I hope doesn't fill you with too much alarm. In any case, in observance of the law of the conservation of energy I'm going to try to limit my remarks to the strictly relevant. But then, considering the universality, the absolute blanket-covering of Headlessness, what isn't relevant to it?

Here, for instance, and in direct contravention of the guidelines I've just set down is a mere passing remark of Altizer's I came across only a minute ago while looking for an altogether different reference and which, on the surface, at least, would seem to indicate I'm still all over the place but, nevertheless, given our context I find irresistible:

"Writing or scripture finally ends in *Finnegans Wake*, for this is a text in which a written or writable language has wholly disappeared as such and disappeared to make way for or to awake that *primal and immediate speech* which is *on the other side* of writing or text, and on the infinitely other side of that writing which is scripture or sacred text."

Could there be a better if unwitting or even unconscious yet premonitory description of what the experiments -that "primal and immediate speech ...on the other side of writing"—will be all about and how and why they're conveyed in the way they are than this? Or this?:

Not only is "Scripture more fully and universally present in *Finnegans Wake* than it is in any other text...but the Koran is

likewise present...and so also are the Eddas, the Bhagavad Gita, the Egyptian and Tibetan Books of the Dead, and even Confucian and Buddhist scriptures...But always these texts are present only by way of their emptiness or absence as sacred or mythical texts, their original sacrality now invariably passing into ribaldry, banality, and blasphemy, as all the grace of an *archaic* and sacred Heaven is now present and actual only by way of what Scripture could only name as Satan and Hell...Even the four evangelists are present once again as witnesses and narrators, but not only are they now false witnesses, they are reverse witnesses or narrators, who become yet another source of dissonance and disorder. *Yet this is just the chaos that makes possible an apocalyptic epiphany of total grace, a grace realizing and enacting itself by way of the revelatory and sacrificial presences of H.C.E...*" The same H.C.E., Joyce's hero, whose initials as well as "sacrificial presence" are soon to be revealed in the flesh and under his real name as simply Here Comes Everybody.

Am I reaching too far, derailed rather than detoured, in claiming that the universal chaos the prophetic component indigenous to the Western tradition from Homer and the Bible through Dante and Milton and Blake and now Joyce has prefigured and we're now living through on a scale unimaginable before in the history of the race, is precisely the condition that has made possible, indeed, if God's in his heaven, made mandatory this "apocalyptic epiphany of total grace" we call the experiments? And, to return to my original intention, hasn't this condition been brought about, at least in part, by, as Altizer so presciently intuits, that Christian theology that can and will only be reborn by way of an immersion in Buddhism, a hypothesis that, unbeknownst to him, was actually being prepared for its apotheosis at the very scene of the crime by the seemingly hellish breakdown of all barriers that led to Douglas' breakthrough in India? Other than what the experiments themselves actually render without interference or intrusion or even interpretation, can anything be plainer than the correlation between the Buddhist notion of Nirvana and Emptiness, of inner exodus, with its actual counterpart, the exterior exodus in the Judeo-Christian tradition, first from Egypt and then from history itself, thus relating, from Alpha to Omega, its

fulfillment, available to any one any time any where, to its completion, its opposite number, so to speak, now available for the first time ever to every one every where every when? Can there be any doubt that this is the meaning underlying the apparent meaninglessness of our time on its way to ultimate liberation in the meaning-free?



**Letter 65—March 12, 2006**

Although I hope to go into it in greater detail later when we consider, if only briefly, the work of D.G. Leahy (a younger associate of Altizer's and even more difficult and convoluted), I think it's about time we turn to this whole question (or should it be answer?) of sacrifice and see—and I do mean “see”—how and what the experiments can contribute to our understanding of a practice which is and justifiably has been central to any serious theological or religious or philosophical consideration of any kind and, indeed, as, appropriately enough, they themselves demonstrate in the flesh, has to be the absolute basis for any discussion, not to speak of manifestation, of life itself. In fact, from the Polynesian custom of potlatch to the holy practice of African and West Indian cannibalism to the Aztec-like holocausts still operative today, alas, in their debased versions of racial and/or political purity, right up to, at the other end of the spectrum, the self-immolation of a Prajapati, for instance, in the Hindu pantheon or, closer to home, our own voluntary offerings such as the crucifixion or, in Headlessness the card experiment, I can't think of a single activity, even the comparable give-and-take of breathing, more revelatory of what this mystery of existence is all about.

With an effect, then, so all pervasive as to preclude deviation and confirm that it's no accident that, by definition, to begin anywhere and anywhen is to begin somewhere in the middle, we might as well start with our own vanishing tradition and the notion (and I say “notion” advisedly) of the Eucharist, the transubstantiation of the body and blood of Christ into the bread and wine served up at the Mass. I hasten to point out that whether this act is (or at least was) interpreted as mere symbolic commemoration (as with the Protestants) or, Catholic-wise, is presumed to constitute the real presence, the very real body and blood of the Savior, is, for our purposes quite irrelevant since, in light of the experiments the origin of both practices, however conceived, is still revealed finally as merely a reflection of its source, rather than a manifestation of the Source itself. Rather than claim, as we might have only yesterday, that the experiments mirror in one form or another, and are, in effect, simply re-enactments of a consciousness born some two thousand years ago, what we see now is

precisely the opposite. Despite its seeming precedence in the order of time, it is the mass, however interpreted, symbolic or no, that *reflects* the basic, the absolutely sacrificial ground of all existence, not the other way round. As the experiments not only demonstrate but render, rather than a re-iteration of what, presumably, took place once on a cross, the passion represents, as far as we know, the first historically *conscious* attempt to act out a process that, as Meister Eckhart noted, is applicable to, even as it's indelibly inscribed in, the lowliest fly on the wall and, indeed, to the repetition and supreme sacrifice indigenous to every living thing in its least breath. In effect—and the claim damn near got Eckhart burnt for it—Jesus did not so much die *for* us as to show us *how* to die. No accident, then, or wonder either that, however innocent of this precise rationale, a fleeing Aristotle could instinctively claim that one man put to death for the truth (Socrates) was enough or after the Fact a Kierkegaard actually argue the sinfulness of further voluntary crucifixions, the first having settled once and for all the sacrificial nature of all existence. I know I've cited it before but, as with so many of these gems that bear repeating, though they merely *say* what we're now finally in a position to *see*, can we come up with a coming attraction more enticing than Blake's "Such are the Laws of Eternity that each shall mutually Annihilate himself for others good?" Though we may continue kicking and screaming against such traces and killing too, aside from *how* we pay for such knowledge, do we really have a choice, then, one way or another, as to *whether* we will pay for it?

The ramifications of all this are, of course, if doctrinally simple, virtually endless as through the process of history itself we gradually become educated to and sometimes even forced to give up what was never ours in the first place. A case in point would be the much ado about predestination to which Altizer devotes, I won't say endless pages since whatever he sets down turns out to be both provocative and interesting, but now appear, as does its development, of merely historical interest. As the experiments irrevocably demonstrate and Douglas recognized, the proof of the matter is that, rather than merely born for loving—an appellation vaguely redolent of Hollywood or Tin Pan Alley—we're actually built for it, a much more precise and, indeed, demanding designa-

tion. And the same analysis can be applied to the various trial-runs that, as the case may be, either disfigure or enhance that landscape. I think of the basic encounter between Abraham and Isaac, for instance, a marvelous case in point and absolutely central to an understanding of how this business of sacrifice works or, at least, has worked since we can now trace its evolution, or the awareness of it, from beginning to end, from Alpha to Omega, from the progress of body and blood—another's—to its supreme substitute—his—(the ram in the thicket, the bread and the wine), only to see it revert back on itSelf and, negating the negation in good Hegelian fashion, end up where it not only belongs but began—with mine. No longer is it *his* body and blood, whoever he may be and however consecrated, that speaks *to* us or even has *to*, but *ours* that speaks *for* us and must. And so ends that Chapter if not its Verse.



### Letter 66—March 19, 2006

A propos of nothing—and I do mean no-thing—here are two disparate quotes I recently came across which turn out to be not so disparate after all and as a result worth mentioning. The first is by Berdyaev, Nicolas Berdyaev, a refugee from the Russian Revolution who spent the greater part of his working life in Paris and whom I first discovered there at the end of the War where he enjoyed quite a reputation as a kind of free-lance, if Orthodox, theologian-thinker. Suffice it that his work—and both in weight and volume it was considerable—had a big and early influence on me. Anyway, here it is:

“With the ultimate fruits of the progress of his creative activity modern man arrives at the negation of his own image.”

The second is from Goethe:

“No central point is any longer given to which we may look.”

I can only assume that the rationale for my juxtaposing these two seemingly disparate observations at this time and at this place yet both arriving at related conclusions is obvious: they’re both right for the wrong reasons, or if Goethe is simply wrong for the wrong ones, it’s merely because, absent the experiments, he hadn’t yet learned (nor would he) to look in the *right* direction. So true it is that God, no longer quite the unknown as once believed, is no respecter of persons, not even of the revered and wisely resigned, and now we have the instruments to prove it. Given these parlous times, wise resignation is just not good enough any more, assuming it ever was. And why? Because no longer fit to foot the bill, it’s simply in no position, literally, to pay for it. As for Berdyaev, although he flirts with his better possibilities, again, absent the experiments, he still doesn’t get the significance of the “negation of his *own* image,” which, rather than a call to pessimism (which I certainly shared with him at the time), turns out to be an invitation, not only to the one thing necessary and possible, but the one thing desirable as well.

All this by way of returning, if in something of a round-about way, to this question of sacrifice since one of the items we’re also called upon to forego is our previous notion of what constitutes not only the great but the good, whether applicable to the

human or the divine realm. Such being the case, we see now that according to Altizer's daring if hypothetical thesis—a thesis now absolutely confirmed by the experiments—both a Milton, for instance, and after him a Blake were justified in claiming that it's precisely Satan, that is to say, evil (or, if you prefer, the horrors of our third person and peculiarly modern history), that constitutes the "primary portal" to a genuinely new world and this by means of a word no longer audible but visible. But let me quote him in detail since, by summing up his own position, to some degree he anticipates ours (again, as usual the italics are mine):

"...the work and role of the Son is inseparable from the role and work of Satan, a Satan embodying the 'high permission of all-ruling Heaven' (Paradise Lost, I, 212), and a *Satan whose pure evil finally realizes infinite grace. Therefore the role of Satan is ultimately a redemptive role.* While truly the dark opposite of the Son, it is only through an actual embodiment of that dark and total opposition that a redemption can become manifest which is both total and apocalyptic. But it can be so realized only by and through a new form and mode of self-consciousness...an autonomous and individual self-consciousness whose freedom is newly and only its own. This is that freedom which is the fierce and driving energy of modern revolution, a revolution which is...integrally and finally directed to an apocalyptic goal, a goal ultimately directed to realizing that 'one kingdom' which is Heaven and earth at once. *Only the final loss of an ancient and original Heaven...can make possible this new interior and apocalyptic resolution,* for only the final loss of an original paradise can free all life and energy from an attachment and bondage to the sacrality and ultimacy of the primordial and the past. The very loss of that ultimacy is the grounding center of a new and revolutionary freedom that for the first time can finally and totally embrace a future and apocalyptic goal."

Could there be, however unwitting, a better or clearer exposition of what the experiments, that "new form and mode of self-consciousness," are all about in their drive towards a "new and interior apocalyptic," that is to say, towards a new and interior *revelation* minus all the hocus-pocus? Indeed, rather than having to refer to the "Son and Satan," those already dispossessed heirs of a

worn-out, if not totally discredited, symbolism or mourn “a final loss of an ancient and original Heaven” as a frame of reference, could anything strike closer to home—indeed, as close to home as we’re going to get—than just a plain finger, a true magic wand pointing in the right direction and so not only distinguishing by a mere wave of the hand between a 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Person but bidding bye-bye forever to the bugbear of transcendence? Could anything be more conducive to the realization of our legitimate, because ingrained, longing for a happy ending than this recognition which, for all his insight, Altizer, absent the experiments, still has to consign to the day after tomorrow? As Peanuts might have said had he concerned himself with such things as distinguishing Shadow from Substance, “we have seen the ‘future and apocalyptic goal’ — and it is us.” It is here and now and it works.



**Letter 67—March 19, 2006**

Years ago—and I do mean years, maybe it's fifty now—I used to spend part of my summers in a small unheated hut on an island about ten or twelve miles off the coast of Maine. Except for a few vacationers like me, it was mainly (no pun intended) inhabited by a handful of lobstermen who, when lobsters were off-limits during the breeding season, just plain went fishing and I do mean fishing or trawling as they called it. They'd start off at about three in the morning and not return until late in the afternoon after they'd sold their catch on the main-land. As I can testify, having, on occasion, accompanied a tenant of mine who used part of my shack, a former fish-house, for his gear and tackle, it was hard work. Anyway, the point of the story is that, though like the rest of them I was a smoker (in fact, until I gave it up a few years ago under duress, I never met a cigar, cigarette or pipe I didn't like—like? love!), what with the wind and the waves it was virtually impossible to light up or, if you did succeed, to keep the damn thing going with any kind of consistency, not to speak of satisfaction. So like the rest of them, I learned to chew and, even more importantly since, for obvious reasons, it was at my peril (and everyone else's, too, I might add) to spit, not into but, with the wind. I also learned—and surprisingly enough, it took some doing—when to get rid of the “chaw” altogether and start on a new one. Quite simply when, like a piece of gum, all the “goodness” washed out, it had lost its flavor or, even more to the point, like the proverbial salt, its savor.

Now I don't mean to compare Altizer to a hunk of used-up chewing-tobacco or to salt that's lost its savor, far from it since, from our standpoint — the view from Omega — he comes about as close as we're going to get absent the experiments, at least as I've been able to find, certainly among the moderns. Why else would we bother with him? It's simply that, though we may have cleared a good part of the essential ground with, if not exactly his help, certainly at his provocation, there are still a few more points I want to make—pro and con—before moving on briefly to—and this surprises even me—his side-kick and younger buddy, D.G. Leahy. I know I've mentioned Leahy before if only to note that he may be or at least two of his most important works, *Founda-*

*tion: Matter the Body Itself* and *Novitas Mundi*, may be among the most dense and difficult books I've ever come across and, if you're looking for comparisons, that would even include Joyce's *Wake*. In fact, with its seemingly endless miles and miles of mathematical equations leading, as far as I can see, precisely nowhere (which is where we end up without even trying), *Foundation* seems to me so inaccessible as to be, like a road-map of Jupiter or Mars, virtually useless for our purposes. Not so the *Novitas*, however, providing as it does a nice demonstration of where both Leahy and Altizer agree with each other yet—and God knows they're not alone—differ from us in that along with just about everyone else they're still stuck like just about everybody else—dare I say it?—in faith. I don't mean to be rude but as far as I can see—and I do mean “see”- “stuck” is the only word for it.

That said, before going on to where we differ from Altizer, in the interest of fairness I'd like to touch on a few points where we agree—and I trust that, speaking in the name of the experiments, I've earned the right to say “we”- always keeping in mind, of course, that neither this nor anything I might have to say about him or anyone else or even *anything* else, is intended as a personal *critique* or, indeed, a critique of any kind. To be perfectly blunt about it, I'm so convinced that it's we who possess the *Open Sesame* as we go from truth, the language of certainty, to certainty itSelf, the language of silence, that whatever others may or may not contribute, even by means of their *lacunae*, especially by means of their *lacunae*, merely serves as a counter or, if you will, a goad which, like absence itself, simply encourages further exploration. But, without getting too fancy about it, isn't that what Blake suggests when he insists on coupling the Son and Satan, that same Satan whose portal, he insists, leads to the meaning of history and we see, carrying it a step further, indeed, carrying it to the end of the line, achieves apotheosis in the experiments? Isn't that what we suggest and more than suggest when, to avoid embarrassment and the charge of fuddy-duddyism (the Son! Satan!), we distinguish cosmos from chaos or, even more specifically down to earth and to the point, 1<sup>st</sup> from 3<sup>rd</sup> Persons, both necessary “partners” in this joint venture we refer to as the great unveiling which turns out to be nothing less than apocalypse itself?

In any case, since I've almost used up our limit of one page, a propos of Nothing let me as a postscript wind up (or down) with a couple of choice tid-bits I've come across recently. Here's one from Husserl: "We must not make assertions about that which we do not ourselves *see*." Which, if past is prologue, should exclude just about any-and-everyone we might come across and, at the same time—a double whammy here—save not only time but—the name of the game—the *time* as well. Who knows? It might even save us from Husserl himself, not the worst offender by any means. Or how about this from Cardinal Newman? (As usual, the italics are mine). "The *visible* world still remains without its divine interpretation." (Which, of course, B.E. — Before the Experiments—it did). "Holy Church in her sacraments and... appointments will remain, *even to the end of the world*, only a *symbol* of those heavenly *facts* which fill eternity. Her mysteries are but the expressions in human language of truths to which the *human* mind is unequal." Indeed, it is. Aren't we entitled to claim, then, in light of the experiments and their *non-symbolic* if "*divine* interpretation of the *visible* world," that we've come, if not to the end of *the* world, at the very least to the end of *a* world?



### Letter 68 –April 9, 2006

To follow up on Cardinal Newman's observation I noted at the end of my last letter, "that the visible world still remains without its divine interpretation," which, absent the experiments, it certainly did at the time of his writing. In any case, wouldn't we be within our rights to include him along with such worthies as Hegel and Blake as an early candidate, however unwitting, for beatification in our new dispensation? And yes, as you also remark at the end of your recent note, "Douglas' is the only hierarchy that I know of that explicitly takes as its starting point and building block the experience of the first person." Which, of course, as I keep insisting, is precisely what distinguishes the all-encompassing, definitive conclusions of Headlessness from anything that's ever been seen before—its difference in *kind*. And if you don't believe me, compare what the experiments say in silence to anything Altizer or anyone else (including me) has to say out loud: "It is precisely a final dissolution of all human presence," he remarks referring to the destiny of the Third Person, "which is a decisive sign of an apocalyptic presence," he rightly concludes, immediately suggesting, as we're now equipped to see, that the one and only source of the full meaning of reality is, literally, the First, that is, the I AM who, though he or she may prefer to go incognito and stoop even to the point, God help us, of trying to pass itSelf off as an It, is, as Douglas likes to point out, who you really really are and me too. And, of course, like everyone else who's come up with this *idea* or something like it, he—Altizer, that is—is quite right as far as he goes: that, as prophesied, the full disclosure of apocalypse, and God knows as well as we that we're living through it, demands a prior condition of damnation so that in the mathematics of salvation evil itself can be disclosed as an instrument of good, it may be, as in crucifixion, the instrument *for* good. But as I noted in an earlier letter, quoting the poet Roy Campbell—and forgive me for repeating myself: "He's got the snaffle and the curb alright, but where's the bloody horse," the one and only on which we can saddle up and, when all's said and done, ride off happily into the ever after?

