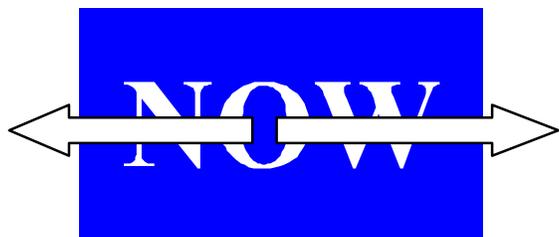


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In the interests of continuity I open this month with feedback on the Advaita matters raised in the last issue and follow with the contributions held over due to the length of our last edition. Thank you all.

I have been updating the mailing list. If this results in your name reappearing after unsubscribing, my apologies, and please let me have another unsubscribe email.

The Advaita Dialogues

(More responses to our coverage in NOWletters 184 and 185).

From Dennis Waite

Hi Alan, Good to see your review has stimulated some discussion. I'd like in theory to reply and refute some of the points made by your readers but a read through of the comments does suggest that I would be wasting my time. Just a couple of points I would like to make though.

Your reader Sam Blight embarks upon a robust criticism of 'A-U-M' whilst freely admitting that he has not read ANY of my books! I am bound to suggest that this seems a little unfair! I am also somewhat amazed that anyone can criticize me for using logic and reason! There are very many books out there in the 'spiritual' domain that tell of the author's personal experience and I suggest that the value of these is usually very low, because there will always be doubt about their veracity. (And 'experience' is not necessarily related to truth and reality!)

Secondly, you make the comment: "He uses both reality and creation in unconventional ways. Reality as unchanging and instead of creation they use formation. The 'ocean' of Brahman does not create waves it forms them. So, no creation!" This is a complete misunderstanding of what I said. By 'form', I refer to the noun 'form', meaning 'shape, make-up etc', not the verb meaning 'make or create'. And it is each individual who sees form in what is actually brahman or Consciousness. We see or imagine a form and we give it a name, thus making apparent duality out of actual non-duality. In the metaphor, we actually see only water but we choose to imagine that there is a separate entity called a wave and so on.

Perhaps you could include this response in your next newsletter, together with the general comment that I am not trying to convert anyone from their existing beliefs; this is usually a lost cause. I am happy to explain things to people who genuinely want to understand Advaita but I am not prepared to argue with anyone who has already made up their mind that there is nothing of value in this teaching. Best wishes, Dennis

From Alan Mann

Our recent exchanges on Advaita arose from my comments on Dennis's latest book A-U-M. In an otherwise favourable response I was critical of his claim that by the end of the book I would be persuaded that:

Your waking experiences are no more real than your dreaming ones!

There has never been any creation.

You cannot die because you were never born!

The fact that you experience separate objects proves that they are not really there!

I was not persuaded, and this led to an exchange, most of which appeared as footnotes to my commentary in the last issue. As it turned out, these claims do not represent Dennis's personal views but were offered as a provocative nudge to his readers.

The basis for these claims relies on specialised definitions of the words 'real' and 'exist'. For me, real means actually existing . For Advaita real means 'unchanging' combined with the consequent belief that anything that changes cannot be real. Existence in Advaita is anything that arises and which changes. Thus what I call me, you, the world, everything –exists as dependent reality and is labelled mithyA.

All the four categories above involve change and, consequently, according to Advaita, are unreal. Whilst I cannot subscribe to this perspective there is a certain logic to it and there is nothing more to say except that I agree with Radhakrishnan that Advaita is itself a most unreal (in my terms) philosophy.

I have had further exchanges with Dennis at the conclusion of which I discovered, on his Advaita website, a series of articles headed *Advaita versus neoAdvaita* which I strongly recommend to anyone interested in this question:

http://www.advaita.org.uk/discourses/trad_neo/trad_neo.htm

My conclusion after all this probing is that whilst Advaita claims to offer the possibility of awakening to reality, adherents of *neoAdvaita*, who think that I am asleep because I do not see what they see, appear to me to have fallen into a sleep of Brahman which, if manifesting as a fully awakened state, would include awareness of the multiplicity of Being, on the lines of Douglas Harding's observation which Robert Penny sent me as his contribution below.

