

Issue 104 –December 2004
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Meetings:

Dialogue – Third Sunday of the month

Harding – First Saturday of the month

		Page
Responses to ‘Don Cupitt and the Sea of Faith’ articles in Nowletter 102	<i>Greg Spearritt</i> <i>Paul Tulip</i>	2 2
Review of <i>The Serpent Rising: a Journey of Spiritual Seduction</i> by Mary Garden	<i>Ann Faraday</i>	4
The Implications of Near-Death Experiences for Understanding Posttraumatic Growth	<i>John Wren-Lewis</i>	6
Schloss-Gebser-Harding – A commentary on the latest George Schloss <i>Letters to Carl</i>	<i>Alan Mann</i>	8
Poems	<i>Ryokan</i> <i>Colin Oliver</i> <i>Paul Tulip</i>	12 13 13
Meetings		14

Editor’s Note,

A letter from the editor of The Sea of Faith Bulletin in Australia, Greg Spearritt, which opens this month’s publication, has readjusted my assumptions about the Sea of Faith. I have made an attempt to summarize the recent letters of George Schloss, which are too lengthy for inclusion here, in a four-page commentary in this issue. I recommend a visit to the Capacitie website for the full story.

Subscriptions for the calendar year 2005 become due in January. This applies only to the postal version where a subscription of \$15 covers postage and printing. There is no charge for the email version. I know some of you postal readers are paid ahead and I’ll put a confirming note in with your copy.

Thanks to this month’s contributors.

The Nowletter appears between 10 and 12 times every year and is a vehicle for news and views about awakening to what is really going on. Contributions from readers are considered the most valuable content so please think about letting me have your thoughts, experiences, discoveries and any responses to what you read here.

Subscriptions: Postal \$15 per annum, Email – Free

Don Cupitt and the Sea of Faith from Greg Spearritt

A few brief notes in response to your assessment of SoF:

While it's true that Don Cupitt inspired the formation of the original UK Sea of Faith Network, he can't truly be said to have 'founded' it. He is not and never has been a SoF member. The SoF Networks in NZ and Aus do draw on him as a source of stimulating ideas - and he gives generously of his time and resources - but he is one source among many.

SoF - at least in Australia - is essentially about pushing the boundaries: we want to resist the tendency to make idols of particular ideas or belief systems, Don Cupitt's or David Boulton's included. SoFiA's only creed is 'There shall be no creeds', and our formal aim is simply to "openly explore issues of religion, faith and meaning", with a view to expanding the range of ideas and possibilities that each of us has to draw upon as we live our lives. Our members hold all kinds of positions (though mostly, it must be admitted, on the liberal-radical end of the spectrum, since those on the conservative end tend to be unhappy with too much 'open' discussion).

Certainly some are 'non-realists' a la Cupitt, but many more are 'critical realists' for whom Rachael Kohn's warnings about overlooking 'objective' reality were pretty much irrelevant. (I didn't see these warnings, actually, as particularly relevant even to the more 'Cupittian' of us. They were entertaining and sobering, however.)

SoFiA is much more about discussion and intellectual exploration than about 'experiencing' as such.

However, it would be misleading to suppose that many or most (perhaps even all?) SoF members don't have or value spiritual experiences: it's just that there are other avenues (various churches, or Eremos, for instance) for exploring/experimenting with spirituality in a hands-on fashion. For some of us, indeed, spirituality has a profound intellectual dimension and the experience of honest discussion is much more than a 'talk-shop' experience.

Best wishes, Greg

Greg Spearritt

Getting wet in the Sea of Faith from Paul Tulip

I have a copy of the book Titled 'Sea of Faith' by Don Cupitt beside me. Published in 1985 it accompanied a TV series of the same name. Chapter One opens with part of Matthew Arnold's wonderful poem 'Dover Beach' written in 1851 including -

'The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.'

The last magnificent verse isn't quoted in the book. It's given below and foretells the disaster that was the mid 20th century when the withdrawal of faith in God created those two great tyrannies of slaughter, Communism and Nazism, bedrocked respectively in Atheism and Evil.

'Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.'

So, that was history, but guess what?. The tide's coming in! The Sea of Faith is rising. If you keep standing just where you are now, you're going to get your feet wet!

The 'Sea of Faith' movement is evidence of this post modernist renewal of interest in the search for spiritual life. It's cute. Wavelets lapping against the toes. What does SoF say about God? Basically, that God does not exist, we made up God as a potent symbol. Here's a couple of quotes from the SoF website.

'SoF acknowledges that no truths in the world arrive untouched by human hand. Truths are made within human culture and language. Ideas, beliefs, faiths: we made them all up - not, of course, as isolated individuals or lone craftsmen, but as communities, groups, collectives, cultures.'

'SoF uses "non-realism" to refer to the belief that God has no "real", objective or empirical existence, independent of human language and culture; God is real in the sense that he is a potent symbol, metaphor or projection, but has no objective existence outside and beyond humanity.'