Well, as we fixers and carnival barkers fresh from the big tent of eternity might tell him, "It's stabled right here on the premises

and in the promises too. Which is not to suggest—and this comprises the pathos of his situation—that like so many others—dare we say almost all?—his head’s not in the right place, only that it’s screwed on at all. How else could he write (and quite correctly, too) that “only in the apocalyptic situation of the end of the world” or, as we might say, the end of a world, “does either the possibility or the necessity of our continual transformation and transfiguration into our *direct contrary* become manifest and real,” yet virtually take it back or at least a good part of it, by almost immediately claiming that “the power of ritual language is inseparable from its own enactment,” which, in light of the silence that in-forms us, almost sounds like a carry if not a hang-over from the old days, a throw-back on the order of faith itself, now seen for what it is, a helpful but, nevertheless, redundant because no longer necessary superstition, something on the order of crossing our fingers for luck? How else could he follow this up by referring to “the original divine sacrifice which is the *mythical* origin of the world” when, as we see now, there’s nothing mythical about it, that, in effect, as Ramana Maharshi would have it (“plain as a gooseberry in the palm of your hand”), our conclusion—and I do mean conclusion—does not derive its sanction from the myth but, precisely the other way round, the myth is already determined by, beginning with “God,” the sacrificial nature of all existence which, via the experiments, we’re now in a position to confirm: that, in reality, the only myth comparable to the myth that “the proper study of mankind is man,” is the myth that myth stands at the origin of reality rather than merely reflects it? As Hegel insisted who, if the first to confirm it can now no longer be considered the last, there’s nothing that cannot be known, only that which—*mystes*, closed lips—cannot be spoken. Enter the experiments, those ministers of grace and silence, expressly sent to reclaim duality from itself for itSelf.

All of which, not incidentally, lies at the origin of so many of our other “myths”: that history has *essentially* to do with the past rather than to offer itself, as we see now, as the door to Presence, at once, fittingly enough, the gateway out of Alpha into Omega and, at the same time, the unwitting record of the last best hope on earth; that, failing that, rather than participate, our primary pur-

pose is, at best, to witness as observers and “see” God rather than close that book once and for all and so, in this “reciprocal interchange of absolute inequality” (Nishitani), see *as* God, or as, following Eckhart (“Let us pray to God that we may be free of ‘God’”), Douglas refers to as “not-god”; that the so-called malevolent breakdown for the first time ever of the barriers between sacred and profane at the hands of an unholy science, rather than confound history as commonly, even fashionably supposed has, in effect, delivered it, released it, freed us from it to the point where we’re now in a position to recognize that the most important event in it is the evolution or, if you prefer, the development of the differentiating consciousness that constitutes it and so provides the means to bridge or, if you prefer, leap the gap from faith into certainty. And therein lies the miracle, indeed, the greatest miracle of all: that either we no longer require one or recognize that because nothing is miraculous and only no-thing, everything is.



### Letter 69—April 12, 2006

Recognizing that, despite all he's pro-vided us ("for the sake of vision") or should I say pre-vided us (as anticipating it), you may be getting as impatient as I am to move on, I'll try to be as brief as possible in finishing up with Altizer.

"Writing or scripture finally ends in *Finnegans Wake*," he observes suitably enough, "for this is a text in which a written or writable language has wholly disappeared as such, and disappeared to make way for or to awake that primal and immediate speech which is on the other side of writing or text..."

But as the experiments confirm, that "that primal and immediate speech ...on the other side" consists precisely of silence, the conscious silence that will one day possess the "in-sight" capable of finding the equivalent to "sermons in stones," indeed, the source of it, he hasn't the foggiest. Nor beyond a suspicion or two—and I dare say it (and it really is daring)—did anybody else till you-know-who came along? When even a St. Paul, despite his admonition that "we set free rather than be set free from our bodies," could nevertheless do no better than claim that "we walk by faith and not by sight," is it surprising that it took a while (two millennia to be exact) for the doubting Thomases of this world (and our names are certainly legion now assuming they haven't been before) to have our innings and then only at the "end" of it? Yes, of course Altizer's quite right—and it's a salute to his own brilliant insight—in claiming Joyce as "the epic poet who gave us that ending," but as with all endings in this world, it was merely the inversion that heralded its own reversal and a new beginning. As I remarked in an earlier letter—and it's certainly not original with me—God never closes one door without opening another. Can it be an accident that, given this assurance, *Finnegan*, whose author predicted that after him would come, not the deluge, but the appearance of a hitherto unseen simplicity (though what that simplicity was to look like lay hidden beyond even his wild imagining), and *The Hierarchy*, the end and the beginning, appeared only a dozen or so years apart and not that far from each other geographically either? Nor, obviously, were even these insights the first but merely the last to be first, from that early Church Father whose name escapes me at the moment but who

insisted that “there is nothing that is not body, everything that is body,” right through to, of all people, David Hume who, along with his seemingly strange bedfellow, Aquinas, insisted that it’s the sensible, Blake’s “minute particulars,” that must replace the rational, thus paving the way for the notion that, since truth is not arrived at through thought alone, metaphysics will again be subordinate to revelation. And so, as they say or at least used to, it’s come to pass that the absence of a head, by guarding against the dangers of its habitual, indeed congenital, swelling, may hopefully spare us this time from the perils of any subsequent miscalculation.

For the rest, as I’ve already touched on, if Altizer is sure along with Hegel that the absolute actualizes itself in history and with Kierkegaard that, since the union cannot “be brought about by an elevation, it must be attempted by a descent,” and though he’s more than willing to celebrate the replacement of the traditional Eucharist, the symbolic “thank you” gone into abeyance and desuetude anyway, by the full disclosure of the real one wherein the true order and meaning of sacrifice is revealed for the first time, he’s, nevertheless, not so much uncertain as to where the guide-lines come from as to where they’re going, where they lead: that the certainty of Apocalypse—the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things now seen—requires, not the body and blood of the other or even its reasonable facsimile in the form of bread and wine, but our own. Indeed, if the truth be known and it can be now, it’s faith in the middle, the penultimate term—the bread and wine—that represents, however well intentioned, the ultimate cop-out for which we’ve paid these many years. Can it be that if history’s taught us anything it’s that the lion that can’t or won’t learn to lie down with the lamb does so at its own peril? Certainly the lesson of modernity as embodied in the experiments, not to speak of the African veldt, would seem to indicate as much.

### Letter 70 – May 1, 2006

Just to give you some idea of what I've been sparing you, not to speak of what I've been up against myself, following is a brief excerpt from what is itself a brief excerpt from an article by D.G. Leahy I picked up by chance on the Internet and which justifiably qualified for one of the prizes in the Bad Writing Contest of 1998, an annual free-for-all conducted, I gather, by one Prof. Denis Dutton of the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. (Of such is the ubiquity if not the kingdom of our heaven these days). In any case, word for word—and I kid you not—here goes:

“Total presence breaks on the univocal predication of the exterior absolute the absolute existent (of that of which it is not possible to univocally predicate an outside, while the equivocal predication of the outside of the absolute of the absolute exterior is possible of that of which the reality so predicated is not the reality, viz., of the dark/of the self, the identity of which is not outside the absolute identity of the outside, which is to say that the equivocal predication of identity is possible of the self-identity which is not identity, while identity is univocally predicated of the limit to the darkness, of the limit of the reality of the self)...”

Will you believe me when I tell you that that's only a fore-taste, only the first sentence of a lengthy disquisition, in fact a book by Leahy called *Foundation: Matter the Body itself* which I believe I mentioned in a previous letter and which I found virtually unreadable? Virtually? Hell—since we're in the business of truth-telling and telling the absolute truth at that—absolutely unreadable. Well, you might ask and, of course, you'd be justified, “Why bother with him?” To which I can only reply, “Because Altizer whom, as I've already indicated, I do respect, keeps insisting that he's worth looking into and more than worth looking into—worth taking seriously.” And surprise! surprise! shall I tell you something else (since such are the mysteries of this world, not to speak of the “next”)? Judging from one of Leahy's earlier works, *Novitas Mundi* which, with my rusty Latin I first translated *News of the World* but which some kind soul in the Classics Department in the University here informed me should more precisely (and

more fittingly too) read *The Newness of the World*, as you'll see too when we deal with him presently, Altizer's quite right.

But before I get into the details—and, believe it or not, some of his details are worth looking into—I think I should clarify one point—a re-statement of aims as it were—if only for the record. Though in looking over the list of names I've almost inadvertently managed to accumulate in these letters, an interested or even a disinterested reader might be tempted to conclude my concerns are essentially scholarly, as I'm sure any genuine scholar would be glad to testify—and I'd be happy to agree—they're anything but. To be as plain about it as possible and however impertinent it may sound, from the Buddha and Jesus on down (or, if you prefer, on up), my essential concern is not how my remarks and observations measure up on some hypothetical scholarly scale or related scorecard but only as they pertain to the experiments. Because, as it must be clear by now, I'm convinced that it's not what this or that one said or even did that constitutes the last word and beyond so to speak but these simple instruments that, as far as I can see, are the only medium equipped to qualify as the final arbiter and ultimate gauge in what passes for modernity but has, appropriately enough, turned out to be the court of last resort for all time. And again, as I've also remarked but it's worth repeating, if this means relegating the world's ordinary medium of exchange, its hit-and-miss and now superseded a priori assumptions as opposed to our a posteriori certainties to, if not the dust-bin, at least the storied store-house of history where, along with their proponents, they belong, then so be it. As Leahy never tires of pointing out in his, at best, somewhat overloaded prose, "The proof of the possibility of the transparency of the eucharistic essence of existence itself (is) now occurring for the first time in history. No proof of the actuality of what now occurs is possible other than the perception in essence of the fact itself." Or as we're in the enviable position of now being able to translate, to literally zero in on and confirm, "The FACT itSelf." That, thought-full man that he is, he tends to mistake con- for per-ception, in fact—again absent the experiments—is necessarily trapped in it, we can leave, for the moment, to our upcoming analysis. Suffice it for the moment that if, as he suspects, "the form of an essentially new universe"—his

*Novitas Mundi*—“now exists for the first time in thought,” we’re in a position to go him one better and assure him that, thanks to the experiments, not only the new but the original is also in plain view and this, not just in “thought” but in the flesh as well, as, indeed, it has been all along had we only been aware of it and been able to recognize it for what it is or, if you prefer, is not. But the time was not ripe nor—and it comes down to the same thing really—were we.



### Letter 71 – May 11, 2006

Again, not to beat a dead dog but merely remind us that it's the truth we're after and not some mere assessment of what this or that one said, following is a brief analysis, an appreciation really, of the best that Leahy has to contribute to what can only be considered *our* proprietary interest—the experiments. And I must admit, grudgingly perhaps, that despite the bug-bear of his faith vis-à-vis our certainty and his excruciatingly dense presentation—as a leading proponent of the fallacy of imitative form, he's more than willing to torture language into finally confessing what it might have admitted all along—it's not inconsiderable. In fact, speaking of miracles, it almost appears that despite his later gobbledegook, a sample of which I included in my last letter, he's nevertheless been able to arrive intuitively, almost unconsciously, as close to our position, at least from one perspective, as anyone I've come across and that would include such worthies as an Altizer or a Tillich or a Gebser on this side of the pond as well as a Nishitani or Abe from across the water. Indeed, since he's convinced *that* it is though he can't quite point his finger *where* it is (hence the still-lingering necessity for faith rather than certainty), if we didn't know better it would almost appear as if, age difference apart—after all, they are separated by more than a generation—in order for Douglas to have put his money where his mouth was he would have had first to take the Word right out of Leahy's.

But enough with overtures, hypothetical or otherwise. What Leahy has come up with—and though how he “intuits” through faith what we “see” with certainty doesn't concern us here—is the distinction, and as he insists, the historically based distinction, between what he characterizes as the now out-dated *Missa Solemnis*, the age of the solemn or, if you prefer, the sorrow-full Mass *exclusively* reserved for Christians and what he calls, brilliantly I think, the *Missa Jubilaea*, the all-*inclusive* joyful or jubilant Mass, which advent like some John the Baptist heralding the new dispensation, if it isn't already upon us (as we know it is in the form of the experiments) is, as he announces, waiting, if not *on* wings, at least *in* the wings to make its appearance. As must be almost immediately apparent, this correspondence, indeed coincidence

between the First Coming—between the original Crucifixion culminating at point Alpha and its supposed Resurrection heading towards Omega—and what we see initiated almost automatically in virtually any experiment is just too great to be ignored any more than the final breakdown and actual cut-off date as it were of that original belief (generally assigned to the onset, indeed onslaught, of the French Revolution or thereabouts) can be separated from the subsequent breakthrough we're now in a position to characterize as the long-anticipated Second Coming in the *person*, the anonymous, that is to say, name-free 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the experiments.

How, beginning with the necessary collapse of a Christianity that, according to him (and we can agree) began no later than four or five hours after the descent from the cross at the hands of a nascent imperial Christendom that, failing to heed Phillip's warning not to become a Christian but a Christ, was already hell-bent on the purifying self-immolation essential for its eventual resurrection (though in a most unlooked-for way), we can leave for some other time. Suffice it that the parallelism between his, Leahy's, position and ours as regards the end of transcendence and the subsequent conversion, the switch to immanence and the primacy of the senses—the "intelligibility of appearance" as he elegantly puts it, "things not being other than what they are"—if too apparent to be overlooked, is, at the same time, too obvious to have to be repeated. Not so, however, our differences which, as it turns out (and they always do) make all the difference. Because what we now know because we now *see* is that what for all the world was once purely speculative and for him still is, is now as visible as a "gooseberry in the palm of your hand," to quote Ramana though he, too, as with his predecessors—the saints and sages and saviors—was only able to pass it on verbally, to tell it rather than, as with the experiments, translate it back so to speak into its unmistakable and native medium of silence, a silence that, talking about miracles, can now speak for itSelf for the first time in history. No surprise then that the "Word" was and in virtually all quarters still is the only way to go or that despite his, Leahy's, recognition that, putting a "a forcible stop to all this evolution" (Ruskin) we've cleared the way for a form of an essentially new

universe. Because for the first time ever “the nullification of possibility” at the hands of “the realization of actuality” in “the perfect transparency of *thought*” (which for him is, of course, the “knowledge” of faith) has come to pass. And, indeed, it has—and then some. Then some? Then all. What’s been missing up to now and what the experiments have literally pro-vided (from *pro-videre*, for the sake of seeing) is the certainty, freed from reflected glory, that arrives with vision. “If you want to, why not ask, turn round and come back?” the ever faith-full Isaiah demanded, to which we’re finally in a position to reply: “If you want to, why not *answer*, turn round and go forth?” and so speaking not only with the “tongues of men and angels” but in the language of you-know-Who (who will not be mocked), tell one and all that what once appeared the most terrible of losses, the annulment of a blind-sided faith, absolutely coincides with the advent of its co-relative, the one that speaks louder and clearer and more persuasively than any Word ever did because for the first time ever it *enunciates* down to its very last syllable the certainty of its *own* annunciation.



### Letter 72 – May 29, 2006

I remember a few months back we were discussing Nishitani and, following your suggestion, agreed we should get back to him he was that important. And, of course, in any consideration of the definitive meaning of modernity - and make no mistake about it, one way or the other, from the breaking of the sound barrier and space-travel to the development of the atom bomb and germ-warfare and now the ultimate uncovering via the experiments, it is definitive - when it comes to the collapse of all tradition and the ramifications of a universal nihilism on its way to a conscious nothingness, he's certainly worth listening to. In fact, right off the top of my head (assuming I've got one), I'd have to say that if Altizer and Leahy constitute the last word in a faith also taken to the end of the line until, confronted with "the death of God," it's forced to go the whole hog and rather than merely turn the other cheek perform a complete about-face, so, at the other end of the spectrum - what I call the Alpha perspective - Nishitani (and his younger colleague from the Kyoto School, Masao Abe) have been, not surprisingly, more or less up to the same thing, in fact, may even be said to have surpassed the "faith-full" in pursuit of it, at least until the arrival of the experiments. As we shall see, the only difference and, as I've contended in the past, it makes all the difference, is that it's precisely the absence or, at least, the supposed absence of the historical factor in the one that, by definition, constitutes the Alpha as distinct from the Omega perspective in the last place. That said, how surprising and possibly even embarrassing to be reminded as I just have been following my third or maybe fourth reading over the years that the final chapter of Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness* and the one that might have been specifically addressed to us is precisely entitled "Sunyata and History" or that, conversely, Douglas subtitled *On Having No Head* "Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious." What's going on here? Have I missed something in my claims for the definitiveness of the experiments and that they live and move and have their being beyond anyone's last Word?

In any case, whether due to my various debilitating ailments and their effect on my ability to concentrate - let's face it, I ain't the man I used to be, thank God - or whether just plain

spoiled by the utter and ultimate simplicity of Headlessness or maybe a combination of both, I found to my surprise that this time I occasionally had difficulty following Nishitani, in fact, had to read and re-read passages that once upon a time, sustained by their air of revelation, I'd breezed through as if there were no tomorrow but now seemed to me, especially in light of what Douglas has uncovered - and I'll get to the significance of the difference in a minute - unnecessarily dense, heavy, difficult, in a word, wordy. Still, there's no denying he's come up with some absolutely irrefutable material. For instance, other than to experience it in the flesh via the experiments, can the meaning of what we've come to know as the universal face to no-face encounter applicable at all times and all places and to all bodies whatever their shapes and sizes (not to mention the even more laughable distinction of race, creed and color) be better and at once more cogently and accurately described than to refer to it, as he does, as "the reciprocal interchange of absolute inequality," always keeping in mind, of course, the precise and essential difference between a Look-See and a Hear-Say, between the "experience" of an event or thing, the pre-scription for it, and its "expression," the de-scription of it? By the same token, how could the once hypothetical but now absolutely proven "as it is and as it ought to be" being one and the same, how, as we see now, could the nature of the task of the "ought" already determined by the other-directedness of the "is", be better said or more assuredly confirmed than by the now visible fact that, like it or not, we're indeed built for loving, and so, freed from any conceivable charge of antinomianism, rather than pretend to exist above the law, represent the very ground it stands on? Or how could one ignore what is, perhaps, the most conclusive yet startling of all his claims and, the devil being the ape of God, one so susceptible to parody: "that in its ultimate home-ground the self-being of man is not human?" In light of the experiments (and I do mean light), try putting that one on for size and, then wearing it as a crown of majesty, silently respond to charges of enjoying divine pretensions, of having a "swelled head."

The point being, of course, that for the first time in history we're now equipped, literally, to claim that what was once mis-

taken for mere myth we and only we are now in a position to render and render in a flesh at once more elemental and so closer to home than reason or faith in the word, any Word, could ever do or be. And therein, in what, beyond hypothesis or even hope, I call God'speak, lies the difference between the experiments and anything ever manifested before, right down to their capacity to certify what was once, in a penultimate stirring, a near approximation of total consciousness "acted out" on a cross. And if we insist on the authenticity of this our demonstration of "God's" ultimate nature, it's only because, the Fact finally allowed to "speak" for itSelf (and, fittingly enough, in silence), we must. But more of that and Nishitani (but not too much more) in the following.



### Letter 73 – June 9, 2006

As we discussed or at least touched on during our phone conversation when, significantly enough, we were talking about Nishitani - the question seems to come down to this: are the experiments "qualitatively" different in kind, as I've been claiming, or are they merely different in degree from anything that's ever appeared on the "face" of the earth before and merely represent the same only more so? Assuming we can even answer that, let's take it a step further and ask whether, aside from the historical interest, it really really matters how we've gotten where we are or what we call it since one of the eye-openers on arriving is recognizing that like all roads that formerly led to Rome these were merely trial runs in preparation for the long heralded arrival at the center of the world in the person, the first person of the experiments. In a word, except for people like you and me and perhaps a handful of others who have the interest and, after the interest, the leisure to ask such questions, does anybody really care? And again, because even more important, does it really really matter? Do I have to understand the internal operations of a car in order to drive it or of a clock to tell the time or even of a body to inhabit it or, better yet, let it inhabit me? Obviously not. Yet equally obvious is the fact that at least once upon a time somebody or some power did or we wouldn't have had them and somebody or some power still does or we wouldn't be able to keep them in at least passably good repair and make as good a case as any for the presence, in one form or another however modified, of - unfashionable as it may appear at the moment - a teleological structure at the heart of things, the kind that an Aristotle, for instance, for whom life was in-fused with purpose, diagnosed as an invincible immanent process. But we can reserve a discussion of that for some other time.