From Andrew Hilton

in reading or at least surveying, dipping, skipping into the responses to dennis waite's work I'm struck by the lack of a sense of the true intent and meaning of the word religion and its consequence, acting morally and with kindness. the beauty in this world can bring tears to one's eyes, the freshness of seeing, why! it affects the heart, hastening to respond to the elderly person hunched over and walking, attending a funeral, a wedding (even in a crap mood) - do an act of goodness and kindness today, hospitality, these things, genuine non-intellectual real life living, the self hops out of the way in responsiveness, really krishnamurti's meditation is always expressed in the active by present participation, employing a present participle, ie watching, listening, inquiring, attending, learning etc., the word religion, not its stories, constructs and rituals, that dimension represents ultimate diversity and charm, no, we're talking the underlay of the rugs and the carpets, the 'felt' ground of being on which we walk, live and breathe, that je ne sais quoi, that wholeness, suprapersonal dimension is common, and unifying in a state of inner freedom/essence that can enjoy the decorative

From Robert Penny

Quotation from the Hierarchy of Heaven & Earth by Douglas Harding, p58

Of the two lessons I have to learn, I am always forgetting one or the other. The first is the lesson of how to become nothing, the lesson of the Tao -- "Be empty: that is all: the perfect man's use of his mind is like a mirror", the lesson of Keats' 'negative capability' and James' 'relaxation'. To be still, to polish one's mirror, to empty oneself and prepare the receptacle, is to invite a great access of power.

And the second is the lesson of how to become something, by becoming something in others, re-creating them and so becoming part-author of reality. I am the world's receptacle, and it is mine. Others use me to make something of themselves, and I use them. By courtesy of the inhabitants of every region I am self-conscious, for their consciousness of me is my self-consciousness actual or potential. My continually changing self-estimate is a series of changes in them.



Douglas Harding concludes one of his extensive commentaries on his map as follows: *In short, I find this map to be a valuable antidote against clinging. It reminds me of the fact that to lock onto any of its parts, in isolation from the living and strictly indivisible Whole, is to undervalue and to spoil both part and Whole, if not to kill them outright. I hope you, too, will find it useful.*

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Buddhism—from Heinz Rahn

I read NOWletter 184 on Advaita with which I am mostly unacquainted but it made me return to Tibetan Buddhism with which I have been acquainted since 1977 and to which I try to return as much as I can. There are many texts and one that I have been engaging with again is *Contemplating Reality, A Practitioner's Guide to the View in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* by Andy Karr. It seems to me that the path to genuine reality laid out by Advaita is less clear and complete than that laid out by Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.

"Students of greatest capacity are the sudden types, who, simply upon hearing about selflessness or the nature of mind, recognise the true nature of reality, just as it is. Students of a middle level of capacity are called *alternators* --sometimes they get it , and sometimes they don't. The majority of students are those of lesser capacities called the *gradual* types, who need to slowly and systematically go through the stages of the path. The Tibetans say that the reason students are of different capacity is because they have done different amounts of listening, contemplating, and meditating in previous lives, and bring more or less delusion with them to this life. The sudden types are people who have gained great realisation in the past and just need to be reminded to look in order to see things as they truly are.

The three *dharmachakras*, or three turnings of the wheel of dharma, are often presented as the historical evolution of the teachings and provide a framework or map for understanding the main stages of the path.

Sentient beings need to be led to the truth in stages, because if someone tried to present the most profound reality all at once, either they wouldn't have a clue what the person was talking about, or they would think the teacher was nuts! It is not easy to recognise a dream while you are dreaming or to recognise selflessness and emptiness when you are deeply habituated and attached to the self and to your projections or indeed when you have intense egolessness phobia. Hence the Buddha introduced the true nature of reality in stages where the first-turning teachings present the truth of

apparent reality. The second-turning teachings refute *what genuine reality is not*, and the third-turning teachings assert *what genuine reality is*.

The first-turning teachings are presented in terms of the way things appear to ordinary beings. The self exists. Things exist. The world exists. Sentient beings exist. The three times (past, present, and future) exist. Suffering exists. Cessation of suffering exists. The path that brings cessation of suffering exists. This is what is called apparent reality. It is the way reality appears to deluded beings, and it is in these terms that the teachings of the first turning are presented.

In this context, the Buddha taught that all positive states of existence arise from virtuous deeds. All negative states from nonvirtuous deeds. Liberation arises from removing obscurations from body and mind. He taught that all dharmas (phenomena) are marked with impermanence, selflessness, and suffering and that only nirvana is peace. In short, he taught how cause and effect work at the level of apparent reality.

