

### Letter 17 –July 6, 2004

Dear Carl, Vertical grace masquerading as space, horizontal providence as time: the one, representing 1st Person Science and spelling out fulfillment and freedom, the infinite potential necessarily operative in everything that is; the other, 1st 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 - Godspoke 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 1st 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 1st Person of the experiments?

#### Letter 18 – 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 19 – 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 20 – 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 in-sight, 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 1st 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 21 – 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 analyses 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 3rd giving way to 1st 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 1st 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 dispossessed 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 prefigured 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 Experiments) 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 22 – 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 Sir Edmund Hilary 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 Tscharpa 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 corn-ball 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 ec-stasy and advise going elsewhere for the ex-ceptional 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 looksee, 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 23 – 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-visual meanings as within ample visual 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 metaphysical 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 24 – 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 1st Person Science joined with 1st 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 3rd Person Science and the special revelation of 3rd Person History.

#### **Letter 25 – 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 1st 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 1st Person History, the "finding in this Now of all our to-morrows and yesterday" now available to one and all.

#### **Letter 26 – February 15, 2005**

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 1st 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 odorous comparison: him to the admirable Livy when, for all his good intentions, he's obviously not in that class; I, to the arch-villain himself, merely on the strength that I pretend to be. Of course, as again I 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.

#### **Letter 27 –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 even he insisted unbeknownst to him, 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 28 – March 4, 2005**

As you can see 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 1st Person Science and 1st 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 1st Person Science - revelation - and 1st 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.

## 1st Person Science

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

## 1st Person History

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

**Letter 29 – 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 30 – 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 odorous 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 blue-prints 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 31 – 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 communication 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 32 – April 20**

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 33 – 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 omniscience, 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 34 –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.