In any case, are we not then at least entitled to ask, analogously, whether manufacturers, not to speak of mechanics, of the universe are similarly enjoined: something on the order of a Father Abraham's quorum of ten 'good' men enlisted to keep things going on an even keel or, more recently, of an otherwise sober Rene Guenon's absolutely crazy notion that somewhere in the neighborhood of Afghanistan of all places, *Le Roi du Monde*, as he

calls him, is still hovering around waiting for the opportunity to preside over the end of things that they may start all over again?

Which, considering where we are, is as good a jumping-off place as any to begin: at the end, not in the sense of *finis* of course - we can leave that to the latest headline, scary parody of prophecy that it is - but in the sense of *telos*, its true meaning and purpose uncovered if not achieved. Hegel saw it, of course, or if he didn't quite see it, thought about it: that if you travel far enough and long enough on the road to logical conclusions, somewhere along the line, the world being round, past will become prologue and, quantity exploding into its great reversal, meet up with its qualitative Self returning to its first principle. Does anything less take place when at the end of the line Nishitani's (and Zen's) negation of speech - *neti, neti*, not this, not this - comes face to no-face with its *semblable*, its *frere*, the affirmation of silence in the person, the first person of the experiments as it "heads" the other way proclaiming from every pore, yes this, yes this? Wouldn't you say this qualifies as a qualitative difference to end all *a priori* speculation in favor of an *a posteriori* certainty where, however we slice it, there's still only one chance and one chance only for a bull's-eye?

In this regard and though comparisons may be odious it's still interesting and revealing, too, to follow Nishitani's thought and note how incredibly close he comes to consummation but, nevertheless, absent the experiments, falls short, not only of the brass ring but of a wedding ring too. I mention this because, much like Romeo's protestations of love for Rosaline before he meets up with Juliet and the real thing (or real no-thing), Nishitani, whose work I discovered about five years before Douglas, seemed to me to represent the end of the line, the be-all to end the end-all of all time. For instance, here he is on Nietzsche (his own "failed darling" as, interestingly enough, Nishitani was to become ours or at least mine): how, in the end, he (Nietzsche), for reasons we don't have to go into here despite the respect, even reverence we can feel for him, was unable to see "that the original countenance of time" - or as we would say, "the original face of time" - "would be unveiled in time originating as truly bottomless time; *and the original countenance of history would be unveiled in the complete and radical discharging of its historicity.*" (Please note the italics are mine in

order to emphasize what must be as good a thumb-nail description as any as to what history, in the person of the experiments, actually has done towards the "discharge of its historicity" as distinct from what Nishitani or, for that matter, anyone else, from Herodotus and Thucydides down through Ibn Khaldhun and Gibbon to Spengler and Toynbee, *says it might* do - and this is not even to speak of the philosophers and/or theologians). According to Nishitani, this extraordinarily complete and radical discharge of its historicity together with its countenance was reserved and appeared to be reserved most plainly and unmistakably for Zen and until the advent of the experiments I suppose it was or appeared to be, at least to me and to others too. Nevertheless, to mark how that's changed and how far we've come on the last mile merely by turning around and looking the other way (from the negation of speech to the affirmation of silence), we've only to compare Douglas' modest subtitle to *On Having no Head - 'Zen and the Re-discovery of the Obvious'* - to what, on further consideration, we're now entitled to call "Headlessness and the Uncovery of the Certain.



### Letter 74 – June 20, 2006

On the frontispiece to Douglas' *The Science of the 1st Person*, in fact, appropriately enough "heading" it, is a wonderful quote from Rilke which, since it consists of only three short lines, bears repeating:

And we, spectators always, everywhere  
 looking at, never out of, anything...  
 Who's turned us round like this?

I bring this up for a couple of reasons. First off, having discovered Rilke for myself almost seventy years ago now - can you believe it? - and with the encouragement of a favorite teacher devoured everything I could find in English and even some of it in German and then some ten years later on the recommendation of Stephen Spender, not only an early translator but a war-time friend, finished off the rest, I must have read this passage over the years - who knows? - maybe half a dozen times, maybe more. And do you know, aside from the "poetry" of it which may or may not have elicited a yelp of admiration - even in those days I was preternaturally demonstrative - it never made so much as a dent, I mean a serious dent on my - what shall I call it? - my soul, my psyche, not to speak of my mind. Aside from thinking about it or, thrilled at the concept, nodding my head in agreement or even on occasion going through the motions of no-motion and sitting cross-legged (though that came later), it never occurred to me once to take Rilke and what he said literally and, even if it had, how to go about it. And though he himself must obviously have experienced himself as more than a spectator but a participant - how else could he have arrived at this particularly acute observation as we can too now, thanks to the experiments? - I dare say it never occurred to him either that, aside from singing its praises and recommending the state, he could share it in more than an eminently verbal way and so, steering clear of the very siren-song luring us on in the first place, help us avoid the very duality inherent in words, even *the Word*. And as far as I can tell the same practical, as well as verbal or intellectual, limitation applies to

virtually all attempts that have been made either before or since by anyone: namely, the capacity, on the one hand, to experience the bliss or the emptiness or whatever you want to call it yet, at the same time, transmit it *in kind*, easy as a kiss. And, assuming such things can be measured - full cups being full whether small or large - this applies, in some degree or other, to all the big guns: to the greater even than Nishitani, to a Ramana or a Meister Eckhart or a Chuang-Tzu, for instance, not to speak of a Buddha or a Jesus, although in this last instance we have, if not the first, certainly the most publicized attempt (and justifiably so) to act out, in effect translate, the perfectly natural sequence of crucifixion and resurrection inherent in every breath we take into conscious articulation and a language we can not only understand but see and understand finally because we do see.

And this, I suggest - no, I insist - is, if it has a meaning, not only the true meaning of our time, but, by extension, the true meaning of all time, the end-time to which it's been tending all along, not in the ominous way predicted, the parody of "Aeroplanes and Zeppelins coming out/ and pitching like King Billy bomb-balls in/ Until the town lies beaten flat," as Yeats (and so many others) would fearfully have it but rather as, later reconsidering, he recognized would appear in the person, the first person, of prophecy itself responding in the only way it "knew" how: by way of " a revelation...some Second Coming surely at hand." Which, of course, time-wise and thanks to an obscure Englishman conveniently operating just across the way (and, not accidentally, amongst a people well-known for devising, among other things, such practical modes of transport as the choo-choo train), it precisely was. Not in the way expected, of course, but, as we now inevitably see after the Fact, the only way possible. (Do we ever see "inevitably" except after the Fact?)

Just as horse-power was first commandeered by the one before being usurped by the few only to be seized in turn and exploited by the many before, coming to the end of the line, society was forced, if only in its surfeit, to admit that, despite its full belly or maybe because of it (not to speak of its traffic jams), only the necessary about-face would do to turn this parody of the "free-for-all" towards its true, its original meaning, so Self-power had to be

flushed from its hiding place in plain view and made visible to all. And what better way than by re-instituting, via the experiments, the triumph of vision over insight, of the obvious over the earned? As Guenon used to insist and quite rightly (though he, too, fundamentalist that he was, had difficulty distinguishing the forest from the trees), it was precisely the combination of eye and hand in conjunction with the upright posture, the so-called "genius" of the race - if by "genius" is meant the tutular deity common to all and not some compensatory aberration dragged in at the last minute to explain the eminently explicable - that at once qualified it for its unique if not special position in the hierarchy.

And so it has.



**Letter 75—June 29, 2006**

Many thanks for your reminding me of Gebser whom I've been hoping to bring into the conversation anyway along with his seminal notion of "concretion" which, of course, linked though it may be to its derivative, "abstraction", is, as you pointed out, the absolute distinction we've been looking for that separates the experiments from anything ever seen before on the face of the earth (and on its no-face too). The only other notion I can think of that even remotely corresponds to it is one I mentioned in one of my earlier letters where, following Huxley in his *Perennial Philosophy*, who, in turn cited Shankara, I brought up the distinction they'd both made between the two classes of scripture: what orthodox Hindus recognized as the *Shruti*, the inspired writings which, the product of immediate insight into ultimate Reality, are based on their own authority, and the *Smirti* which derive their authority from an authority other than themselves, what we would characterize as commentary and/or interpretation—for what it's worth God bless it, precisely what we're doing now. What's not so obvious, however, and only serves to emphasize the absolutely radical nature of what Douglas has unearthed and will, no doubt, raise howls of protest, at least in certain quarters, is that a good part and maybe all of what up to now has passed for scripture East and West, for *Shruti*, has, in the blink of an eye, literally been, if not knocked into a cocked hat, at least on the evidence, demoted a notch to *Smirti*. With all due apologies that, at least in English, this almost sounds like a comedy routine but is, nevertheless, the truth of the matter, we've only to note that in light of the visible and palpable proof inherent in a pointing finger or a paper-bag, both the Bible and the Koran, for instance, as well as their opposite numbers, the Gita or Tao (not to *speak* of the distinction itself between *Shruti* and *Smirti*), totally rely on the word whether spoken or written and to that degree can be defined as abstract. And not to confuse the ridiculous with the sublime however "near allied" they may be and recognizing that comparisons may be odious, if it be argued that in Zen at least, there's no talk of talk at all but only a slap and a tickle and, except for one last cry of despair, even less on a cross, they too, in some degree, are either related to or dependent on or directed towards the

action or re-action of others, however intimate or close those others may appear to be at the time. Only the experiments by their very nature have the “capacitie” (to use Traherne’s term and Alan Mann’s favorite), to express and so clarify, rather than merely reproduce, the original one-to-none equation at the very heart of all existence.

As for the distinctions Gebser draws between the various stations on the way, if you haven’t checked them out lately just take a look at his absolutely brilliant, unsurpassable and, as a result, almost completely-ignored-by-the-intellectual-establishment tables he’s drawn up as an appendage to *The Ever-Present Origin* and see if you aren’t as flabbergasted for the umpteenth-time as I am as to how on target they are. In fact, if I didn’t know better, I’d almost be tempted to claim along with the rest of the world the possibility that, as with others, in his case too there may be such an aberration as genius which, thanks to the very presence of the experiments I can’t admit for one minute, at least in this regard, they being precisely the one instance in which genius is not only not required but, by reason of their absolutely unexceptional nature, out of the question because unnecessary. And out of the question, too, as regards its role in illuminating all things great and small, the birds and bees and—who knows?—the whispering trees as well. Nevertheless, how else account for his arriving at virtually the same conclusions we do without the aid and imprimatur of these built-in yet anonymous instruments? Until we realize, of course, that, very much like John the Baptist who, like the horse that’s been led to water but alas, won’t (or can’t) drink, he, too, offers yet one more testimony to the absolute uniqueness of the experiments. Just to give one for-instance: take, under the rubric he designates “forms of realization,” the categories he so brilliantly distinguishes in their ever-increasing differentiation as Imagination, Abstraction and Concretion, to which first, for example, we can consign a Dante or a Milton or a Blake or a Rilke, to which second, beginning with Plato, we can add among others a Hegel or a Nietzsche and to which third—Who? Jesus? The Buddha? The legions of spiritual masters and mystics and magicians, both named and unnamed? Maybe as a concession a Nishitani or even Gebser himself? Yet can any of them be said to

provide a word-free differentiation at once so simple and so obvious and so absolute that all it requires is an immediate and conscious about-face where even the answer, the very *tertium quid* itSelf—that third something or somewhat capable of escaping a dichotomy supposedly exhaustive (the right thing being right for the wrong reasons, the wrong thing being wrong for the right ones)—and that can, indeed, must be delivered in silence?

At which suggestion, leaving myself wide open to the obvious hint that I, too, could use a little, I'm tempted to stop right here and practice what I preach. I mean when dealing, as we have been, with that one degree which beyond degree is no degree at all how much further can we take it within the limits of language? Which, of course, even to ask is to answer. Frankly, if it didn't sound so damn pretentious and leave me even more wide-open than I am to the obvious charge of having, not so much no head at all as a swelled one, I might almost be tempted to follow Aquinas who, when granted the vision, put down his pen forever with the now famous "All I have written up to now seems to me no better than straw." But not being an Aquinas and somehow having to get through the day (and night too) as best I can, forgive me if I just take a rain-check.



### Letter 76 – July 7, 2006

As must be obvious by now I'm continually being struck by the implications of Headlessness, its reverberations on every level however inconsequential, even extraneous, they may seem on the surface. For instance, 'a propos of nothing—and I do mean nothing—I was lying in bed this morning when came into my head and quite unbidden a phrase from Paul Valery, the great French poet, which when I first came across it (and him) in Paris during the war I simply assumed was, if not the last word, pretty close to it. And though I haven't thought of it (and him) for years I suppose I still would or at least might have were it not for the experiments. In any case, as an example of the effect these seemingly unobtrusive instruments can have on one's casual notions here's an exclamation—as I pointed out it's not even a line—taken from what many consider his masterpiece, a meditative poem called *La Cimetiere Marine*, which quite simply reads, "Homage aux hommes, saint langage." Sorry if I've set you up for what must now seem an awful let-down, but of such was the kingdom of heaven in those heady days or at least appeared to be. And, indeed, could anything have sounded shorter or sweeter in its sonorous intonation yet (as I see now) tell in its received and supposedly inarguable wisdom only half the story? And even to say "half" is to make a generous concession to what, as I see now, should and must read "Homage à dieu, sainte silence," and this not only to complete the story but to begin it. Am I being too insufferably priggish to insist that this recognition—that we're now finally in a position not only to hear but see the silence—is what, *essentially*, it's all been about for not only my eighty-odd (very odd) years or civilization's five or six thousand or—what the hell? I might as well go for broke—the universe's thirteen billion or so: to let the air, mostly hot, out of this inflated balloon we call a head, that it may arrive at the ultimate realization that not only is it not a surrogate for God, but as Blake (and others) suspected but we now know, neither is God? And that therein, in this abysmal recognition—what Douglas refers to as the not-god—lies the absolute tie that binds us and makes us one.

Or take that other favorite of mine, Hegel's "the owl of Minerva flies only at dusk," intimating among its myriad interpreta-

tions, that, *properly seen* history is something more than a pit-stop in hell and, quite superior to stained-glass that captures more light than it transmits, only reveals its true meaning when, the last to be first, it simultaneously comes to its end by coming to a “head”. And if pronouncements like these seem to fall short of a skepticism that is both appropriate and required reading elsewhere, all I can say is “precisely.” I know that at this late date it must sound sophomoric and I’m almost embarrassed to bring it up but I’m reminded of an exchange I had years ago at a cocktail party where a woman I knew, instead of flashing her admittedly beautiful face and even more eye-catching *et-ceteras*, kept insisting on flaunting her badge of professed atheism under the guise that all things are relative. To which, though myself somewhat the worse for wear, I tried to point out that far from being a profession of godlessness *relative* is precisely what *things* are and thank God for it. Who’d have thought, however, it would take me some forty years to come up with the wherewithal, courtesy of Douglas, to confirm that claim, not only the only one we have a right to but the only one we need: the demonstration that, no amount of thought or talk but only a paper-bag or a finger pointing in the right direction and delivered, as we are, in silence, can guarantee the *absolute* truth of that fact? Or that it’s as simple as that?

Which brings us back to the Nishitani of a few letters ago and his observation that “this original face (or “countenance” as it’s translated) is most plainly and unmistakably seen in Zen,” a claim that I myself was more than willing to accept till I came upon the experiments. And I suspect the early Douglas was too as witness the subtitle of his first manual, *Zen and the Re-discovery of the Obvious*. But, though I’ve already touched on it many times and certainly don’t mean to belabor the point, it’s now my conviction that the experiments—*prescription*, not *description*—represent a difference in kind, the difference between persuasion on the one hand and demonstration *by means of* the other. A Socrates, for instance, was not just being modest or humble when he referred to philosophy as the *love* of wisdom rather than wisdom itSelf. He was simply being just, just as we are when we distinguish the latest version of a kerosene lamp or even an electric bulb from the light of the sun itSelf. Looking back from the perspective of the

end (which, thanks to the experiments, is now our privilege), to be left alone with a Nishitani and deprived of the experiments (and note, I say “experiments” and not “Douglas,” which, in its impersonality, its anonymity and no-nameness alone, is to suggest a difference in kind from anything ever seen before—from a *Christianity*, for instance, or a *Buddhism*) would, I see now, be to gain a possible fulfillment, of course, yet at the cost of completion, and as a result to be condemned to keep looking instead of seeing. Which, of course, was precisely my case. I seriously doubt that had it been the other way round, had I discovered the experiments before Nishitani, I would have been compelled to seek him out other than through academic interest or sheer curiosity, the frosting on the cake, as it were, rather than hunger for the thing itself. Which may very well account for the current lack of interest in what we have to say on the part of our headless colleagues. They simply feel no need for it after the Fact. And, of course, at bottom which is where we (and they) are coming from, they’re quite right.



### Letter 77 – July 20, 2006

Though I can't be sure until I get into them, in accordance with the old but nevertheless wise saw and I'm sure you're familiar with it— "How can I know what I think till I see what I say?— I suspect these next couple of letters are going to be difficult ones, at least for me, though hopefully not for anybody who reads them. After all, that's the name of the game, isn't it? In any case, I'm referring to that very broad group and my first loves, generally referred to as the Traditionalists, who received their original impetus, at least in modern times, from Rene Guenon and included such brilliant figures as Ananda Coomeraswamy, Frithjof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt, Marco Pallis, Martin Lings and most recently and, I believe, the only one still alive, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, still teaching and writing in your neck of the woods at George Washington University and whom on my frequent visits to D.C. I was tempted to call upon but didn't which, given my now altered perspective—literally—is probably just as well. I did, however—and this was years ago—have tea with Lings at the British Museum where I'd sought him out and where he was a curator— I'll give you one guess as to what department—and on that same visit, virtually around the corner if I remember correctly, with the scholar of all things Tibetan, Marco Pallis. As for the incredibly bizarre week I spent with Schuon and his followers at his *tarika* in Lausanne some thirty-five years ago— this is before he ended up in, of all places, Bloomington, Indiana where he made quite a name for himself but for different reasons—since that's largely anecdotal, I'll reserve it for some other time if at all. That's assuming you're interested. Right now I want to zero in on principles not personalities and I suppose the most convenient place for us to begin and possibly end is with one of Guenon's most accessible books, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* which I believe we've already agreed is an absolutely brilliant diagnosis as far as it goes as to not only what's been ailing us but also failing us. And I say "as far as it goes" advisedly since, much like Nishitani's work with which it can certainly be compared in importance, his analysis, though originating in a different tradition, does, like so many others'—I might almost dare say like virtually *all* others—takes us as far as we can go in that direction. But

therein, of course, lies the rub—not only as to what we see when we arrive at the end of that road but what we’re supposed to do when we get there: in Guenon’s case, for instance, get hold, at the very least, of a copy of the Koran and then, as a token of our surrender and to remind us of the slaves of God we reputedly are (rather than the slaves *as* God we really really are), “face”, of all places, the Mecca “out there” five times a day—preferably flat out though on our knees will do—rather than, capitalizing on our God-given upright posture and, not as in a mirror but through a window, dare look in, in the opposite direction in order to draw a bead on absolutely no-thing. In any event, the easy answer which, in one form or another has been making the rounds these thousands of years, is to con-vert, that is to say, turn around or, to use Douglas’ phrasing, turn our attention “elsewhere,” though despite innumerable and, alas, for the most part, somewhat airy-fairy directions as to where, even when presumed to lie within us, that “elsewhere” is, has, at best, proven to be somewhat elusive. Witness not only the above but the wars fought in its name and the revulsion and compensatory neglect brought about as the result of those wars. On the other hand, the simple answer—so simple that, beyond belief, beyond even words, especially beyond words, it’s literally been “overlooked” even by the best of them (and without getting into name-calling I do mean the best)—is, putting first things first, not so much the dispute as to *who* lives *where* but— and this is certainly at the very heart of Douglas’ unique uncovering—*where* that elsewhere is (or is not) where no one but *Who Else could* “live”. From which, as we ourselves, the last to be first, can witness, everything follows, not least the very real and definitive conclusions we’re finally—and I mean that literally—in a position to make.