The second and third turning teachings are presented from the way things actually are. This is called genuine reality. Once students begin to wear out their attachment to delusion through following the teachings of the first turning, they are able to hear the teachings of the second turning which present essencelessness or *shunyata* -- that all phenomena are empty of true existence, like dreams.

The quintessential second turning teaching, that all phenomena are empty of intrinsic existence -- while they appear, they are empty, while they are empty they appear, form is emptiness, emptiness is form; emptiness is no other than form, form too is not other than emptiness, is expounded more fully in the *Sutra of the Heart of Transcendent Knowledge* (transcendent knowledge is a translation of the Sanskrit term *prajnaparamita*), often referred to simply as the Heart Sutra of which there are many translations.

The teachings of the third turning explain that all dharmas are the play of original wisdom or radiant clarity. This is the *tathagata-garbha*, or buddha nature. In ordinary beings, this wisdom is obscured by temporary stains of conceptuality and emotionality arising from our mistakenness. In buddhas this wisdom is fully revealed.

Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso in the *Sun of Wisdom* states; 'In the middle and final turnings of the wheel, the Buddha described the true nature of reality, explaining that the way things appear to be is different from the way they actually are. The Buddha taught that of all the progressively subtle ways of explaining the true nature of reality, the ultimate description one can make is that the true nature of reality is the true nature of mind, the union of luminous clarity and emptiness. It is difficult, however, to understand what 'the union of luminous clarity and emptiness' means as an initial statement, and therefore the Buddha taught about the two aspects of emptiness and luminous clarity separately and in great detail in the sutras of the middle and final turnings, respectively. Once students understand what emptiness is, and then what luminous clarity is, they can then much more easily understand how it is that genuine reality is in fact the union of the two.

Nevertheless, the profundity and vastness of the Buddha's teachings in the sutras make them difficult for ordinary individuals to understand. For this reason, Nagarjuna composed *The Six Collections of Reasonings* to explain the middle turning's *Sutras of Transcendent Wisdom (the Prajnaparamita Sutras)*, and *The Collection of Seventeen*

Praises to explain the final turning's Sutras on the Buddha Nature. From among The Six collections of Reasonings, the major text is The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way.'

Another map or framework of the Buddhist journey is called 'the stages of meditation on emptiness' or 'the stages of prajna meditation.' This is a sequence of investigations that strip away the conceptual and emotional veils from samsara to reveal its genuine nature—nirvana. The investigations proceed from coarse to more and more subtle, and roughly parallel the historical evolution of Buddhist traditions in India.

In the first centuries of the Common Era, Indian Buddhism flourished and evolved rapidly. Nagarjuna and Asanga and their followers produced a great ocean of mahayana teachings. As far as we know, these teachers did not see themselves belonging to separate schools, but later scholars, looking back at their exuberant outpouring and the teachings of the earlier traditions, organised them into a framework of schools and subschools as pedagogical tools. To differentiate the schools, they identified different systems of tenets.

These tenets are often called philosophical systems, but they are a little different from philosophical systems as we know them in the West. The systems are not elaborated as ends in themselves but rather with the pragmatic intention of aiding practitioners in their quest for liberation. Buddhist tenets indicate ways of investigating reality directly, through the practices of contemplation and meditation. The systems of tenets are more like theoretical work in science than philosophical projects. A scientific theory describes a certain understanding of phenomena and indicates fruitful areas for new exploration and experimentation. Likewise, the tenets describe the relationship of apparent reality to genuine reality, and indicate how to investigate these realities.

The different stages of meditation on emptiness are named after the schools of tenets that the investigations are based on.

- Vaibhashika, or Particularist, School
- Sautantrika, or Followers of Sutra, School
- Chttamatra, or Mind Only, School
- Madhyamaka, or Middle Way, Schools
 - * Rangtong, or Self-Empty, Schools
 - Svatantrika, or Autonomy, School
 - Prasangika, or Consequence, School
 - * Shentong, or Empty-of-Other, School

The first stage is named after the Vaibhashika school. It can be translated as 'particularist' school for its emphasis on the fragmentary nature of reality. The investigations use subtle impermanence to analyse experience and reveal that which is ultimately real. They say that only the most minute particles of matter and most subtle moments of consciousness are genuinely real. Coarse things and durations of

consciousness that appear don't truly exist: they are just concepts and labels superimposed onto collections of these partless particles and moments of mind.