It comes down to the old question of whether God is a human concept like patriotism or stands outside the human mind.

I love my mother and she loved me. The only way we knew that was from the experience of our relationship from the inside. Knowledge coming from being inside applies to so many mundane things.

'Bus' is 'made within human language' in the sense that when I want to talk about that big thing that stops down the road and takes me to work I use the word 'bus' - but a bus itself is not the symbol, metaphor or projection. For people who have eyes to see the same applies when they use the word 'God'. They are then referring to what Tillich called the Ground of our Being that calls to our Spirit from every atom, plant, animal, person, cloud, planet, whatever.

How do we know of God? Well, how do we know a bus? It's a vehicle of transport to another place. I can read about buses or look at photographs but I'll really only get to understand buses when I get inside one and take a ride. To get that feeling 'Aaha...now I know what buses are like' I MUST step inside one and take a bus ride. There is no other way to know what buses are like.

In the same way, to know God you simply have to step inside and take a ride on a mystery tour of love. How do you step inside God? By communication. Communication is two way.

It seems reasonable to conclude that if there is a God then God would want to communicate with us. How? If I say that you possibly could experience something of God by talking to people about Douglas Harding's Headless experiments and getting into them, or going to a Pentecostal church like Hillsong and trying acceptance in your heart of the triple offer of forgiveness from the past, a new life today and hope for the future that God creates through the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What would your reaction be?

It depends on what type of person you are. One factor is whether you are a Yes type person or a No type person. Everyone tends to one or the other. If I say 'I saw a fox in my garden'. A Yes type person could say 'Oh, that's nice. What was it doing?' A No type person could say 'It was probably a ginger cat.'

If I say 'You may possibly be able to get in tune with a loving God by doing Harding's pointing finger experiment.'

A Yes type person could say 'Do you think so?, what's it about then?'

A No type person could say 'There can't be a loving God because there's so much mess in the world. Look at my daughter by my first marriage...now she's really screwed up...'

It's up to you. Dive into the sea of faith to seek the eternal.

Try getting wet. You might enjoy it.

Paul Tulip

THE SERPENT RISING: A JOURNEY OF SPIRITUAL SEDUCTION by MARY GARDEN (Sid Harta Publishers, Melbourne; Second Edition 2003). Reviewed by Ann Faraday.

When a guru's not engaged in meditation
 A-reciting of his mantra for the week,
 His capacity for infantile inflation
 Is enough to drive disciples up the creek.
 He will take the girls aside for tantric yoga
 While celibacy's ordered for the chaps;
 If he starts behaving like an angry ogre
 He will claim it's just to make your pride collapse.
 Oh, with all this yogic practice to be done,
 A disciple's lot is not a happy one."

This little poem by John Wren-Lewis was inspired by *The Policemens' Chorus* from *The Pirates of Penzance*, and the first (1988) edition of *The Serpent Rising* by Mary Garden.



Sometime in 1980, John Wren-Lewis, my daughter Fiona and I found ourselves on a crowded Indian bus, sitting next to a young Western woman dressed from top to toe in white, who seemed oblivious to the heat, noise and smells around us. "It's a very long, tiring journey," she said, advising us to pull our scarves over our faces and focus our minds inwardly in order to shut out the general mayhem which would be our fate for the next eight hours. I wondered if she belonged to some religious group, a Hindu nun perhaps. Anyway, we were glad to have her company, as she obviously knew her way around.

It turned out that she was a New Zealander called Mary Garden who had left home many years earlier to find her guru in India. Her first stop had been a visit to the (in)famous miracle-working guru, Sathya Sai Baba, ending after several months as she observed the rich and powerful receiving private *darshan* from the Master, while she and other impoverished but serious devotees were ignored. There were also rumours of his sexual molestation of young boys, later to be confirmed by Western ex-disciples. "At least Rajneesh and his followers were open about sex," she said, adding that her later years at the Poona ashram had been very positive, mainly on account of all the therapies available from skilled Western group leaders.

She tells of these ashram adventures in her book, and they are lively enough. But the main story centres on her years at the Rishikesh ashram of a beautiful boy-yogi, Swami Balyogi Premvarni. I don't recall her mentioning this on the bus, probably because she was still raw and hurting from her years as his disciple. Nor would the details of his constant sexual demands ("just raising your kundalini") and her pregnancy and late-term abortion ("your bad karma catching up with you"), have been suitable conversation on a crowded Indian bus – quite apart from all the weird yoga and "cleansing" rituals she had to suffer, including the ingestion of post-coital seminal fluids mixed with cream and honey ("nectar of the gods"). The first we heard about all this was in 1988, a couple of years after we settled in Australia, when we turned on the TV one morning to find Ray Martin interviewing her on *The Midday Show* about the newly published first edition of her book. I recall that he interrupted the interview more than once to advise about giving away too much of her story prematurely, but I suspect he was really concerned about the sensibilities of his typically conservative daytime audience! It turned out that Mary was living in Brisbane, and we've kept in touch, on and off, ever since.