Incidentally, though my primary concern here is still Guenon but, nevertheless, recognizing that by the very use of language itself I do leave myself wide open to the obvious criticism of complicating matters (a charge made against me more than once), I can’t help but respond as I’ve done so often in the past, that if Douglas hadn’t beaten us to it, I’d be the first to admit you can take the three or four admittedly complex notions of the previous paragraphs and stuff them you-know-where, namely into a paper-

bag with a hole at each end, and so, not only make the same point instantly on contact but, none the worse for wear, actually look a lot better. Which, enough said, is precisely the point I've been trying to make anyway. In any case, since at best I'm about to exceed our allotted space I should mention before I forget that though familiar by name with all the above-cited (and sighted) stars in that apparent firmament and even, if I remember correctly, having had a singularly unrewarding meeting with Lings who, presumably deafened by the clash of his beloved symbols, was (as one Zen master cautioned), if not dumb, certainly blind to the ultimate direction in which they were "heading", Douglas, though, despite his protests, exceedingly well-read, had never and, so far as I know, has still not ever read a single line of any of the above-named. Which only goes to show you why, when you put last things first, one thing and one thing alone—that is to say, all one—ends up necessary.



### Letter 78 – July 30, 2006

Since Guenon has packed so much of what specifically concerns us into two of the forty chapters of *The Reign* —the one entitled *Time Changed into Space* and the other *The End of a World* (and I'm almost tempted to ask, "Need I say more as to why I chose those two?")—inviting as it may be to examine his complete case, in the interest of my own limits as well as the limits of our subject which is nothing less than the unlimited, I'm going to confine my remarks to just these, always keeping in mind that as with all the other approaches we've reviewed- and "approaches" is the exact word—none of this is intended as a *critique* with all that that suggests of the negative. Though I know I've said it before as regards the various stations on the way we've looked into—and alongside the experiments so are they all, all stations on the way—why should we require a *critique* when, better than argument or even conversation, a mere flick of the wrist can, like magic itself, transport us to headquarters and so, avoiding all those ambiguities that not only flesh but language and even thought is heir to, deliver us into our native element in silence. With this in mind, then, but recognizing that, at least as regards doctrine, Guenon, first in Paris and then in Cairo, stands very much in relation to Douglas, relatively a few miles away in Nacton, as Philo Judaeus in Alexandria did to his virtually unknown co-religionist in Bethlehem (and, you may recall, I suggested this in Letter #37 which Alan has been kind enough to reprint in Nowletter #114 ) or perhaps even closer to home, as John the Baptist did to the long hoped-for but as yet anonymous figure still waiting in the wings;—recognizing this then, do we have any less reason to look back than Guenon did to look forward, not to *an* end of *the* world as is commonly and mistakenly feared but, as he was careful to point out, to the end of *a* world? Which in the person, the first person of the experiments, is precisely what's come about, not as expected by virtually everyone but, as we *see* now, in the only way possible. The one exception I can think of offhand, at least among believing Christians, is Emanuel Swedenborg who, to his everlasting credit adamantly insisted that the "End of the World" was an egregious mistranslation of the Greek for "Consummation of the Age." And quite right he was to recog-

nize that what appeared at best an unlikely story was about to come true, though in what shape or form, he, too, like everyone else, could only “envision” it as a hope. Other than we who see and therefore no longer have to anticipate it, could anyone have predicted, no less prophesied before its beginning, that the world once it had achieved its end, would look—and this, perhaps, may represent the greatest miracle of all—not different but the same?

In any case, I think the best way to proceed from here on in is, wherever possible, to appeal to Guenon himself, not only because, in light of our own uncoveries, his diagnoses appear at once so impeccably perceptive as to demand assent yet at the same time his fundamentalist prescriptions, not to speak of some of his conclusions, so—what shall I call them?—so fundamentally wrong-headed as to give even belief a bad name. Here in what follows, however, he’s at his absolute best, as, distinguishing between *chronos*, what time it is, and *kairos* what time is for, he points out—and certainly this has to be central to our case—that, given the nature of reality, it’s no accident that in all languages words used to describe time originally derive and, must derive from their counterparts used to describe space. We speak, for instance, of the *by and by* or of *maintenant* (holding a hand) or of *annus* (a ring) or of *kairos* itself (the right time for striking an enemy). We refer to a *long* night or a *distant* day and so acknowledge, however unconsciously, the priority we award space over time, not in the order of value, of course, but in the order of cause. By extension, then—and this lies at the very heart of what distinguishes his *inferences* from our *demonstrations*—rather than merely surmise, we can actually see and not only see but participate in the realization that even as “time compresses space”—and could anything be more descriptive of the speed with which our modernity operates right down to its space ships and instant communication?—it will in turn be “subject to its own progressive contraction,” until, of course, at the “end of a world, that is to say at the extreme limit of cyclical manifestation, ‘there will be no more time.’” Which, of course, the prophecy now fulfilled, is precisely what takes place in the least experiment. “Succession... transformed into simultaneity... time changed into space, a reversal takes place at the last, to the disadvantage of time and to the

advantage of space: at the very moment when time seemed on the point of finally devouring space, space in its turn absorbs time; and this in terms of the cosmological meaning of the Biblical symbolism, can be said to be the final revenge of Abel on Cain." I wonder how many of us put that in our pipes and smoke it while, sitting before our television sets, we meditate on the premonitory parody being played out before our eyes by a man on the moon. Or recognize the earth-moving consequences of a finger pointing, not only at that same moon that seems so near and is yet so far, but at its source now seen to be, as Mohammed insisted, even nearer to us than our own jugular. Which, of course, it now *demonstrably* because *visibly* is.



### Letter 79 – August 16, 2006

At the risk of repeating myself—and why not if to repeat our thanks for a good thing is the very best we can do with what we've been so generously given?—I'd like to clarify some of the material we touched on in our last letter as regards Guenon's premonitory contribution and the joyous resolution the experiments make of it. In short, where he *speaks* of the coming "transmutation of time into space...only realisable at the 'end of a world'" and compares "this return to the 'centre of the world,' as the necessarily "*symbolic* relation of the 'Heavenly Jerusalem' to the 'Earthly Paradise,'" we're finally in a position, in *the* position thanks to the experiments, to recognize that this expected and, in some quarters, hoped-for "transmutation" has already taken place and, for the first time ever, no longer in a merely symbolic way, which, in virtually every instance, every past con-version, has been the case up to now, but in a very real way, the way, as we *see* now that lies between Omega, the truth at the end of history, and Alpha, the truth that begins it. How else can we describe, no less account for the experiments if not as that form of time in which eternity manifests as space and so, absent an extraneous if understandable symbolism or metaphor or analogy, reveals the nature of reality in its purest form, in effect itSelf, or that correspondingly at its end we see, because it is at its end, that it's not only what happens *in* history that contains its ultimate revelation but what happens *to* history? By the same token, can it be an accident, as we've already pointed out, that time can only be measured in terms of space and never the other way round, if for no other reason than that, in face of that reality—and certainly the experiments testify to it—we simply don't have the words, no less the Word for it, Mantalk being no substitute for the teleologically effective silence of Godspeak? Is it merely an oversight in this connection that, as Guenon points out, we can picture the end of the world as the end of time but never as the end of space or that, considering whose "medium" it is, we instinctively see that, presumably mastering space through the miracle of technology, time nevertheless finds itself hoist by its own petard and literally *handed* over, delivered back to where it came from by means of a compensatory techknowledge which, appropriately enough,

moving with the speed of light, we now know as the experiments? Can it be merely by chance that even in language, of *our* medium *par excellence*, we refer to “our season in hell,” our prison, as “serving time,” whereas freedom in whatever shape or form it takes, is habitually characterized by precisely its opposite, as either a “heavenly” absence of time (Alpha), that is to say, of history personal or otherwise, or as its “heavenly” fulfillment *in* time (Omega) thanks to that same history?

What constitutes its pathos, of course, the tug between its well-publicized horror on the one hand and, on the other, its long heralded magnanimous mercy now Self-evident if only by virtue of the experiments, can best be exhibited by that which lies somewhere in-between, namely the various nostrums that good, bad or indifferent have come down to us over the millennia. One in particular, from Novalis, comes to mind which I must have jotted down over fifty years ago and, looking over my notes, just happened to come across the other day. “I equals not-I equals Thou,” he writes. “This is the highest principle of all science and all art.” Can you beat that, that “riddle wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma” as Churchill might have described it? Not verbally I can’t though at least I had the wit even then to suspect that if I didn’t quite get it, in fact didn’t get it at all, ostensibly somebody did or claimed to. Now, of course, I can absolutely swear by right of evidence manifest in virtually any experiment—in effect, by all that’s holy—that, riddle and mystery and enigma no longer, Novalis was absolutely on the mark, that, everything grist for its mill, it’s not just the profane third person but, as Milton recognized and after him Blake, the sacred first as well that’s incorporate in each of us under the sign of Satan & Son.

And though this was recognized in various degrees not only by a Milton and a Blake but a Guenon, too, as well as the Mohammed of “Allah is closer to you than your jugular” or the Ramana of “it’s as plain as a gooseberry in the palm of your hand,” and this is not to speak of all those others, the saints, sages and saviors, all with their personal assurances, certainly of the *that* of it and the *what* and *who* and even, in some cases however inaccurate, the *when* of it, nevertheless, other than the somewhat vague indication that the kingdom is somewhere “within you” never

until now has it been indicated with the pin-point accuracy that defines the *where* of it, the one area still left relatively unexplored in a shrinking universe more and more reduced to revealing, at the very least, its outward secrets. How fitting that like the supposedly hidden note in Poe's sibylline *Purloined Letter* we now see that the last to be first has been in plain view all along and, no longer merely implicit in prophecy or tales told by returned time-travellers, has been sitting there on the mantle just waiting for the new science to make itSelf perfectly explicit for all to see. So what shall we call it—this new science? Theography? Deometry?



### Letter 80 –September 6, 2006

I want to finish up with Guenon, not that, like everyone else we've looked into, he doesn't warrant a good deal more attention—my God, we could spend a life-time trying to satisfy the appetite that grows by what he and his colleagues feed us on—but merely because, like everyone else we've mentioned—and I do mean everyone—though they may appear so, neither his nor their arguments, however close they come, are *absolutely* central to the one and only answer no longer in question, in reality the answer the whole world, consciously or not, has been looking for since the beginning of time. Which, of course, is precisely the point. Totalitarian as it may sound (and in this case and this case only it's meant to), as with the one and only bull's eye, there's no room for discussion here, however expedient a concession, Socratic or otherwise, we're required to make regarding multiplicity and the things of this world. And this for the simple reason that, our god-given and native tongue being what it is, that is to say, silence, and there being, literally, no place like home, everything else, including what we're doing now, can, at best, only assume the posture of a mirror-image where, right is taken for left and, more often than not, for wrong as well. Inside-out, wrongside-up, upside-down, call it what you will—I call it totalitarianism—it's still a perversion, at best the good the enemy of the best, at worst its *mortal* enemy.

That said we can flip through as many names as we like and still come up heads or, if you prefer, tails (as in history), and never so plentiful and suggestive as in the Western progress—and, vouched for by the experiments, it is a progress—from the medieval monk, Joachim de Flore (whose seminal and premonitory work I hope to examine next) right up to and including the great Germans of the Idealist persuasion beginning with Lessing and running through to their magnificent swan-song in Nietzsche or, as a concession, Wittgenstein, before come to the end of the road and forced by its own inner logic if nothing else to an ultimate about-face, it completes a pilgrimage that beginning in faith and then, passing through the crucible of reason (Schelling, Hegel) ends, not in some mystical vision, first pioneered by the medieval contemplatives (many of them also German) but in Vision itSelf, in the absolute certainty of the experiments. Incidentally, you may

have noticed my deliberate omission of Heidegger who, though in more ways than one he may qualify as the end of the line or at least that line, is, nevertheless, from our perspective beyond the pale and this for one reason only. Setting aside anything he may have had to say (all superseded now anyway by the experiments—"Only a god can save us now" being almost his last words—Well, do tell, and we have) have you ever seen photographs of him taken in 1934 and 1935 when, having dumped his Jewish mistress and former student, Hannah Arendt, as well as betrayed his teacher and mentor, Husserl, also a Jew, and now promoted to chief mucky-muck at the university in Freiberg, he poses, arm raised in the Nazi Heil and virtually indistinguishable from his hero right down to the flabby and flapping jowls and ridiculous Chaplinesque moustache? Really uncanny how the two meld into the spitting image of one another, making in all three, counting Chaplin that is. (Incidentally, if you haven't seen it I recommend this last's marvelous Aristophanic spoof of *The Great Dictator*). And maybe that, too, says something about the demise of a once noble and aspiring philosophy now come to its end with both a bang *and* a whimper.

In any case, following, for instance, is a shining example at its best of one big gun among all those many which can serve as well as any as a case in point to encapsulate how close all of them come descriptively but fail us (and themselves) prescriptively. This one is from Fichte, suggesting that the present age, being one of "complete sinfulness" as he puts it, "merely precedes a final regeneration in a new age of the spirit corresponding to the millennial kingdom of St. John's revelation." As Karl Lowith, from whom I got the quote, comments, "Fichte rejects the living generation and his age as only the Jewish prophets have done, expecting from this *zero-point of history* (italics mine) an ascending millennium and from death, resurrection." Other than subscribing to an "ascending" rather than the actual "descending" movement that drove us to "let go hell that our fall might be broken by the roof of heaven" (Djuna Barnes), could anything be more uncannily suggestive of the goal to be reached and yet more maddeningly vague as how to get there? And so it goes with virtually the whole panoply of good will, good intentions and good advice prompting

someone—I forget who, it may have been Gogol—to question why “there’s so little good in goodness.” Could it be to so abandon us as to force us to accept no substitutes but only uncover the thing itSelf? Which, of course, in our desperation—the one thing necessary—it has. What I find so extraordinary, in fact I never cease to wonder at to the point of pinching myself, is that Fichte’s presumably inflated, almost laughable, *prediction*—jaded as we are, I’d hardly dignify it as a prophecy—of “a final regeneration in a new age of the spirit corresponding to the millennial kingdom of St. John’s revelation” has actually come to pass. Not in the way expected, of course, least of all by him (nor, I suspect, by his forward-looking colleagues), but in the only way possible, by way of the “foolish things of the world confounding even the wise,” or, as we might add, especially the wise.



### Letter 81 — October 15, 2006

Long time no see (and indeed I didn't) but, now that the bulk of our move is over, finally a clearing in the woods and a chance to sit down and recover our uncoveries. Not, as we see now, that they've ever been completely lost, only the consciousness of them *over looked* as, for instance, has been going on since the beginning of history anyway, in fact constitutes it. But thanks to the experiments, that's all over, gone now for as long as forever is.

In any case, before picking up where we left off with Guenon, not only because, for what it's worth, his work played such an important part in my own personal development, preparing me as it did for the simplicities of Headlessness, but because it represents, indeed may be the classic example of how, absent our precise tools, everyone — and though I've said it before I'll say it again — everyone, even the most brilliant or saintly of us from the big guns on down, must *necessarily* fall short. But before I do, I realize on re-reading my last that I owe Husserl or at least the memory of him a brief apology. Not that I exactly short-changed him as a thinker but nevertheless I may have inadvertently downplayed his role (along with Wittgenstein's) as an intellectual precursor, however unwitting, of the experiments, illustrating once again that when these great civilizational sea-changes take place (like the one we're going through at the moment) they come if not in battalions, at least like single spies. Think, for instance, of John the Baptist's job-description for the future though still unknown applicant for high-office or, to go from the sublime to the ridiculous, of our "innocent" commentator's "cockeyed" objections regarding Husserl's "rather extreme views of the transcendental ego" I included in my last letter but which nevertheless bear repeating: how he, "Husserl, said more than once that this ego would remain in existence even if the entire world were destroyed and that this ego is an individual entity distinct from the self which is the object of my empirical self-observations or the observations of the psychologist." All of which, our dubious commentator goes on to say, "sounds very much as if I had two selves, one of them the familiar empirical one, the other a transcendental and generally unknown one which would remain in

existence even if my empirical self were destroyed together with the destruction of the world." Pardon me for repeating it but could there be, however wrong-headed the egregious skepticism ("one may well doubt that such a claim is supported by the description of the phenomena"), a more perfect account of what the experiments *essentially* demonstrate, however Husserl and so many others understandably skirt the central issue and the one thing necessary by failing to note the detailed *existential* and infallible guide qualified to point the way home. I know I've used the image before but doesn't it all resemble the classic sad ending so dear to a Dickens or a Chaplin, of the hungry urchin, nosed pressed against the glass peering in at the Self-satisfied diners, just longing to be asked in? And now we have been.

As for Guenon, though approaching this question of the great reversal from a slightly different angle but nevertheless perfectly aware that the "end of our cycle" — the Reign of Quantity he calls it — rather than signify the annihilation of the corporeal world (as has generally been prophesied and feared), suggests instead not only its transmutation but the completion of a development in which (and I paraphrase), "time will be changed back into space and, all succession excluded, everything will appear in perfect simultaneity in a changeless present through the power of the third eye where, the sense of eternity recovered, even death will not attain thereto." As with Husserl, can you think of a better description of what the experiments not only promise but deliver and deliver like nothing — and I do mean no-thing — ever has before, thus obviating Guenon's claim, for instance (and just about everyone else's) that "everything manifested is itself necessarily a *symbol* in relation to some superior reality," an assertion, if not totally discredited now, certainly superseded by the presence of a "nothingness" not only manifest for the first time ever but consciously manifest and in plain view for all to see. Even more important, for all to *be*. "We shall not cease from exploration/ And the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time." So Eliot — not incidentally an older contemporary of Douglas' — summing up all earlier expectations prior to their fulfillment in the experiments which, for all their absolute silence (indeed, because of it), are now au-

thorized to announce in their native tongue, that is to say in no uncertain terms, the very last "Word": that the past has indeed been only prologue and that if the truth were told and now it can be, "We *have not* ceased from exploration/ and the end of all our exploring/ *Has been* to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time." As a result — and can we doubt any longer that this is the *meaning* of history? — what was seen to be "acted out" on a cross once upon a time has now been made available to all and made not only available but undeniably, even inescapably so. And this in order that our so-called "invisible" Self, as demonstrably visible now and palpable as the experiments themselves, may *see* itSelf for the first time and acknowledge Who and What it is.