The next stage, Sautantrika, followers of sutra school, provides a different way of deconstructing the way things appear. They say that things that truly exist are things that can perform functions, such as the directly perceived objects of the five senses: sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile bodily sensations; as well as the consciousnesses that perceive them. What cannot truly perform a function does not truly exist; it is only a deceptive appearance. For example, the spoon that you directly perceive on your table is genuinely real, but it is not connected with any name or label - it is merely an object of your eye-sense-consciousness. On the other hand, the object that appears to your conceptual mind when you think 'spoon' cannot hold any soup -- it cannot perform a function, so it does not truly exist.

The Chittamatra or 'Mind-Only' school says that dualistic appearances of perceived objects and perceiving subjects are deceptive. All outer and inner appearances are only mind. They use dreams as examples of things that have no material basis yet appear to be vividly real, and they say that daytime appearances are the same. For this school, genuine reality is consciousness, free from the mistaken duality of perceiving subjects and perceived objects. This school is sometimes referred to as the Yogachara, or 'yoga practice,' school.

The Madhyamaka, or 'Middle Way' school includes two schools: the Rangtong which is further divided into two subschools and the Shentong.

The Rangtong is divided into the Svatantrika and the Prasangika, therefore the next stage of analysis is named after the Svatantrika subschool which says that conventionally things appear to be real, but when investigated with reasoning, nothing can be found to exist. Genuine reality is empty like space.

The next stage, named after the Prasangika subschool, describes reality the way ordinary people describe it: without any analysis at all. They say genuine reality is free from all concepts of what it might be, even the concept of emptiness itself.

The last stage is named after the Shentong Madhyamaka school, which describes apparent reality the same way as the Chittamatra school, while describing genuine reality as luminous clarity, or the inseparability of emptiness and wisdom.

There is one thing to bear in mind about these maps of the path. It is only from the point of view of our confusion that there is a journey to be made at all. From the perspective of genuine reality, there is no journey, no one to make the journey, and no goal to arrive at. Everything is originally pure, great perfection. However, until we realise this, we definitely need to make efforts on the path, because the illusory appearances of the path will unerringly give rise to the illusory appearances of fruition.

Otherwise we are left with clinging to the illusion that 'I' and 'mine' are real and so as the seventh-century Indian Buddhist master Dharmakirti wrote;

When there is self, one believes there is other,
From these images of self and other
come attachment and aversion
As a result of getting wrapped up in these
All possible faults arise."

This is a very short summary of the path based on the following texts.

Gyamtso, Khenpo Tsultrim. *The Sun of Wisdom, Teachings on the Noble Nagarjuna's Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*. Translated by Ari. Goldfield. Boston: Shambala Publications, 2003.

Karr, Andy. *Contemplating Reality, A Practitioner's Guide to the View in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston: Shambala Publications, 2007.

Tenzin Gyatso, The Fourteenth Dalai Lama. *Essence of the Heart Sutra*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005.

Heinz Rahn

Why Not Nothing?

We still cannot answer the question
 Why there is something instead of nothing?
 The question implies a false statement.
 There isn't something instead of nothing.
 There is something **and** nothing.
 Something **Goeswith** nothing.
 We all know where to find something.
 Seers know where to find nothing.
 Something and nothing are both necessary.
 You can't eliminate one side alone.
 You can't keep one side alone.
 With no nothing, no something either.
 Only something -- impossible.
 Only nothing -- impossible.
 Of course, I'm speaking of perception.
 Seeing is an occasion of perception.
 Even if you don't consciously see nothing,
 Nothing is still in your view.
 You can't lose nothing.
 Nothing and something are always in sight.
 Something is seen in and from nothing,
 in and from the headless space.
 Something and nothing together,
 the godhead, the faceless expanse,
 the great image, the big picture.
 Something instead of or without nothing,
 the great pretense, the big lie.

Jim Clatfelter

Jim added that he didn't think of this as a poem when he wrote it and that the one word *Goeswith* was coined by Alan Watts, Laozi 18 gives us the 'great pretense', the great image comes from Laozi 35 and 'faceless expanse' came out of an LFY exchange about six years ago.

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Cloud of the Impossible by Catherine Keller

John O'Neill introduces the book: *Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* by Catherine Keller.