### Letter 82 — November 3, 2006

I think I have a bit of a problem. Encouraged by your enthusiasm (and surprised by my own as well) I've spent the last couple of weeks looking into Husserl. And when I say "looking" I mean just that. Obviously one doesn't or at least one shouldn't even pretend to scratch the surface of so profound and difficult a thinker in so little time—in true Germanic fashion forty thousand pages alone (alone?) of unpublished material made available since his death and still counting, mind you!—but emboldened by the experiments I'm going to do just that or at least try to. And just to show how unintimidated any of us have to be with those miraculous instruments at our back (and beck too), imitation being the sincerest form of flattery I'm going to attempt my survey in a kind of short-hand, that being as close as language can even hope to come in the "wake" of an all-revealing silence. That said, please make allowance for what follows however disjointed since its format is offered up as no more than a series of notes, a keepsake really and always with the understanding—and though I've said this many times before I still have to remind if only myself—that by definition it's the experiments, not what anyone has to say about them (or even not say), that take absolute precedence (if only by arriving last) over anything that's ever appeared on earth before. And so, for all Husserl's reputation for "greatness" and brilliance, we're able to approach him or anyone else for that matter with the certitude that in the final analysis the "reciprocal interchange of absolute inequality" (Nishitani) makes us all equal.

The first thing we notice is that he continually refers to himself (and justifiably) as a pioneer, an explorer in an absolutely new field of experience he calls, again in true Germanic fashion, "transcendental subjectivity" but, post the experiments, we can immediately and more simply recognize as the first halting steps towards a genuine conscious 1<sup>st</sup> Person Seeing, or if not a Seeing at least a Looking; in effect, what remains after everything is excluded and we are left alone, that is to say all-one, not *with* but *as* no-thing at all. Interestingly enough, in one instance I came across he actually compares himself (and, as we see now, in all modesty) to a Moses who, if forbidden entry himself into the Promised Land is nevertheless about to lead his people right up to if not through

its gates. Why he denies himself this privilege other than that he instinctively recognizes the difference between what he calls “intuiting” and what Douglas designates as “really really seeing” he never makes quite clear, though we certainly can. It’s the same difference that distinguishes the said Moses from his logical successor, Jesus, and will, in turn, differentiate even that penultimate messenger from the incontestable fulfillment of his mission: a death and resurrection no longer achieved solely and vicariously in the Person of a singular One but available, indeed unavoidable now by All in the definitive Self-recognition of the 1<sup>st</sup> Person Singular. (I hope to go into this aspect much more thoroughly when I get to the distinction Joachim de Flore, yet another of our precursors, makes between the three essential dispensations of Father (Judaism), Son (Christianity) and Holy Spirit, this last, as we see now, the long-awaited fulfillment, finally achieving literal apotheosis by way of the experiments).

Since my time and energy, not to speak of my inclinations, are in short supply these days, rather than try to wrestle with Husserl’s very complicated concepts of “transcendental subjectivity” and “phenomenological reduction” as he calls them, my intention is to cut right to the chase and setting down, not necessarily in order of importance, his essential insights and concepts as they come up, merely note where we agree or disagree, always recognizing, of course, that, not the *testimony*, since by definition they offer none, but the silent *witness* of the experiments represents, so to speak, the last word.

Let’s begin with where he’s right on and with the recognition of the broader implications of his findings: that “the theory of all possible forms of theories—intentional phenomenology” as he calls it—has for the first time made spirit as spirit the field of systematic scientific experience, thus affecting a total transformation of the task of knowledge.” More specifically—and here again he’s reasonably close to our position, one might almost say, “too *reasonably* close”—is the distinction he makes between what he refers to as the “universal epoché” (again, absent the “acute” accent on my machine, it should be pronounced epokay) and the “local epoché,” the former a condition no longer dependent on “temporal-spatial, extra-mental *assumptions* “ and, in contrast to

the latter, free of any metaphysic that needs to draw on “extra-scientific sources.” What we’re in a position to recognize, of course, is that, however inchoately and haltingly, he’s nevertheless feeling his way, if only verbally, towards distinguishing between what we immediately see (that is, see without mediation) as the difference between a 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Person perspective and with it the acknowledgement that, thanks to the experiments, a highfalutin metaphysic built on word of mouth, has been rendered obsolete, not just in degree by a stroke of the pen, but in kind, by an act of silence.

So far so good but since we’ve reached the end of our agreed-on space (one page) and, ready or not, “I’ve miles to go before I sleep,” I’ll put off further comment till our next.



### Letter 83 — November 11, 2006

Before picking up where we left off, I think we should remind ourselves or at least I think I should remind me that, as with all my previous comments, my principal concern, indeed, when push comes to shove my only concern (and I know you agree with me on this), is with the experiments. I trust I've made it clear by now and to the point of exasperation that by the very nature of the beast every other consideration, however engaging or instructive, has got to be designated secondary. To have Douglas and be deprived, say, of a Nishitani or an Altizer or, as in this case, a Husserl, would no doubt constitute a loss if only as providing a counter or topic for conversation, but, the shoe on the other foot would leave us, not right back where we started (which as Alpha wouldn't be all that bad) but still stuck somewhere in the middle waiting for the cata-strophe to happen which, of course, as the long-heralded, though not quite in the way expected turning-around, it has. Indeed, given our parlous situation these latter days, literally teetering on the edge, had the turning-around not happened or had we, however inadvertently, not brought it about, that would have been a real disaster. But we have. That said we can return to Husserl (or anyone else for that matter) and give him (or them) his not inconsiderable due, not least in his perceptive distinction between psychology and philosophy which, along with his right-on recognition of reality as a "primordial teleological-tendential structure with a directedness towards disclosure" — the "I was a mystery who wanted to be known" of Sufi repute — may be the most perceptive distinction he makes. As he explains, psychology with all the shortcomings it entails and, as the last stop before arriving at zero, modern to a T, corresponds exactly to what we refer to as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person outlook, whereas philosophy, or what passes for it, at least approximates 1<sup>st</sup> Person insight. I think we'd have to say in this connection that in his search for a "genuine scientific ontology whose certainty succeeds reason, the one and only universal science grounded on pure evidence," it's here that he comes as close as we could possibly expect to the *rationale* of the experiments, but, at the same time, can't help but betray, by their absence, the essential difference between theory (his) and vision (ours) between *eidos* as he calls it (image or idea) and *factum*. And,

as we're in a position to see, it's this that makes all the difference, that, as with all his predecessors (and, again I can't repeat it often enough, I do mean all), where he supposes and even proposes, Douglas, via our ordinary instruments, simply disposes. The fact of the matter of course, the truth of it, is that, pace a Freud or, if you prefer, a Jung or any other commentators in whatever field, we're no longer limited to reinterpreting a recycled mythology or examining a discipline that ever since Socrates and Plato has, rather than the genuine article, offered a love, almost a protestation, of wisdom by way of words. Nor, taking even that not inconsiderable advance a step further, are we required any longer to provide more than lip-service to a theology that prides itself on endorsing a go-between's exemplary crucifixion, or accept its Word for what isolated mystics and Zen acolytes have experienced from time to time but has now been rendered wide open to each and every one of us instantly on contact, not as a reasonable facsimile or subject (or even object) for imitation but as the thing itSelf.

Not surprisingly, then, though no longer totally beholden to the deceptive testimony of the "I" as distinct from the "eye" but, absent the experiments, still subject to the *logic* of his position in preference to the vision of it, Husserl finds himself in the role—as we see, short-sighted to say the least—of repeatedly awarding precedence to the "ascent" rather than to the "transcending" (to use Abe's felicitous phrase) of the "downward path to wisdom." How else account for the confusion of referring favorably to "the height of abstraction" as distinct from "the depths of concrection," yet at the same time the more than willingness to give devils like Grossteste and Buridan and Roger Bacon at the end of the Middle Ages their due along with those who—like Francis Bacon and Descartes with his search for the only "concrete and stable ego," or a Leibniz and a Hume following after him—delivered the nails to the coffin of transcendence preparatory to a Hegel and Nietzsche hammering them in? "The subjective conscious life in pure immanence is the place where all sense is bestowed and all being is posited and confirmed," he writes. "Thus if we are to clarify what subjectivity can and does accomplish here in its hidden immanence"—hidden?—"we need a systematic and pure

self-understanding of the knower, a disclosure of the life of thinking “—thinking?—exclusively by means of inner-experience.” Again, as with so many word-men, however maddeningly close they come they still offer no more than the mixture as before, librettos without a score, words without music, without *the* Word made flesh—ours. Is it any wonder that Husserl—and God knows he’s not alone—consistently and, as it turns out given *his* perspective, justifiably, awards precedence, not only in time but in the order of cause, to an *a priori* cognition, to knowledge *received before* the Fact rather than, as we’re now in a position to see, knowledge *perceived* after It by means of that eighth wonder of the world (fittingly enough delivered on the Eighth Day), the *a posteriori* in the person, the 1st Person of the experiments —the miracle of a future hope finally converted into Presence.



**Letter 84 — December 3, 2006**

This letter was sent to Alan Mann, who was compiling this volume of letters to Carl Cooper, when side correspondence on the relevance of Husserl to the enquiry arose from some articles in the *Nowletter* and correspondence between Prof. Fred J. Hanna of Hopkins University and Dave Knowles in Canberra.

Dear Alan, Though I hadn't planned to and indeed, arrogant as it may sound, thought I'd finished with Husserl, I was so taken with Fred Hanna's piece you sent me I just can't resist adding a few more comments in hopes of contributing to our primary purpose which is not so much to stand in judgment of others as take what we can from their, not so much errors, as deficiencies, or better yet insufficiencies, and use them to clarify our own position. First off, and I do thank you for it, Hanna's analysis as far as it goes (and, absent the experiments, he goes as far as he can) is an absolute gem of clarity, making the work of two such difficult and complicated writers as Husserl and Heidegger totally accessible in a way neither of them are, or at least were for me, in their own right. (And we might add, hopefully without sounding too snide, in their own wrong). The problem then becomes, given my limited time and energy, how best to make use of his insights and theirs as they contribute towards our Seeing and, however disparate, still keep them manageable. To that end I've decided to take it step by step, just as he does, and confine any editorial comments to no more than a series of notes.

1) Husserl's topic is "transcendental phenomenology" or, if you prefer, "phenomenological reduction." And please note—and I'm quite serious about this—how as we approach a philosophy grounded in experience, in effect an attempt to disclose the mysteries of a consciousness and being once known more familiarly as God, we're immediately confronted, in true Germanic fashion, with two tongue-twisters for the simple act of hitting bottom. As Hanna kindly notes, "part of the problem is that both of these philosophers have the reputation" (and we might add, deservedly) "of being especially difficult to read." But, as he also notes quite correctly and to their credit, these are not "inadvertent or closet mystics." I say quite correctly because as Douglas has indicated

many times and the experiments testify, like Headlessness Zen is not the pursuit of “ecstasy”, of getting out of one’s Self, however deserving and revealing a trial run or station on our historic way that may be, but of “enstasy,” of rather getting into one’s Self. (Assuming, of course, there’s a Self to get into, but we can leave that for some other time).

2) As Husserl notes, “inquiring back into the ultimate source of all formations of knowledge...such knowledge brings with it a sense of certainty,” a revelation with which, from the testimony (sic!) of the experiments we can certainly agree. And if I’ve “sic’d!” the word “testimony” there’s a method to my madness, calling to mind if only by its derivation our covert dependence on the sanction of speech even where speech is no longer necessary, in fact, as in our case, is shown to be quite superfluous. As Hanna points out, “Knowledge for Husserl was not intellectual but intuitive. Intuition was the guiding principle of his method of inquiry.” Which is all very well and certainly suggests the right path but nevertheless brings us to what I suspect is the very crux of the matter, to what we mean by such words as “intuition” and its country-cousin “theory,” both of which, the one from Latin, the other from Greek, derive from words which as “looking” or “seeing” may have begun life with the best of intentions but have long since lost their virginity in the service of thinking. Quite simply (and “simply” is what we’re all about) I do not say “I intuit” or “I theorize” this paper I’m writing on, I say, “ I see it.” Just as, for instance, I’m now in a position to dispense with such ambiguous if well-meaning Biblical approximations as Job “seeing God face-to-face” rather than the infinitely more precise face-to-no-face, so too I’m now entitled to claim the invisible has become visible for me in all its invisibility, not because, visionary rather than visional, I feel it or smell it or hear it (as in a voice) or hear *about* it or even, most intimately of all, eucharist-like taste and swallow it, but because I actually see it. To revert to Husserl’s “intemplanation” as one commentator teasingly calls it, the “intuition” that, presumably beyond reason, brings with it a “sense of certainty.” Of course it does however liable to error. Where he falls short, however —and in this he’s not alone —is in his failure to recognize that, in order to qualify beyond question, to be certain

rather than just believable, his *a priori* sense of certainty has to be confirmed *a posteriori* by the certainty of sense, the assurance of which we no longer have to accept on faith before the Fact but as patently present after It. Which delinquency, in all fairness, he did recognize with his willing admission, even to his dying day, that he was still attempting to perfect his method and determine its final form. And indeed he was, though whether, given the occupational hazard of being a philosopher and a professional one at that, would have encouraged him to acknowledge that the answer to his, if not prayers, at least meditations, lay not in language but in our simple instruments is up for grabs. Quite the contrary, however, pertains to the less than admirable Heidegger, though even he at the end of his life was forced to admit that "Only a god can save us now." How little he knew, for all his twists and turns, not only who and what but, most important of all, where that god lay "concealed" (so to speak) was made obvious, if by nothing else, his none too salubrious political behavior.

3) Where Husserl's analysis is almost impeccable, however, and almost right on target (and I say "almost" advisedly), at least compared to what was going on around him, is in the distinction he draws between what he refers to as the transcendental and the psychological ego, a distinction we immediately recognize as corresponding to the difference between first and third persons. According to him, lacking any ontological foundation whatsoever the latter, when subject to the "transcendental reduction," can, by means of a personal transformation akin to "religious conversion," be assumed not to exist at all, a conclusion explicitly confirmed by the experiments and this simply on the strength of a finger pointing in the right direction, an intentional gesture whose silence not only spares us the ambiguity of a language that's plagued us from the beginning, in fact constitutes it, but, at the same time, implicitly rescues us from the wilderness of the airy-fairy "speculation" that's sprung up in its trail. "Souls themselves," he correctly notes, "are external to one another only in virtue of their embodiment." Which is only another (and fancier) way of saying (rather than seeing) that in this "reciprocal interchange of absolute inequality" (Nishitani)—properly understood, of course, since, as the experiments demonstrate, if it were not reciprocal it would not only be

intolerable (because tyrannical) but mistaken—I, being all One, am you and you, being all One, are me, making, as Shakespeare informed us with his customary accuracy, “these odds all even.” But it’s precisely here in his total commitment to the saying rather than the seeing, to, in effect, the Word, that, like virtually all his predecessors Husserl, too, falls short. As Hanna correctly observes, “It seems that Husserl’s transcendent ego” (our first person) “is transcendent in much the same sense as the ‘witness consciousness’ in Hindu Vedanta.” But as, given their primordial teleological structure, the experiments incontrovertibly demonstrate, this is precisely the problem, revealing as it does only half the story if even that. To paraphrase Blake (with, again, a nod to Shakespeare as well): the expense of immanence, of 1<sup>st</sup> Person Participant, in a waste of transcendence, of 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Witness, is Nobodaddy in action, is, by giving the devil more than his due, to turn the world upside-down rather than down-side up which, of course, is precisely what we’ve been doing since, turned on our ear, we became tuned to it. To act merely as a witness and a transcendent one at that, in effect to look down from above rather than up from below is precisely how You-know-Who, the Immanence of immanence itSelf, does not operate. Nor, by extension, do we, as we see when only by becoming smaller than the smallest thing can we qualify as larger than the largest and so contain it. And to some degree, if only by his use of the term “transcendent reduction,” Husserl senses, even “intuits” this. One can only assume that had he come to the end of his search he, too, would have seen it, seen in Djuna Barnes’ magnificent words (and I know I’ve quoted her before and no doubt will again if only because it couldn’t be said better), that we’ve only to let go hell for our fall to be broken by the roof of heaven. And so it’s come about.

4) Though given the temptation to explore the ramifications of our findings as regards just about everything (and why not, granted their universality?), I’m nevertheless trying to stay within reasonable bounds, I still can’t resist touching on one side-light worth noting since, like virtually everything else that’s come down to us by way of tradition, it constitutes one more indication of how shadow and substance invariably move, indeed must move, as apposite opposites. Just as, significantly enough, it’s only in our

generation that we've been able to see that the invention of the wheel presaged a trip to the moon with all that that portends for better or worse, so the manifestation of the experiments also represents the two-edged sword of history in its ultimate revelation, the ever-present Presence of Self-fulfillment accompanied as always by its parody and shadow-side (also known as the devil, from *devilus*, the little god), the ever-present possibility of self-destruction. In this regard, it's interesting, though no accident, to note how these simple instruments also confirm in no uncertain terms the three degrees of a faith no longer required (thanks to the experiments) but nevertheless proposed in the ground-breaking doctrines of Sufism in which, using the symbolism of fire as the medium of exchange, are charted the three stages of realization: 1) the Lore of Certainty, the Saying of it, succeeded by 2) the Eye of Certainty, the Seeing of it (by means of the organ with which God knows his Self), and culminating in 3) the Truth of Certainty, the Being of it, in which like fire, capable of burning everything but itself, is concealed the secret of Everlasting Life better known these days, at least up to the uncovering of the experiments, as the Zen doctrine of unborn-ness. In any case, if we're in the business of keeping score, and apparently we are, we'd have to say that if the experiments answer as nothing else ever has, can or will to #2, to the Eye of Certainty and so immediately provide the where-with-all for admission into #3, to the Truth of Certainty beyond speech and certainly measure, then Husserl and Heidegger qualify like so many others, forerunners all, for a position intermediate between #1 and #2. In Husserl's case, having arrived via his 'phenomenological' interpretation of history no further, by his own admission, than the outskirts of the Promised Land, like Moses he was still reasonably contented with what he'd been given and, as it's turned out, rightly hopeful for better things to come. Heidegger, on the other hand and if only on the strength (or weakness) of his claim to *alethia*, to the "unconcealedness of what-is-present", for all his decorative embroidery and supposedly new mode of 'gazing at' the intuitive, the contemplative and the dialectical, is still limited to what, in reality, turns out to be no better than a thinking about. Witness, however on target, his famous "Only a God can save us now." Apparently in good Germanic fashion -

and that includes the best of them - Schelling, Novalis, Goethe and even my darling Hegel (although I seriously doubt he's ever been called that before) - as *we see* now and as with virtually all of them with their fancy ideas - and I include myself in that designation until I found the experiments - just plain god-given *seeing* has never been good enough.

5) No doubt we could go on and on, in fact the beauty of coming to an end, to absolute knowledge as Husserl calls it, and then, reborn in the knowledge of itSelf, awakening to the permission it gives us to begin all over again from the one true perspective and so revel in all we know on earth and all we need to know of heaven, is precisely the fulfillment of the promises Douglas makes on pages 224-225 of *The Hierarchy* and since they've both come true, the one as 1<sup>st</sup> Person Science, the second, following from it as "day from night," 1<sup>st</sup> PersonHistory, I can never get tired of repeating them:

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

And we have. In the words of Copernicus, one of its bright and early if unwitting and courageous pioneers, we've finally arrived at a position in which, justly laying claim to our birthright and at the same time our hardly earned reward— the recognition of our omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence (cf. *The Trial Of The Man Who Said He Was God*)—we can now absolutely demonstrate that "things are not what they seem but only as they are seen." And though certainly not the first to anticipate this conclusion (now certified) Copernicus wasn't the last either. My mouth positively waters at the prospect before us, of what the future holds for those of us who bother their no-heads with such things, matters that once a question of life and death and assigned to forerunners such as a Nargajuna or a Chuang-tzu or Ibn-Arabi were then passed on to the rear guard, to those who, left with nothing and only nothing left to conquer, had no choice but to take the downward path to wisdom, the road that Descartes followed with his first attempt towards an absolutely subjective ground (now achieved) or a Leibnitz with his suspicion that knowledge of

probabilities must precede the knowledge of actualities (now confirmed), or a Hume or a Hegel or whoever, and have now all, all been relegated to the secondary position where they belong as *objects* of knowledge to be enjoyed and honored for what they are, no more and no less, so freeing us to leave the Subject unencumbered to speak for itSelf in the only language it truly understands and someday, now that we've begun, we may too—the language of Silence. Speaking of which, enough.



## Letter 85 — December 11, 2006

Since I've just finished revising for Alan's website a seventy page letter I wrote to Anne way back in 1998, I blush to admit how, in the first flush of enthusiasm (and "flush" is the right word suggesting as it does the appropriate activity when applied to my seventy pages in praise of absolute brevity) I let myself go. In any case, having just finished with the revision but because I still have no idea how to transmit the damn thing on this machine you can imagine how delighted I am to return to what I've come to consider these bulletins, the idea and encouragement for which I owe to you. My God, talk about not suiting the word to the action: all those pages and pretty dense ones at that and all in praise of those miracles of speed and inclusion, the experiments! Well, live and let learn.

Anyway, before starting on Merleau-Ponty—and at your suggestion I've xeroxed *The Phenomenology of Perception* which looks more than interesting—or finally getting to Joachim de Flore, I thought, if only by way of catching my breath, I'd gather up a few odds and ends which, though interesting or pertinent or amusing in their own right, I wasn't able to include in my previous notes. Here's one from the *Babylonian Talmud*:

"Isaiah came and reduced the 365 commandments of the Torah to six: 1) He who walks righteously and 2) speaks uprightly; 3) who despises the gain of oppressions, 4) and shakes his hand from holding bribes, 5) who stops his ear from hearing of blood and 6) shuts his eyes from looking on evil. Micha came and reduced them to three: 1) Do justly 2) Love mercy and 3) walk humbly before God. Isaiah came back again and reduced them to two: 1) Keep justice and 2) Do righteousness. Not to be outdone Amos came and reduced them to a single one: See Me and live."

So there really is nothing new under the sun except—and it's a large exception—the meaning of modernity. As witness the fact we no longer merely gaze at the moon from afar—"See me and live"—we actually lay claim to it personally, 1<sup>st</sup> Personally.

This next is from Masao Abe who, picking up from where Suzuki left off and along with writing many wonderful books in English (and lecturing here in Princeton), was and, if still alive, is the last and in my view the very best of all the interpreters of Zen

to the West. I'm thinking not only of his studies of Nishida and Nishitani but particularly of his work on Dogen which I hope to get to some day. It's a masterpiece, the clearest analysis of a very difficult and complex subject I've ever seen.

"God is quite capable to go beyond the sacred realm and work in history at will. But how do people go beyond the realm of history and enter the realm of God?" (How indeed?) "The realm of history is limited by time and space and is defiled by human sinfulness and ignorance. There is no *continuous path* (italics mine) from the realm of history to the realm of God. There is an essential rupture between these two realms, which can be overcome from the side of God..."

And here we have it in a nutshell, not the essential but the existential difference between the view from Alpha (which includes everything up to the experiments) and the view from the experiments themselves, from Omega, as both stare at each other from across a once seemingly unbridgeable Gap. "Overcome from the side of God," as Abe claims? Absolutely right, as the experiments—their very existence—testify. "No continuous path from the realm of history to the realm of God?" Absolutely wrong as their manifestation, again not only by reason of what they "say" but simply on grounds of how they got that way, the very fact that they are, also insists. And herein lies the difference between what Douglas has uncovered and anything, and I do mean any-and-everything that's come before and could even, conceivably, come after, as once again the pro-verbial silence of the fool exposes the secret folly of the wise. And do we, can we come any wiser than an Abe (and not only an Abe but greater even than an Abe) with his incredible subtleties in range and depth but who, for all his brilliance and sensitivity is, by facing the wrong way—and God knows he's not alone here—still dancing around the outskirts of the question instead of entering, no matter how tentatively, into the very heart of the answer. And when you consider that he and Douglas are exact contemporaries you begin to realize what a literal about-face we've been privileged to share in and why I have to insist—and I've already been taken to task for this many times—on the great gulf that separates even Zen, the negation of speech and end of that dispensation from its absolute turn-around,

the about-face that constitutes the affirmation of silence and the beginning of ours. No longer is it a question of being a witness to and, more than a witness to, a participant in a difference in degree, but of being invited to share that difference in kind, an offer altogether fitting considering the unexamined places and perilous waters we're in the midst of exploring. Moon-shots, atom-bombs, germ-warfare!

"God is quite capable of going beyond the sacred realms and work in history at will. But how do people go beyond the realm of history and enter the realm of God?" Abe asks. Quite simply as an Eckhart or Rumi saw for themselves but other than to talk about it were, absent the experiments, no better equipped to pass it on than they were of turning on a light-switch in a flip of the wrist or twinkling of an eye. And that, the presence of an unfolding time in the service of an enfolding space, is the meaning of history. It's as simple as that and, now that we see it, the very gift we've all been given in this our hour of need.



### Letter 86 — December 22, 2006

As I think I mentioned on the phone, I'd forgotten that in letter #21, dated September 5, 2004, I'd made a passing reference to Joachim of Flore, so on the assumption that you've forgotten too and/or don't have a copy handy, I'm going to start out by repeating what I wrote there and then follow up with some further remarks. The more I think about him (and, in light of the experiments, I've been thinking about him a great deal lately), the more I realize how uncannily prescient the analysis of this obscure twelfth-century monk was and how his prophecies, though not quite condemned by the papacy but nevertheless frowned upon—witness his enforced isolation, almost exile, in the mountains of Calabria—have been more or less fulfilled, again as we've seen so often in the past, if not exactly as predicted, at least close enough for comfort. After all, it's not without reason that, on the strength of his original claim which happens to be ours as well—the possibility of penetrating into the full meaning of history, the arena in which, as we see now, reality's providential purpose can only be revealed at its end—so qualified a resident as Dante could invite him a few generations later to join that small but select band already established in Paradise, a place, considering how far we've come thanks to our democratic aspirations, now thrown open, fittingly enough, to the public at large, in no small part due to pioneers like Joachim. At any rate, here's what I wrote:

“Aside from his tremendous if belated influence on people like Schelling and Hegel, he also deserves acknowledgement as one of the putative pioneers who, in spirit if not in the letter, helped prepare the Ground for, no longer the opinion but, the certainty that the experiments have brought to fruition. I think we should examine his work briefly since we, and as far as I can see, we alone represent for the moment living proof that his prophecies, far out as they once seemed, have actually been realized by means of these simple home-made instruments.

‘Jesus crucified, proclaims the spirit in place of himself, that is, his resurrection.’ So Schelling commenting on Joachim's text and then goes on to point out that ‘It's as though, as the last God, Christ has put an end to an age and after him comes the spirit...the soul that rules over the new world.’ All of which is no

more than to propose a secularized version of what Joachim had advanced six centuries earlier in his vision of the history of humankind as divided, like Caesar's Gaul (speaking of parodies) into three periods or dispensations: 1) the age of the Law or the Father (the Old Testament); 2) the age of the Gospel or the Son (the New Testament); and 3) the age of the Spirit or the third Empire, the Gospel of the Christ to be superseded by the Gospel of the Spirit which would be final and everlasting. Knowing what we know now because seeing what we see now, can there be any doubt that the *pro-vision* for the third dispensation has finally been met, not, for all the current commotion, by the one commonly expected—drums beating, cymbals (and symbols) clashing in the grand overture to the end of the world—but, on the contrary, by the only one possible: the recognition and acknowledgement of apocalypse now, of the revelation, disclosure, uncovering, unfolding of who and what the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the experiments is and where and when it may be truly proclaimed: that, literally coming from and to our senses once and for all, we've finally arrived where we started, where what makes Omega Omega—that is, awareness of Alpha (which Alpha never is which is why it's forever Alpha and always will be world without end)—we're now justified for the first time ever in laying claim, by right of possession, to our place, not so much in the sun but as the sun in us?"

Absent the specifics of the experiments then—and when have they not been absent until now—could anything be more foretelling of what lay in store for us and about to come true? My only problem is how, given my own limitations as well as our limits agreed-on, to compress such a wealth of material into so short a space and so brief a time as to do God's work and convert what on the surface appears to be no better than a narrative of almost universal misery yet turns out to be the primary instrument towards the uncovering of the good—as we've noted before, history as the "atom bomb-antibiotic" syndrome. To that end I'm going to enlist what, on the surface, will appear to be no better than a series of notes towards some later Prolegomenon as Father Kant might have called it and let it go at that. And since we do have that short space and that brief time, we can do worse than seek a blessing from one Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, a reputedly fanatical (sic!)

Franciscan who announced in 1254 that as of now (that is then) both the Old and New Testaments had been utterly abrogated and authority passed to Joachim's Third Testament better known as the Everlasting Gospel which title, taken from a text in Apocalypse reads: " And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people." And so, as the Bible might say, "It has come to pass." As, indeed, it has.



### Letter 87— December 31, 2006

Following up on my last and on grounds you'd either forgotten my brief mention of Joachim of Flore in letter #21, September 5, 2004 (I know I had) or no longer have it, let me continue with another brief excerpt from the same letter which, though it doesn't relate to Joachim directly, nevertheless will determine the parameters we have to observe if we're going to comply with the experiments' unequivocal demands. This quote is from Reinhold Niebuhr: "There are more specific meanings in the Biblical conception of history, as we shall see presently, than merely the idea that history is *potentially* and ultimately one story by reason of being under one *divine* sovereignty. (All italics are mine.) But this Biblical conception which establishes the unity of history by *faith* rather than by *sight*, is a guard against all *premature* efforts to correlate the facts of history into a pattern of *too simple meaning*. It is indeed one of the proofs of the ambiguity of man, as an *observer* of the historical process who transcends but is also involved in the process, that he can not construct systems of meaning for the facts of history, whether of a particular story in it or of the story of mankind as a whole, without making the temporal locus of his observation into a *falsely absolute vantage point*, or without using a structure of meaning which seems to him to be absolutely valid but which is actually touched by historical relativism."

I know that on the strength of this excerpt alone it must sound like I'm picking on Niebuhr (and God—and not only God now—knows he's not alone) but could we have a more perfect and succinct illustration of how, when put into practice—in this case of interpretation—the experiments turn, if not all hazarded, certainly all received opinion on its head where it belongs? We've only to take one by one his claims I've italicized and turn them upside down (which is why I've italicized them) or at least put them forward a notch, in order to arrive at the simple and God's honest absolute truth. For instance, the idea that history is *potentially* one story, when we see now it *absolutely* is. Or that its unity, presumably established on *faith* rather than *sight* as a guard against a *premature pattern of too simple meaning*, has again been superseded by the fact that we see now and literally see without question that that so-called pattern of "too simple meaning" has also been

realized, no longer solely by reason of its *observers* — far from it— but by virtue of its participants or, if you prefer, that one single participant who, in reality, cannot aspire to be simple enough because it already is. As for that “temporal locus of observation, that falsely absolute vantage point,” the mouthpiece that passes for the latest as distinct from the last, that, too, has been put in its place, turned on its “ear” so to speak, by that same last that shall be first. No longer do we have to buy into the notion that assures us that history has only to do with the past, then concedes that, well, maybe to some degree it’s conditioned by the hope if not the idea of the future and finally in one true concession and confession—historicism proper—admits as to how it’s really no more than a reflection of the present, in effect, of current opinion and so, like everything else, subject to varying winds of doctrine. With the exception, in some degree, of an Augustine or Aquinas or a Dante, or of hints and more than hints from a Joachim or later inheritors like a Vico or Bossuet and their, as well as our, last best hopes, Hegel and Schelling, nary a word, not to speak of *the Word* regarding the presence of Presence. Once again, enter the experiments and the whole business is settled once and for all.

Noteworthy, too, and indicative of how radical Joachim’s claims were and are, is the extent of his break from the Augustinian doctrine that had ruled the roost for some eight hundred years: that, rather than having to await the arrival of some endless future, the end and its meaning were attainable here and now in the progressive revelation of God and its disclosure of a divine purpose no longer hidden but attainable within it. To suggest the ramifications of that one, complete with its misconceptions—the confusion of a “progressive revelation” with its opposite number, the idea of progress, for instance—all we have to do is run down an abbreviated list of some of those who, to one degree or another, have been affected by it and, in turn, have affected us and so, finally, been instrumental in arriving at what we see now as the ultimate dispensation. How about, for starters, a St. Francis or a Dante? Or a Columbus? Yes, our Columbus who went looking and looking consciously for that formerly merely heard-of thing, the land of heart’s desire in the flesh just as we have. How about that long list of Germans beginning with Lessing and Herder and

running through Hegel and Schelling and Marx and ending with—and maybe even you’ll have trouble with this one—Hitler, that same Hitler whom Voegelin correctly tagged as the lineal descendant of Joachite thinking? Just as there’s always a necessary connection between substance and shadow, so too there’s a necessary connection between the real thing and its ultimate parody, the *deus* and *devilus*. Joachim’s Father, Son and Holy Spirit reflected in their individual patrons, Peter, Paul and John; Comte’s three stages of history; Lessing’s and Schelling’s three Revelations, Fate, Nature and Providence; Hegel’s thesis, antithesis and synthesis, all expressive of the trinitarian nature of received reality (Nagajuna’s Middle Way) and all temporarily derailed, whether by the Third International or the thousand year Third Reich (these last simply the latest parodies of the last and best) until they, too, if in no way exonerated (since evil must come), are at least and at last rendered purposeful by the ultimate Omega perspective finally made available to one and all here and now.



**LETTERS TO  
CARL COOPER  
& ALAN MANN**

**2007**



## Letter 88 — January 18, 2007

Dear Carl, Since some of the claims I've been making, especially in the last paragraph of my last letter, may appear somewhat "dense" (as they've often been accused of being), given Joachim's central position as regards our thesis—"the dominant philosophy of history ending in a utopia...have their roots in Joachism" someone has said despite the fact that he's virtually unknown to the average educated layman)—if you'll bear with me I'd like to go over a few points in more detail. And what better place to begin than with the school of thought, if you can call it that, which, though completely foreign to him, significantly enough employs the pretext of history (as we see now the arena in which purpose passes for no purpose) as "a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing?" Which "nothing," that is to say "nothing" and the significance thereof, we can reserve for future examination, always bearing in mind that the above-cited observation can be attributed to, not the "only begetter," William Shakespeare, but to one Macbeth, tyrant of Scotland. Especially interesting to note, however, if only parenthetically, is how, though intimately aligned with a nihilism never so pervasive as it is now — and there's a connection here, too, with the manifestation of the above-mentioned "nothingness" which I hope to go into later — a similar sentiment, and it is a sentiment, keeps popping up in the most unexpected places. Here, for instance, is a quote from that alleged paragon, Goethe, which I just happened to have run across a few months back and which, when I did, I couldn't believe my eyes. "History, " he opines, "that most absurd of all things, a web of nonsense for the higher thinker..."; in short, the movement of time, absent its goal which is to have none, experienced as total chaos. Which, in turn, seen from the bottomless pit we happily inhabit (or, better yet, which happily inhabits us), simply illustrates, as an Eckhart or Blake well knew, that when it comes to the truth, especially its supposedly elevated precincts, you can be too smart but you can't be too dumb.

Augustine, of course, is another matter, occupying as he does the pole, or at least one of them, from which Joachim after some eight hundred years, courageously or, if you prefer, impatiently diverged. For Augustine the progressive Self-revelation of God, at

least here on earth, ended not in the fullness of time in the sense that the end is the fullness of time, but in the Incarnation and Crucifixion. All that was left for us to do now — and the length of that where and when, that ever-receding “now”, was anybody’s guess — was to wait. Not so for Joachim nor, understandably, many of his contemporaries for whom the already thousand year delay of the Sabbath Day and, hopefully beyond even that, to the Eighth Great Day of Eternity, was beginning to look a bit much. Not only was the long-awaited conversion of possibility into realization slipping away into an unredeemable past and dragging along with it any hope for what, after all, was Christianity’s stock in trade, the meat and drink that distinguished it from anything that had gone before and made salvation not only attainable within history but because of it, it virtually seemed to ignore the place and potential of its Silent Partner, significantly enough referred to as the name-less or, better yet, name-free Third Person of the Trinity, the anonymous Holy Spirit so-called.

Enter Joachim with his, if not assurance, at least instinctive suspicion that if “eschatology” meant what it said — a discourse about last things — and “apocalypse” literally no more (nor less) than the field of God’s activity and so the meaningful disclosure of a divine purpose no longer hidden, then it followed we were faced, not with an endless future, but the end of the future. And this not in a “bad,” an Augustinian doomsday sense, a not so Divine Comedy as it were, but in the good sense of promise and fulfillment within history. In any case, can there be any doubt as to his enormous influence, whether acknowledged or not (and for the most part it has gone unacknowledged) on all subsequent theory and practice that, beginning with the Franciscans, has affected, not only all Western but now, via its political and scientific dissemination by means of any “ism” you can name, all world-wide thought as well?

Fortunately — and it’s just one more illustration that God is no respecter of persons — Joachim, all too human himself, also miscalculated. I say “fortunately” because had he not we might, conceivably, not have had the experiments. But then, of course, we might not have needed them. In any case, true to the progressive heritage he helped establish and the burgeoning emergence from

the “Dark Ages” to which he contributed, like virtually all his predecessors he saw the new movement, this new awakening, as an ascent and so, if you’ll forgive the mixed metaphor, fell into what we can only call the “transcendence” trap, the goal to be reached as somehow up there or at least out there with he, she or it, that is to say, you and/or me, the observer *par excellence*, on the outside looking in, instead of seeing it for what it is (or is not), its opposite number (if a zero can be said to have an opposite or be a number at all), the one and only participant looking from the inside out. Granted that over the years, even centuries, the possibility of this condition or something approximating it had been suggested by mystics of all shapes and sizes. I think specifically of Nicholas of Cusa as well as, even today, scholars like Altizer who comes as close as any I know of to describing the state by referring to it as 1<sup>st</sup> Person subjective immanence, the immanence of immanence as it were, as distinct from 3<sup>rd</sup> Person objective transcendence. I still can’t help being reminded of my father’s caustic remark (and I’ve mentioned this before) when confronted with his son’s lofty speculations, that “that and a nickel’ll get you a ride on the subway.” Well, now in the person of that most singular 1<sup>st</sup> Person revealed by the experiments, we have that nickel or, given our current inflation, at least its reasonable or maybe not so reasonable equivalent. In any case, heading in the right direction, we now have fare enough to “fare well” as well as “fare forward.”