We had a fine morning and a comfortable fly-free session on the deck for John's talk at our October meeting. John is an engaging personality, an enthusiast for his causes and he handled the difficult assignment of introducing us to the wide range of Keller's complex content very well. For example, he managed to untangle the meaning of planetary entanglement very satisfactorily. He also covered the range of options she identifies as our notions of what the word God is pointing to and the various versions of the cloud metaphor.

Keller is a process theologian and polymath of consequence and once you overcome an immediate resistance to her innovative use of language, her approach is seen to offer interesting possibilities, notwithstanding the title of the book, *Cloud of the Impossible*. In the limited time available John managed to stimulate our interest in the wide range of areas covered by the book.

Keller's book includes commentary and reference to people who pop up for discussion fairly regularly at our meetings so we were a receptive audience. She attaches importance to theopoetics, a subject that came to light for me when the Tasmanian poet James Charlton's book on Eckhart, Dame Julian and Traherne appeared last year. (NOWletter 168) The inclusion of Emily Dickinson, Whitman, Whitehead and Bohm as references indicate that Keller shares our interests and concerns. Inclusion of Bohm's implicate and explicate order proposal is similar to her version of 'folding to ply'. These and many other familiar references appear as she applies her thoughts about relationships, inseparability and collective awareness to such issues as climate change (from a Gaia-like perspective) and our interconnectivity at many levels.

Whilst open to many traditions, philosophical positions and theories, she seems to be striving for a catch-all coordination of the multiple streams. I felt that the entanglement referred to in the title is her way of addressing the possibility that the increasing complexity (entanglement) of our world offers a possibility of good outcomes and as an example she speaks of what she calls an amorous cosmology.

All this will be checked out when I get around to the reading the book myself.

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Beyond Literal Belief—Religion as Metaphor by David Tacey

In the first flush of enthusiasm on seeing what the Harding experiments revealed I said to Douglas "This method is just what the church needs to re-vitalise itself". Douglas replied that he thought the clergy the least likely to get the point. In his book *THE TRIAL OF THE MAN WHO SAID HE WAS GOD* he quotes Carl Jung to the effect that the church is the custodian of a mystery it no longer understands. David Tacey makes plain the reason for this forgetting; we mistake metaphors for the truths they represent and then tie ourselves in knots trying to validate our representations as facts.

There are reviews for this book on the Amazon page at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Religion-Metaphor-Beyond-Literal-Belief/dp/1412856108> . This is not a review, just a summary of the points I thought particularly interesting.

The book opens with a personal introduction by the author (referred to as DT from here on) describing his churchgoing family and how he went along with commitment to traditional Christian teaching until his early teens when he began to question the simple faith in which he had been reared. His sister pointed out to him that religion was mythological and to her, as to most others, that meant it must be false. He did not feel this was right at the time but was unsure about how to respond. The book explains what he came to understand as the necessary response, which is largely to undermine this assumption of falsity and to present the case for recovering a respect for myth and metaphor. This reminded me of my own rejection of Christianity as a teenager and how I engaged in atheistic argument with the enthusiasm of a would-be Richard Dawkins whenever an opportunity arose. I imagine the problem of taking the metaphors literally applies to most if not all traditions, the examples used in this argument are mainly Christian examples which make it particularly relevant to my interests and experience.

David Tracey (DT) explains that for him "... Jesus existed as a historical figure, but most of the representations of his life and ministry are mythological. He writes, ' I do not believe that the recognition of the mythical dimension leads to atheism, scepticism, and nihilism. In fact I think quite the opposite; the acceptance of myth leads to a deepening of faith and a profound appreciation of what the biblical writers were trying to express". And later he quotes Keats:

Jesus was so great a man that though he transmitted no writing of his own to posterity, we have his mind and his sayings and his greatness handed to us by others. It is to be lamented that the history of Jesus was written and revised by men interested in the pious frauds of religion. Yet through all this I see his splendour.

On page 30 he includes this quotation from Alvin Kuhn:

... religious myths are fables of events which, as events, never happened. The aim was never at any time to deceive anybody. It was never imagined that anybody would ever 'believe' them. Nevertheless the myth was designed to tell truth of the last importance. Its instrument was fancy, but its purpose was not falsehood but sublime truth. Outwardly it was not true, but at the same time it portrayed full truth. It was not true for its 'characters' but it was true for all mankind. It was only a myth, but it was a myth of something. It used a false story to relate a true one. While it had never happened, it is the type of all things that have happened and will happen.