The point, of course, is that, suiting the action to the word, rather than an ascent, our road to ultimate revelation has been demonstrably and necessarily a descent all the way. And why, if only in hindsight, did it have to be a descent? Setting aside all symbolic if not downright sentimental notions as a savior being born in a stable, not to speak of his having to undergo a brief layover in hell, how else turn the tables on the Law and not so much tempt as allow the All, the secular and profane as well as the reputedly holy, to reveal itSelf for what it is, the lowest of the low, a not-god? How else seduce the Unspeakable into speaking the only language we’re capable of understanding and so, *trans-descending* by its silence the tyranny of transcendence, make the very best of a bad bargain and reveal that, given who we are with all our limitations and pretensions, what appears as profane—

outside the precincts of the sacred — is the only and best shape the sacred could assume at the time?

Which, of course, is precisely what's happened and how it happened, not the sole means of redemption of course, but the most conclusive because the most inclusive, that to which, like destiny to providence, all previous approaches appear insufficient. I know I've already noted here and there in these letters some of the milestones that marked this downward path masquerading as a progress from Alpha to Omega but, beginning with Roger Bacon and Grossteste in what is significantly, if portentously, referred to as the "High" Middle Ages, it's worth identifying once again at least some of the players you can't tell apart without a score-card anyway. I think of Descartes, considered in some quarters the villain of the piece, and his search for what was to turn out to be (because it had always been) his only "concrete and stable ego" and so recognizing, even courageously acknowledging, his conscious subjectivity as the first step towards what was to turn out to be (though as yet unknown to him) our conscious Subjectivity. Well, well, well! I think of the application of David Hume's experiential philosophy, not only to the subject of morality but to the actual moral subject in the flesh as he or she "heads" towards the very Subject itSelf, thus establishing the solid foundation on which by observation and, later, participation, certainty could be grounded once and for all. I think of the old man, Kant, taking the downward path one step further and almost to the end of the road by insisting (because there was no proof, at least not yet) that not only could that conscious Subjectivity, that I AM, not be seen, it could not even be known. Finally, I think of the first hints of a counter-movement led by Fichte and his recognition that our "complete sinfulness was merely a preparation for our final regeneration," which suggestion — and it was no more than that at the time — picked up, as I've already mentioned, by Hegel and Schelling was to lead to all the developments we've already touched on. And now I've come up with a new one I recently rediscovered: Joseph de Maistre. Do you know his work — a brilliant writer and refugee in Czarist Russia from what he at first considered the misguided French Revolution who, though an arch conservative and ultra-Montanist promoting the infallibility of the

pope and divine right of kings, nevertheless practically jumped for joy at the coming prospect in the guise of disaster: the recognition that the narrow revelation of Sinai confined to only a single people and the subsequent advent of the Christ, though addressed to all but nevertheless restricted in its universality, was about to be succeeded by the “revelation of the revelation” as he called it, some “enormous religious event, some total unity” about to manifest in order that the same stone the builders rejected could become the corner-stone of the new dispensation? And as if to validate Aquinas’ insistence that “God must be proved by the senses like any other concrete thing” was he wrong? “*Nihil est in intellectu quia primus fuerit in sensu*” Nothing exists in the mind that hasn’t previously existed in the senses. And if you have doubts about that, how about this one from Ibn Arabi: “the eye is the organ by which God knows himself,” from which he concludes “God is never visible except in concrete form.” All of which can only lead us to acknowledge the means that got us there, or rather here, and agree with Dante that, “History is the arena in which God works out his purposes.” And if you don’t believe that just turn to Douglas’ ultimate dispensation and simply “Look for your Self” and see all the above immediately on display and, as a result, validated.

Seriously, can there be any doubt that if the Christian revelation as represented by the First Coming vouches for the coherence of history, the Second, exemplified by the experiments, provides us with a demonstration of its full meaning, the providential design recognized if only haltingly by such loving skeptics as Burckhardt and Voegelin who were able to make some sense at least — the first via Renaissance Italy, the second Ancient Athens — of those islands rising up out of a vast sea of dissonance? How much more, then, a Vico who even two centuries earlier had been able to recognize the central role of sacred Judeo-Christian as distinct from what he called profane history but still couldn’t grasp its ultimate significance: that, though without question it no longer represented a mere parochial event, its full meaning and world-wide implication signalling the end of cyclical theory was still not entirely evident. But how, absent the experiments, could it be? Who could possibly have seen, and even if he or she had, who

could have recognized it was precisely the high aspiration and, given the very nature of reality, its necessary breakdown that was to lead to its subsequent breakthrough and so lend, no, not lend, but *give* meaning to the presumably random movement that had characterized history up to then but, in effect, was indicating as it unfolded from myth to fact, to the FACT, not only the promised end finally in view but announcing that end as a beginning?

What's so instructive here is how, as if in compliance with Say's law (Jean Baptiste-Say, the nineteenth century French economist) which had established that bad, that is to say, paper money will always drive out good until the day of reckoning when gold will exact its due (and what better instrument of reckoning than the experiments?), so, too, newly minted Omega as distinct from originally mined Alpha vision—not consciousness alone but consciousness of consciousness—was destined to establish itSelf in person, in its 1<sup>st</sup> Person, as true currency of the realm. I've already noted Augustine's reservations regarding the possibility of any resolution here on earth and, following Augustine, Voegelin's acute observation as to how Hitler's millennial prophecy derived from Joachitic speculation or at least from its debasement. Is it purely speculative, then, on our part to note that, quite in accordance with the dictum that "God never shuts one door without opening another," the collapse of the Nazi nightmare, of what by general consensus has been, arguably, the evil empire to end all evil empires if only on grounds that its victims were not chosen because of what they said or did or threatened to do, not even because they were in the way or the gods demanded it (these were no Aztecs) but, *for the first time in history*, purely by reason, if you can call it pure and you can call it reason, of their mere existence? Since these things move hand in hand — no atom-bombs without antibiotics, no antibiotics without atom bombs— can it be sheer accident that the demise of this empire of death coincided almost to the day with Douglas' uncovering of — dare I say it? — the secret of creation, that contrary to any previous naïve "millennial" claims but quite in accordance with the nature of birth, death and resurrection, Joachim's "dream" too had to die in order to rise like the phoenix out of its own ashes and so be reborn, not in the way expected, of course, but in the only way possible, in reality? Is

there no correlation, deep calling unto deep, between the demands of the *devilus*, the ape of god, and that sacrificial *deus* whose death we celebrate as the not-god, between the possibility of total nihilism, the ultimate parody, measured against the necessity of the nothingness that, in Wallace Stevens' words, both "is and is not?" Can there be any doubt ever again why the misappropriated because mythical notion of *human* 3<sup>rd</sup> Person perfectibility had to be sacrificed on its own altar in order to clear the way for the only other Way, the Way that turned out to be, essentially, *the* Way?

I know I've run over the allotted but, sorry about that, so has my cup.

*George*



**Letter 89 — February 22, 2007**

As I've suggested more than once and at the risk of sounding ridiculously, even obscenely, pretentious and leaving myself even more wide open than usual to the obvious, I think I know how Aquinas felt when, putting down his pen once and for all, he uttered what have come down to us as his famous last words. I'm sure you know them: the "all I've written up to now seems to me no better than straw" or something to that effect. The difference between us, of course (and God knows it's not the only difference), is that he meant it and acted on it, whereas, though I may mean it or think I mean it, it looks as if I still have a few more miles to go (though not too many) before I sleep. For one thing, I think I owe it to this East is East and West is West business we're about by addressing the exchange between Tillich and Abe which is so beautifully illustrative, even revealing, given our perspective. And if I choose rather than Altizer, say, as a foil for Abe, it's merely because, given his, Tillich's, Western insistence on the primacy of being vis-à-vis Abe's case for Eastern non-being, it so beautifully exemplifies the difference between them (and us), whereas Altizer might almost be taken (and mistakenly has been) for a Buddhist. But we've already addressed that issue when we noted how Douglas' first attraction was to Zen. The point being, and I can't repeat it often enough, is that our primary concern is not to explore the various and divergent outlooks for their human-interest or scholarly sakes but only as their perspectives lead us to the one and only end as offered most clearly by the experiments. For another, though, tongue in cheek I may claim the reason for being for all arguments is to transcend the transcendent by immanentizing the immanent, I also recognize how silly, even laughable, all attempts to verbalize the truth (including this one) are; in effect, like trying to describe breathing, how impossible it is to speak the unspeakable or as the Hindus say, carry nectar in a sieve. But as the experiments also demonstrate beyond argument (which is precisely the point), to dispense with the "unspeakable" as such is in no way to deny its knowability or attainability which is presumably what we're all about. In effect, to point a finger at one's no-head is neither a metaphor nor a symbol but designed to direct

us to all we know on earth and all we need to know of God in His heaven.

That said, we're free to examine their respective positions and determine, not only where they differ from each other but how both, to some degree, diverge from that "third thing," the ultimate revelation provided by the experiments, a revelation that, dispensing with the guise of a prophecy now superfluous because realized, arrives full blown in and through history. And again, to avoid any misunderstanding (and I'm thinking specifically of Anne), I can only repeat that appealing to these simple yet infallible instruments is in no way to suggest that other means may not also serve and, indeed, if only by default, have, since, from the beginning of time, it was all we had anyway. But a signpost however accurate, if only by its necessary appeal to language is not the territory, any more than the Word, any Word, is the Thing itSelf.

In any case, here's Tillich distinguishing between preparatory, that is to say prophetic, and what he refers to as final revelation: "Final revelation is an event which is prepared *by* history and received *in* history but cannot be derived *from* history." Which we *see* now and only now thanks to the testimony of the experiments, though forgivably is nevertheless patently false, just as his claim that "nobody writes history from a place above all places" with its implied and even welcome knock on transcendence, may be so but in no way precludes our uncovering that the corresponding place *below* all places performs double duty just as well, in Fact eminently (and immanently) better. As Abe seems to suggest, offering in words what the experiments demonstrably confirm in kind, though, by its very nature *agape* may appear to originate in a movement from higher to lower, in effect, as, again, we *see* now, it moves in quite the opposite direction. Indeed, how could the revelation of an abysmal not-god be otherwise? Is it any surprise, then, that virtually everyone, even the mystics, have, to some degree, skirted this issue when even the Man himself, though rendering the certainty of the promise, of the end of history as *telos* rather than *finis* and its aim, not the end of time but its transfiguration, was, nevertheless, so understandably vague as to what that end would look like as regards a literal resurrection?

**Letter 90 — March 9, 2007**

I'd like to continue a while longer on this Tillich-Abe confrontation, if you can call it that, not that I consider either of them more important than so many others, than a Gebser and Nishitani,, for example, but because each of them represents in its purest form divergent perspectives now so easily reconciled, in fact settled once and for all by the experiments. No question that from our point of view—that is to say from the point of view emanating from the definitive “no point of view”—Abe comes closer, any more than it's an accident that Douglas sub-titled *On Having No Head* “Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious.” But as in the normal course of discovery we're in the process of uncovering, to be aware of more than half is not necessarily to know the whole story, no less tell it. And in light of the experiments, that has to be the final knock on Zen: that however admirable years of sitting cross-legged in order to arrive at the negation of speech may be, considering our present situation, not least the requisite speed demanded by our various and not so extraneous extreme possibilities—the threat of extermination, for instance, by either atomic or germ warfare—it's still no match for the effortless affirmation of silence available, courtesy of any experiment, to anyone instantaneously on contact. Aside from other factors (the distinction we've already drawn between an Alpha Buddhist and a Headless Omega perspective), we just don't have the time in every sense of the word for that kind of preparation. But we've already touched on that and will no doubt do so again when we come to examine the paradox to literally end all paradoxes: how the current, if not world-wide acceptance or at least tolerance of Buddhism — “the religion of no-religion” as it's been called at least by the “thinking” classes—is only surpassed by the testimony of the experiments, those tail-end, tongue-tied left overs, the lowest of the low pieced together from the failed Christianity they've come to vindicate.

Before we move on, however, I want to acknowledge how, on one issue at least, I stand corrected. Following Tillich, mistakenly it turns out, I'd gotten into the habit of unconsciously distinguishing the problematic nature of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person perspective, our optical illusion (or “ontic plight” as Abe calls it, rather neatly I

think), from its 1<sup>st</sup> Person counter-part by referring to it as the observer-participant dichotomy, the clearest instance I could think of, at least from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person observational standpoint, being the now classic and definitive example provided by Einstein's aptly named theory of relativity. I also remember bringing up in an earlier letter an account of a marvelous awakening I'd had in Paris, either during or just after the War, when I stumbled on Paul Eluard's "there is another world and we're in it" and which, at the time, I thought positively the last word. In fact, continued to do so for almost fifty years until, coming upon the experiments, I discovered that, as with virtually everything else, I'd had it upside-down or inside-out or both: that though I may very well have glommed onto the last Word, the truth of the matter is, and as the experiments incontrovertibly demonstrate in their inimitable silence, there is another world but it's in us. In any case (and it's the primary reason for my indulging in this apparent digression), though absent the experiments literally at his finger-tips, Abe, quite remarkably I think, picks up on this, on the distinction between Tillich's use of "participation" (with its obvious bias towards "part") and what he, Abe, suspects and Zen suggests is a total identity as it spells out with complete assurance, not only the dissolution of that wishful thinking we refer to as 3<sup>rd</sup> Person transcendence but the realization through unconditional differentiation of a new and all-out immanence, a condition which, still stuck in the Son of God impersonation, Tillich continues to deny. Nor is it any wonder that this stubborn insistence on a residue "out there" has finally ended, via Blake's Nobodaddy, in the unconditional de-divinization exemplified by the "Death of God" movement or that we're now in a position to substantiate that Abe was quite right, that, in fact, we are now at long last in such complete possession of the Whole, of that one indispensable gauge available to all of us — our bodies — as to confirm he was absolutely right, that if "before the Abraham I AM" of Jesus (which is now demonstrably true), then even more so becomes acceptance of the Fact, also demonstrable, that before I am I am, though not as ordinarily conceived, an am-not. As a result, since to say "nothing" or even to think it is, as we see, already to reify it, it be-

comes edifying, not to say prudent to acknowledge who that that “isn’t” by a show of silence.

I bring this example up—and of course we could cite many others, probably an infinite amount (in case anyone’s wondering what we’re going to do with ourselves now that we’ve gotten to the bottom of things)—as just one more example of how, if we parse closely enough, the experiments are capable of clearing up what once upon a time were considered merely moot. On that basis alone, can there be any doubt as to their ultimate significance?



**Letter 91 — March 19, 2007**

A few odds and ends as, quite in accordance with the requirements of prophecy and its accompanying revelation, we wind up our claim that the historic view becomes truly significant only to the degree it points to, indeed arrives at its end, a position first staked out in all its depth by Hegel and now, the so-called secrets of the so-called invisible world exposed for all to see, brought to its apotheosis by the experiments. Nor is it surprising that, given his Alpha orientation, Abe, taking or rather mis-taking Hegel's view of a progress towards the qualitative infinite for an indefinite quantitative endlessness, should balk at this any more than that Tillich, for all his recognition (by means of symbol and metaphor) that "everything temporal has a 'teleological' relation to the eternal but only man is aware of it," should see that rather than a "finale" to history—a claim only appropriate to the experiments—the crucifixion was merely (merely?) "central" to it and that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Jesus hanging on the cross for the sake of the 1<sup>st</sup> Person Christ was simply acting out, beginning to bring to consciousness if you will, that inescapable experience that whether it knows it or not, every living being has enjoyed (enjoyed?) before and since and will continue to do so world without end with every breath it takes. Indeed, it could be argued (and obviously I'm prepared to do just that) that all else having failed if only out of exhaustion and only the literal sense left standing—that same literal sense that, in Gibbon's terms, is so repugnant to "every principle of faith as well as reason" but we now see is mother's milk to us—there was no place left to turn except to that No-thing masquerading as a *nihil*. And lo and behold! There it was staring us in the no-face as it had been all along: meaning, the handmaid of experience, come through the back-door to arrive at its ultimate destination.

Now obviously there are all sorts of connections and correspondences and conclusions we can draw from this certainty, some of which, with Douglas' help, we've already touched on, not least the contra-dictions inherent in such necessary pairings of shadow and substance as the above-noted nihil and nothingness or, even closer to home, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Persons. I say "necessary" because, like holding the once-vaunted but now diminished

because no longer required mirror up to nature, we simply don't get one without the other. Instead, by persisting to look through a glass darkly and refusing to recognize there's no glass at all – in Gertrude Stein's words, that there's "no there there" – that's precisely what we do get: life as parody, as the now-exploded utopian dream of living happily ever after instead of living happily *in* it, the correct translation, incidentally, of the original Latin. Quite a difference we can all agree: the vision that not only makes pro-vision for the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth but for nothing *and* the truth as well. Indeed, were we disposed to tell the fairy-tale to end all fairy-tales and so disclose the truth of the matter, of all matter, at least as the experiments see it, we might even be tempted to conclude that the ever-after lives happily in us. Or is that not so much to ask as to answer? "Rilke saw it – "And we, spectators always, everywhere, *looking at, never out of, anything...* Who's turned us around like this?" was how he put it. And turn-about fair play, Douglas, without so much as saying a word, no less *the Word*, responded.

Speaking of which – responding, that is, and what else is there to talk about unless it be the silence of the you-know-what? – it might be helpful to recall that Dante, too, had a word for it, or rather two: Lethe and Eunoe. The first, the traditional river of forgetfulness in which, having successfully navigated both the Inferno and the Purgatorio, he must bathe before, cleansed of all memory of what he's seen and lived through, he's now prepared for baptism into the second and so, by recalling who he really really is, earn admission into Paradiso. And isn't that, in effect, an exact preview spelled out in symbol and metaphor of what happens before our eyes both singly and collectively every day of the week once we enter the experiments: collectively, by means of that unparalleled immersion into the secrets, so-called, of the hell of the past, right down, for the first time in history, to the world-wide unearthing of its every last detail where society and presumably the globe itself will soon resemble one vast gossip-sheet ("gossip" you may recall, deriving from "god-sib," god's sibling – another parody to end all parodies), yet singly so overwhelmed by this accumulation by means of television, movies, newspapers, the internet, as to make a mockery of universal literacy and

suggest, like the total recall of the drowning, a preparation for this same parody, the parody that always reflects, that must reflect – how else could it exist – its reality and has now been made plain for all to see? To paraphrase the poet, Stevie Smith: “You thought I was waving but I was really drowning.” And so it *seemed* we were – “seemed” in relation to “see,” like parody to *Paradiso*, just one more mirror-image of the real thing – until alive to our bellwether for all seasons, we turned and looked the other way.



### Letter 92 — May 8, 2007

Dear Alan, Thinking about the “finis-telos” correlation which I touched on in my last has triggered all sorts of connections which with your help I’d like to explore a little, always remembering that our primary purpose, in fact our only real purpose, is not so much to explore or codify or even grade this or that theory which, after all, in light of the real thing, the experiments, can, if not shots in the dark, at best qualify as near hits or, depending on your orientation, near misses. And this is not even to further qualify by pointing out that as distinct from vision, “theory”—the word itself—rather than born directly of “seeing” is already more kin to speculation with all the secondary confusions that that entails, not least the primacy awarded speech over silence.