David Tacey is, amongst other things, a Jung scholar so the use of Douglas's quotation at the beginning of my notes is doubly appropriate, and on page 74 there is an interesting comment on Atman which is also relevant to our recent discussions of Advaita. He writes:

"Jung used the idea of the Atman as a model for his concept of the Self, as supraordinate entity in the psyche that extends into the nether reaches of the soul, beyond the confines of ego consciousness. Jung has been criticised by theologians for 'divinising' the self, thus producing what they claim is a religion of narcissism and the deification of the ego. This is strongly evident in the Vatican's recent attack on Jung's work. But Jung is not thinking along Western lines in his concept of the Self, and the

theological criticism he has received is ignorant of his Eastern sources, where Atman is not the same as ego. The Atman is the 'place' in the soul where time and eternity meet."

I was very pleased to see this as this particular 'place' is exactly what is made plain and directly apprehended in the Harding experiments.

Chapter 6 is entitled *Waking Up* in which Jesus is identified as a spiritual master rather than as a messiah, or redeemer and the 'waking up' is awakening to an overlooked universal interiority rather than some remote possibility and to which we are pointed in Luke 17:20.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

I think I have to qualify the word observation by replacing it with what I believe is intended, that is 'outward observation'. Tacey continues on p113:

The experience of the kingdom, the new self, or Christ is an awakening to another authority in the personality that was present but not discerned. The mystery of the new self is that it was already present that the ego, in its sleep, was unable to register it. The ego cannot see it, which I assume is the real meaning of the miracles in which Jesus enables the blind to see.

"It is often claimed that the "seeing" of the kingdom is what brings the possibility of eternal life to followers of Jesus. I can only assume this means that when one enters into the region of the new self, one participates in its life beyond time and space. The ego exists in time, and disappears, we assume, at the point of death. If we die as ego there is perhaps nothing left, no trace or essence remaining. But if we have made landfall in the kingdom, we have an afterlife in the sense that our existence has impacted on the eternal and cannot be fully erased. The new self has its roots in archetypal reality, and although it incarnates in this world it has dominion beyond it. The new self is a luminal reality that acts as a bridge between eternity and time and can only be described by paradox and riddles".

It is helpful to consider the experiments in this context and even more so in the turn-around comments that follow.



p124. "In initiation, something is revealed to the ego that has not been imagined before. Metanoia can also mean 'to turn around', to face what has not yet been seen, what has not been considered.

(The drawing and this note are my inserts. The diagram shows, at the rear of the outstretched arms that which is normally overlooked and left out of our everyday account– the eternal).

"The moralistic interpretation of Metanoia is an aberration in the history of religion. What Jesus is calling for is a transformation of the person, and induction into the spirit. He is saying:' see things

from the perspective of the soul, and respect its need for spirit'. His call is not for good behaviour, but rebirth. Where Christianity went wrong was in reading rebirth as an act of the ego: it called on the ego to transcend itself. This is not possible, which is why Christianity has not lived up to the promise of Jesus.

Chapter 9 is headed-- Resurrection: Ascending to Where?

On page 171 DT says: "Joseph Campbell has the gift of plain speaking and puts the resurrection conundrum in simple terms. If, he says, the meaning of the resurrection is to be found in literal terms we are forced to reject it, as it does not make sense".

This is followed by the following Joseph Campbell quotations:

A metaphor is an image that suggests something else. For example, Jesus ascended to heaven. The denotation would seem to be that somebody ascended to the sky. That's literally what is being said. But if that were really the meaning of the message, then we have to throw it away, because there would have been no such place for Jesus literally to go. We know that Jesus could not have ascended to heaven because there is no physical heaven anywhere in the universe. Even ascending at the speed of light, Jesus would still be in the galaxy. Astronomy and physics are simply eliminated that as a literal, physical impossibility.

... If you read 'Jesus ascended into heaven' in terms of its metaphoric connotation, you see that he has gone inward—not into outer space but into inward space to the place from which all being comes, into the consciousness that is the source of all things, the kingdom of heaven within. The images are outward, but their reflection is inward. It is a metaphor of returning to the source, alpha and omega, of leaving the fixation on the body behind and going to the body, your dynamic source.

DT refers on page 83 to the resurrection story about the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and followed by his subsequent dis-appearance 'when their eyes were opened'. This as a metaphor for, in my view, the revelation of what could be spoken of as opening our awareness to 'God with us'. He says on page 183 that the Emmaus parable acts as the prototype of awakening. 'We are walking on the path of life and do not recognise God is at our side as we journey along. We have the assistance of scripture, but it alone does not open our eyes. The scriptures are inspired narratives, but do not always transform us. Something more is needed; in order to bring out Metanoia or rebirth a tradition has to be converted from external message to internal realisation'.

And on P184, ...Once this deeper dimension is understood, the need for a literal reading of the narrative falls away, and we are left with the truth.

My only complaint is in Tacey's interpretation of Matthew 18.3

Verily I say unto you, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The author interprets this to mean that unless a child-like understanding is applied whereas I think it is a matter of restoring our child-like seeing.

Speaking of the value of and need for myth for which he provides some very helpful references' he says on page 229:

"The task of interpretation is to update the mysteries by relating them to contemporary life, thus maintaining the link between eternity and time present and past. But of crucial importance is that the return to myth cannot be return to supernaturalism. It can only involve a rediscovery of the spiritual as an unseen dimension of the natural.

I think that point about it being a matter of the natural rather than super-natural is a critical point. A matter of the natural made plain.

I copied this paragraph from his concluding comments:

"Heretical or not, we are moving into a new understanding of religion. ... We can no longer afford to take the gospels literally, as this freezes their meaning in time and prevents us from seeing the coming of the kingdom as a personal event. The gospels speak to us about our present condition and not merely to the ancient past. The metaphorical approach ensures that the personal dimension is not siphoned off into historical positivism. Theologian Karl Rhaner said, 'the future Christian will be a mystic or he or she will not exist at all'. The best way to ensure that people become mystics is to learn the language of metaphor and symbol, because they will then see that the symbols point to themselves, to the interior of their lives. p237.

On p243 he mentions Jung's reference to the requirement for a limitless range and unfathomable depth of vision and goes on to say

"Perhaps we might ask where this 'limitless range and depth of vision' are to come from. I cannot see such a range or vision on the current religious horizon, but it is unfolding in contemporary science, philosophy and psychology. The idea that the interior self is an eye destined to behold the light has been kept from us, withheld from knowledge. We have to win this back, claim it as our own, and if guides are not available in the religious institutions, we have to search for them in new areas, including the mystical traditions of East and West".

I started this note with a quotation by Douglas Harding and I think it's fitting to conclude with the suggestion that the best place to start to address the challenge of that final paragraph would be to adopt Harding's science of the first person as the most practical way of dissolving the imagined but powerful chasm between the spiritual and the scientific, the natural and the so-called supernatural, the physical and metaphysical.

It would be wrong to think of all Christians as locked into a dream of literal interpretation but certainly the majority seem to be dedicated to the belief in the stories as fact rather than metaphor. I go back to my Anglican friend of the 17th century who, aware of this state of affairs, said:

Once more we will distinguish of Christians. There are Christians that place and desire all their happiness in another life, and there is another sort of Christians that desire happiness in this. ...Whether the first sort be Christians indeed, look you to that. They have much to say for themselves. Traherne—Centuries 4/9

I thought it an excellent book but I wondered why, in addition to the metaphors of the stories and parables, the author had not considered Christianity itself as a meta-metaphor pointing to the demise of the transcendent God and its resurrection as immanence.

Alan Mann

Moonrise–Time Lapse by Luke Taylor

Probably The Most Beautiful Moonrise Time-Lapse You'll Ever See.

On July 31st this year, this beautiful time-lapse rise of the Full Blue Moon was captured two and a half miles away from Cape Byron Lighthouse, on Belongil Beach, Byron Bay, New South Wales, Australia. The head land and lighthouse at Byron Bay is the most easterly point of the Australian Mainland and therefore is the first place in Australia to watch the full moon rise. This video is made up of 1038 frames and slowed down to as close to real time as possible. The photographer has been working on perfecting this type of time lapse for over a year now after seeing the work of his favorite photographer Mark Gee.

Don't forget to breathe watching this majestic time-lapse; everything about it is just perfect, and it's a photography clinic for anyone interested in taking time-lapse. See this stunning moonrise and appreciate just how beautiful God's work can be.

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/137218768>

Thanks to Yvonne Truen for spotting and sending.

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