In any event, what brought this up was my recalling a passing reference I made in my letter before last to Carl, #91 dated March 19 (one which, if I remember correctly, I’d already touched on before), as regards this business so dear to fairy tales of ending with the expression “and so they lived happily ever after.” Harmless enough, you might assume. I certainly did since this accepted phrase has been and still is the mother’s milk we all up grew on. But as we now see in light of the experiments—and it represents only one more instance of their all-purpose curative powers—it’s anything but. In fact, a case can be made and I intend to make it that, if the truth be told, all our troubles, at least in this regard, can be traced to a slight if seemingly innocuous mistake in translation. And if this seems to be reaching a little, is it any more so than attributing our woes (though subsequent salvation) to a snake in the grass tempting us with a bite rather than the whole apple? At any rate, the mistake I’m referring to (and whether, given our natural and, as it turns out now, our providential bias, the miscalculation was deliberate or not I have no idea nor is it really relevant) is the again egregious mistranslation from what in the original Latin, rather than “happily ever after,” should read instead “and so they lived happily *in* the ever-after.” A harmless omission you might say, this careless overlooking of an ineffectual little “in.” I certainly thought so until I discovered the experiments and, not the least of their gifts, realized what a difference a little preposition can make. Witness in the same mode that famous

passage in Gibbon, hilarious if it weren't so tragic, where, describing some of the early Christian internecine slaughters, he attributes the deaths of thousands, not to a preposition now but to an even more modest component, a perfectly innocent vowel: whether the Son was to be acknowledged as "homoousia" (spelled double "o"), that is to say identical to the Father, or "homoiousia" (spelled "oi"), that is to say, merely made in His likeness? Can you beat that? Well, considering we're no longer confining ourselves to a local but rather a universal instance, I do believe we can now.

Seriously, the point I'm making here is that not only actions but words, too, have consequences and what in retrospect might seem limited to a merely provincial interpretation, when looked at from the world-wide and more than world-wide, the universal perspective of the experiments assumes a completely different dimension. In a word, as we're equipped to see now and this without question, the difference between living "happily ever after" and its all-purpose counterpart, "living happily *in* the ever-after," is, in effect, no longer merely the difference between night and day, between a fairy-tale, a dream-world limited to a fortunate few versus the true story available to the One in all but, in retrospect, constitutes the difference between time and space and, never made so clear as in the experiments, between the parody and its paradigm. On the one hand, we have the offer of a utopia, of a "nowhere" — the mirror-image and, as a result, reverse of "nothing" — ranging anywhere from Islam's Paradise of Pleasure with its prospect of 72 dancing girls reserved for men only to the equally lascivious Marxist version — the strip tease as the withering away of the state — and both culminating in the grand and logical *finale* of your typical Hollywood movie with its so-called "happy ending." And, on the other, we're presented with the possibility via the experiments — via, in effect, crucifixion and resurrection — of starring and more than starring in the real thing: of playing as author, actor and audience all the "parts" rolled into One on the world's stage. In effect, for the first time in history — it may be because it's *essentially* come to an end (history, that is, not the world) — we now have a choice between mere wish-full thinking and the wish full-filled seeing of the experiments. Interestingly enough, what was judged and rightly judged as the total debase-

ment plaguing us— the face-less and name-less impersonality of a mechanical world characterized by modernity's mute masses hitting bottom— can now be recognized and acknowledged as the necessary and silent precursor, the ground for the revelation of its reverse, of a face-free and name-free anonymity now *consciously* available to all. And, as always when dealing with shadow and substance, we just don't get one without the other.

Interestingly enough, too, is the intimate connection we can now discern when we delve a little deeper into the essential difference between shadow-parody and its substance-paradigm. Recognizing that comparisons are odious and this may represent a digression (though obviously I don't think so) am I reaching too far when I distinguish the phrase "happily ever after" from "happily in the ever-after" as the one, addressed to the realm of psyche—in effect, the best that soul can do (the concept "soul", being one of Douglas' pet peeves, as we see now for good and sufficient reasons)—and the other of pneuma, spirit, as we know from our familiarity with Judeo-Christian as distinct from Greek sources— Paul, for instance—a dimension partisans of the soul for the most part aren't even aware of?

On this score, for a full appreciation of the first and where it's coming from, we can do no better than refer to Erich Neumann's wonderful and I dare say, definitive little study called *Amor and Psyche*. (For some reason he preferred the Latin Amor to its Greek equivalent, Eros, the Greek original, but both obviously a cut above the juvenile-oriented Cupid). Do you know it? As I say, an absolutely seminal book through which, thanks to Drs. Jung and Freud, we're immediately able not only to recognize but understand and acknowledge on the deepest level our debt to myth. Briefly (in case you don't know it and I suggest, if you don't, you look into it, it's short and sweet), it's the story (and I do mean story) of the Princess Psyche, reputed to be the most beautiful girl in the world but who, arousing Aphrodite's (Venus') jealousy, is immediately committed by the goddess to her son, Eros, with strict orders to take care of this interloper, that is to say to get rid of this mortal rival one way or the other. Fortunately for the rest of us he disobeys. Hoist by his own petard, he falls in love with her himself but, though he continues to visit her nightly, mindful of

his god-like prerogatives and ordering her never to look on his face, he keeps her in the dark as to his own identity, so fulfilling the dream of every male on earth (and in heaven too) since time began: of having his cake and eating it too, and this without even having to pay the price of admission. Since from her standpoint, however, this is an understandably untenable situation she reasonably enough disobeys. Consumed by her perfectly natural, that is to say feminine, curiosity as to who this mysterious lover-boy is, she leans over one night while he's sleeping only to have a drop of wax from her candle wake him. Furious at not only being disobeyed but recognized, he runs off in a huff leaving her absolutely devastated which, as it happens, turns out to be (it always does) the one thing necessary. No need to go into too much detail from here on in. Suffice it that spurred on by her love and passion and need for him and instructed, not only by the birds and bees come to her rescue but by Pan, the Old Man, and, interestingly enough, Ganymede the Messenger, not only the first human to be raised to Olympus but as Jove's catamite a homosexual as well (and, as a result, also no threat), she strives to "grow up" and perform the tasks that would make her "worthy" of him and so win him. But when, though she gamely succeeds in performing each of them (and so hone her wifely-attractions), that still fails to move him she falls into a deep sleep. Meanwhile back at the ranch, what with Eros on strike (Love itSelf love-sick) and all hell breaking loose — birds no longer singing, bells no longer ringing — to make a short story even shorter, Aphrodite, forced to relent if only in the interest of her son's sanity not to speak of the prospect of a world coming to an end through sheer attrition, agrees to allow Psyche into the fold, that is to say, be received as a member in good standing in the pantheon that had up to now been reserved for gods only. And so, love conquering all, a marriage is arranged in heaven leaving the couple free to live "happily ever after." Which, as one wag, no doubt speaking from bitter experience, put it, is why Plato chose to refer to myths like these as "*likely stories*" or, speaking even more cynically, Oscar Wilde suggested that "the good ending happily and the bad unhappily is what fiction" (that is to say, myth) "means."

Not so when we *descend* into history, however, and if I've underscored "descend" it's deliberate. Because it is a descent and, as we see now, a providential one, this downward path from myth into history, from transcendence into immanence. And if, setting aside similarities—symbolic hangovers like the luxury of a virgin birth, for instance— I don't go into the details of the crucifixion and resurrection of that one Man, it's only because we're so familiar with his, and as it turns out (though it's taken some doing), our story. What does concern us though and, on the contrary, constitutes its meaning in light of the experiments is that, at least at this stage in our development 1) though realization is still confined to one person, that is to say, to that 3<sup>rd</sup> person known as Jesus of Nazareth 2) it nevertheless holds out the *hope* that at least someday in the future if we're good little boys and girls, we, too, will somehow be transformed into the life of the party. That is if, contrary to Psyche's deep sleep, we can so flippantly compare a real death for the wages of sin to the price of admission to a ball. What concerns us here, however, and again I won't go into it too deeply since I've already touched on it in previous letters is how when even the *belief* that initiated the whole conscious process just about two thousand years ago also began to wear thin and we stumbled into nihilism, quite in accordance with the movement of parody to paradigm, the reservoir of nothingness, made palpable now, came to our rescue with its invitation to live and move and have our being no longer in a fairy-tale but in an actual ever-after. Which, as we can now testify, splendid as it was and is, still merely announces a step in the right direction and, like mysticism the experiments, not only heralds what it sees and says but also knows now and shows that, in effect, the best is no longer yet to come but right here "facing" us "head-on" so to speak. Briefly, if the price to pay for living happily ever after is no more than a little sleep and to live happily in the ever-after is merely to die, how much simpler, in fact how much more rewarding and time-saving in both senses of the word would it be to dispense with the not-yet altogether as essentially irrelevant. In a word never to be born at all, a suggestion—and in the beginning it was no more than that— first hinted at by Sophocles, then, though unbeknownst to them, literally turned on its ear a thousand years later and half the globe

away by the Zen acolytes until it was finally brought to heel, that is to say to total consciousness right here in our own back-yard courtesy of the experiments.

I know I've more or less exceeded our agreed-on limits but since I do want to explore this as thoroughly as possible given our limitations of space and I've made some rather extravagant claims, please bear with me as we go into it a little more thoroughly. The reference to Sophocles, for instance, provides a beautiful example of how, the world being what it is, parody, attempting to feel its way through, always *appears* to mistakenly announce itself before paradigm. How else can we interpret what is perhaps the best-known, yet in its almost universal "wrong-headed" application (as we see now and only now), the famous about-face from the Oedipus cycle that begins "Not to be born surpasses thought and speech" and goes on to advise that "the next best thing by far, when one has been born, is to go back as swiftly as possible to where we came" and which, though not intended as such, appears under the guise of its *absolutely mistaken* pessimism to be the greatest parody of them all rather than, as we see now when properly interpreted because properly seen, a precise prescription for liberation here and now. Quite simply if, following the Zen people, it's better to recognize that who you really really are has never been born at all because as Douglas is fond of pointing out and the experiments of demonstrating that who you really really are never has been, then there's an end to it—and a beginning. In any case, it represents just one more instance of how an experiment, any experiment, will reveal itSelf to be no respecter of persons except its Own, however first-rate, even spectacular, he or she may appear to be as third-person poet, playwright, philosopher, sage, seer and yes, even avatar.

Not so, of course, as again following Douglas we arrive at the heart of Zen, so far as I know the first "organized" attempt to recognize that since the not-yet is already-here only we don't *see* it, why not, following Sophocles' suggestion however misplaced, go back to where we came from, if not in the first at least in the last place and so in the name of the not-god *consciously* recover at Omega in the name of a new name-freeness the name-less anonymity we knew without knowing at Alpha? Which, of course,

though this transition from *Eros* to *Agape*, from learning to live happily ever after to the promise of living happily ever after in it, has taken some doing (the “doing” we refer to as history), it appears as literally “nothing” compared to the ultimate acknowledgement that, come full circle (the world being round), we’ve finally arrived at the place we never left to begin with. Is it any wonder, then, that the secondary issues, the ones we’re about, assume an almost automatic clarity as we trace the outward movement from Athens to Jerusalem, say, to a seemingly fortuitous arrival at Kyoto, not only as an example of global discovery and exploitation (which, of course, it was) but, quite in accord with Hegel’s notion of the “cunning of history”, as an instance of cosmic exploration and uncovering as well, of trade following the flag in the service of a paradigm which, like the hound of heaven, appears to be hot on the heels of its own parody? And, tragedy or comedy be damned, this is not even to speak of that third thing (and there’s always a third thing): the “divinity that shapes our ends,” the Comedy realized. On that score, I may have mentioned this before but the following brilliant prophecy of Altizer is certainly appropriate here and worth repeating now that it’s come true: that genuine Christian theology can and will only be reborn by way of Buddhism, his fool-proof description, however it falls short as prescription, for precisely what, thanks to Douglas, has actually happened.

And as we know now — and who in a better position to? — depending on the position of the sun, the parody as either shadow or forerunner also has its uses, as witness this from one of the greatest masters of parody who ever lived, Oscar Wilde again: “The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it.” And now, thanks to the pristine and certifiable testimony of the experiments, we’re finally in a position to, in *the* position to. So — in order of appearance — let us give thanks: to Oscar, to Douglas and to-the-you-know-and/or-don’t-know-who who shall no longer remain name-less but from now on in forever name-free.

*George*



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## EPILOGUE

The following comment is included as a record of the impact of these letters on one interested reader.



One of the perennial problems with the perennial philosophy is a lack of interest, by those professing interest, in what it is striving to reveal. It seems we can read about it endlessly, attend lectures and seminars to the point that this industrious involvement obscures the supposed purpose of it all—to become free. Instead, we become prisoners of the various traditions and explanations on offer and devotees of its leading practitioners. I spent long hours listening to Krishnamurti, then David Bohm not to mention side trips into Zen, Advaita, Gnosticism, Mystical Christianity, etc. The search unfolds as our personal history, and this personal story is then enfolded in our story which then, collectively, become our stories and, finally, history as a whole. As a consequence of this serious seeking and the industry which has grown around it, liberation is believed to be extremely difficult, inaccessible, otherworldly and mystical—reserved for the few—the whole purpose of it all is overlooked. A second difficulty is the attachment I develop to my chosen route which then tends to prevent openness to other and possibly more fruitful directions. I think I am a typical representative of those seekers who become so deeply engrossed in seeking that the point of the enterprise, the finding of what I'm seeking, is forgone or even forgotten.

I was lucky enough to stumble on a pointer to a cure for this condition in the form of a book by R H Blyth, *Zen in English literature and the Oriental Classics*, which includes a section on the poem *Dumnesse* by Thomas Traherne. This in turn led me to Douglas Harding who was the first of all the teachers in this area of enquiry to show me what I sought as opposed to all the others I'd come across who were able only to tell me about what I was seeking. As the title of these volumes indicates, we have to move beyond the word into a seeing which dissolves the blockages, perhaps the greatest of which is faith in explanations and 'ultimate' descriptions. Douglas Harding talked of two sides to the necessary revelation, first the seeing, then the meaning. A series of experiments demonstrate the seeing side of this equation. The result of the experiments is the awakening or re-awakening to the fact of the clear, boundless, transparency of awareness as primary. It is so undeniable, certain, accessible and true that, for many, the reaction is "what more could possibly be required, this is the

destination, thank you and good night!” However, this overlooks the meaning component and carries a risk of falling into voidism — abiding in the capacity without affirming the content.

My interest in the meaning aspect of the Harding work led me to the writing of George Schloss. George has a reputation of being hard to understand and is not yet widely appreciated, even by people otherwise convinced by the demonstration of the Harding experiments that what we really are is exactly what Douglas is telling us we are. As far as I can make out, the objections to the Schloss approach are: first, that it is complex and circuitous in comparison to the simplicity and directness of the revelation of the experiments themselves; secondly, that his focus on the meaning of the experiments detracts from the experience they engender; and thirdly, his claim that the revelation of the experiments provides ‘the end or purpose of history’ is far too extreme.

This note is a response to these objections and an outline of why his writing has been so meaningful for me<sup>3</sup>. Taking the pointing finger as my response to the charge of long-windedness, it is true that this simple experiment can induce the sudden awakening, the recovery of our first nature, an immediate and undeniable experience of certainty beyond question. The finger is pointing back to a wide-awake boundless, transparency; an experiencing that includes the pointing finger plus whatever else appears to be on show within the field of vision. Ah, how did it get there, that finger? Well, that is the other point of the pointing finger. It has a history, a progression from no-thing to something, appearing as particles, atoms, molecules, a single-celled organism and now an important human, body-part before me here and now and, after this lengthy evolution, pointing back at what? — at nothing come full circle. But, most important of all, a no-thing fully aware of both present act and what came before and lies before.

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<sup>3</sup> The pointing Finger experiment. Going strictly on what is directly revealed to the senses and suspend what you ‘know’. Point at various objects around you, note their colour, shape, distance, size, etc. Then point at where others see your face and ask ‘what am I pointing at now?’ Stay with it for a while. If I let go the everyday, conceptual crutches and am completely honest about what I’m pointing to I discover a time-free transparency.

Likewise, the history of mankind with many of our greatest thinkers, poets, etc., now teetering on the edge of this transformation—the shift from knowing into seeing—is itself like an intellectual finger pointing, at last, in the right direction, to the everlasting origin of itself.

To opt for simplicity only is to deny the fruits of seeing—its manifestation as complexity—life, the universe, everything—simplicity and complexity turn up as one. One-way-looking, ‘backwards’ into this aware capacity, what I referred to before as the descent into voidism, just reverses the more common problem of one-way-looking outwards, out at the world. George’s work restores meaning to the mix and exemplifies two-way looking in action; the embrace of both aspects in seeing. He describes how meaning undergoes a transformation; no longer confined merely to whatever I ascribe to things and events but seen as life itself unfolding—a shift from explanation to revelation.

As to the objection that focus on meaning detracts from the experience, how could that possibly be true? For me, the experience is the release of meaning, an intensification of being where everything however mean is revealed as meaningful.

Douglas Harding used to say about the exercises he designed, that most people ‘get it but simply don’t believe it’. I find George’s work invaluable in addressing this difficulty; the problem of getting me to believe what I see and of dealing with the meaning, as distinct from experiencing, aspect of the Harding work. In his analysis of the movement of history towards the Integral<sup>4</sup> George places the inversion (the revelation of the experiments) in an historical context and then shows how this context is transcended and seen to be the content of a deeper context; an integral awareness made plain in the experiments.

Although this revelation of capacity, either as a result of the experiments or an act of attention—two-way looking— is not unusual, it doesn’t seem to stick. I quickly revert to my third person perspective as I go about my daily affairs. There are a number of reasons for this, one is the attempt to include first

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<sup>4</sup> Gebser’s progression of human consciousness Archaic-Magic-Mythical-Mental-Integral

personhood within third personhood, to regard it as a newly won attribute or skill, but I think the principal cause is an unwillingness to let go of time as the context of my existence. I have a very strongly held assumption about the actuality of time as though it exists as a solid framework in which everything had, does, and will happen. Looking back now I think I have been mistaking time for eternity. Treating time as actual is rather like mistaking words for the things they describe. To give up time, in exchange for capacity as the context of being, seems an even more difficult sacrifice than to give up my head. This cultural commitment to time is gradually explored and dismembered as George takes his readers through the history of our awakening to this necessary turnabout and in the process makes it more both palatable and livable.

My problem of overlooking the obvious, my first nature, is cured by becoming aware of that to which both the finger of my hand and the 'finger' of history point. Taking history by the scruff of its neck, George shakes its meaning free thereby recovering its purpose and delivering—what for me has been the the real fruit of the Harding experiments—the demystification of the supposedly mystical. George presents history as a call to wholeness, and the revelation of that wholeness in the simplicity of what Harding is not merely describing but actually revealing.

So, all very well but how does it work out in everyday life? For me, the marriage of seeing and meaning results in the transparency, made plain in the experiments, becoming an increasingly natural aspect of my life in all circumstances. It is as though the experiments activated a process whereby first nature, obscured by fifty years of assiduous cultivation of second nature, gradually re-established its primacy. Long ago, I read about Hui Neng's famous stanza<sup>5</sup> and responded positively to its message. I suppose that

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<sup>5</sup> Shen Hsiu's stanza: Our body is the Bodhi-tree, /And our mind a mirror bright. /Carefully we wipe them hour by hour, /And let no dust alight. Hui Neng's response: There is no Bodhi-tree, / Nor stand of a mirror bright. / Since all is void, / Where can the dust alight? (Shambhala 1969 *The Sutra of Hui Neng*)

As George explains "No longer is it a question of seeing through a glass darkly but, as one of the great Zen masters put it (referring to the above), of

was an intuitive response which provided, as George would say a pro-visional, second-nature understanding. But now, as a result of the experiments and the integration of their consequences, largely due to my focus on George's writing, the first-nature, visual apprehension is seen to be at hand.

Alan Mann