So I was interested to compare the two editions of *The Serpent Rising*, fifteen years apart. The first was presented as fiction with no mention of Swami Balyogi's name or her own as the heroine. The second is the autobiography it really is. Mary tells us that her main reason for the revision was that guru-abuse can now be openly admitted and discussed. Moreover, she believed her story might help all the conflicted young people who had posted their own distressing experiences of this particular yogi on the Internet. Most had been puzzled, confused and disturbed by his outlandish behavior, asking themselves the very same question as Mary had been asking herself for over two decades: *Is it him or me? Was he "testing" me or is he downright abusive?* His Yogant Foundation web site currently extolls his skills as a spiritual master and yoga teacher, adding that "The gems of wisdom and love which radiate from his heart deeply uplift the spirits of those who experience the blessings of his presence." Mary felt it was clearly time to expose him as a dangerous and violent sex-obsessed megalomaniac.

I know, I know, I know – I can hear the \$64,000 question reverberating throughout cyberspace even as I write. It was my question too. It was Mary’s question to which she has still not found a convincing answer. *Why on earth did this highly educated and intelligent young woman allow herself to be so abused?* What’s really going on? Mary puts the blame squarely on the nature of the guru-disciple relationship itself, pointing out that it is probably the most authoritarian structure in the world, with its demand for total surrender and obedience, and hence potentially the most destructive of relationships. “We were seduced by yogis and swamis telling us what we wanted to hear: *that we were special and they were God-incarnate,*” she writes. “Our need was our downfall. In the final analysis the authority of the guru is bestowed on him by the disciple.”

Indeed! Here, I believe, Mary has hit at least one spiritual nail on the head – the desperate need of almost everyone to feel *special*. This is the subject of a recent timely piece in the magazine *What is Enlightenment?* (Issue 26: Aug-Oct 2004) entitled *Women Who Sleep with their Gurus – and why they love it.* The author, Jessica Roemischer, interviewed ten women who had slept with their gurus, some of them now spiritual teachers themselves. “If your husband’s a doctor, then you’re special. If you’re with Mick Jagger, you’re special. If you’re sleeping with your Tibetan lama, you’re special,” said one. Another woman sleeping with a prominent American spiritual teacher explained that all the attention made her feel special “like Rhada – a spiritual goddess,” words which might have come directly from Mary’s story when she recounts how “one full moon night, I experienced a love that seemed to cross boundaries of personal love... the whole universe seemed to be dancing with light and I truly felt as if I was Radha, the most beloved of the gopis, with whom Krishna sported in the lila of love.” Which is all very cosmically gratifying until Krishna takes a fancy to another Radha (as he invariably does), whereupon mayhem descends. Hell hath no fury like a devotee scorned, as many gurus have found to their (literal) cost!

In her fascinating and well-researched article in WIE, Jessica explores the myriad conscious and unconscious urges which lead women to sleep with powerful males. But I feel she may be more than a little simplistic in simply asking why we shouldn’t expect women to be able to take responsibility for their own personal and spiritual lives, even in the face of a corrupt spiritual teacher. “Women now have the freedom to go beyond instinct, beyond social and biological conditioning... taking responsibility for our spiritual journey beyond self-serving desires, facing directly and honestly into what *we* have brought to the situation, and consciously disengaging the age-old structures that no longer serve us.”

I’m sure that Mary would agree – in theory at least. But I think she’d also like to point out that there was more to her spiritual search than merely finding a father-figure or satisfying a neurotic need for attention. “I want to find out who I am and what is the meaning of life,” she had written on her application to join the ashram. “I want to find out the truths behind this universe.” Later when she became disenchanted, she constantly asked herself whether in rejecting her teacher she would be rejecting God. “If we did not believe in Swamiji and maintain our faith, then the whole structure of our dreams of becoming more spiritual would crumble around us – to leave would mean returning to the lives we were tired of, dissatisfied with. To stay would mean that, in spite of the harshness of Swamiji’s teachings, we would taste things we had never tasted before and would probably be unlikely to taste anywhere else.”

Mary subtitled her book *A Journey of Spiritual Seduction*. Is she implying that the real villain of the piece is not really her dominating swami, his needy women, or even the authoritarian structure of the guru-disciple relationship, but the very nature of the spiritual quest itself? Exploration into God is tantalizing, exciting and – dare we say it – erotic. It always was and always will be. How many of us can resist that call? And should we?

Ann Faraday

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The Serpent Rising can be ordered by emailing Mary Garden direct marygarden@bigpond.com (see also <http://www.users.bigpond.com/marygarden/order.htm> \$19.95 + \$5 p&p) or internationally from Amazon.

What is Enlightenment? Local bookstores or see www.wie.org.

The Implications of Near-Death Experiences for Understanding Posttraumatic Growth

Psychological Enquiry (Vol. 15, No. 1, 2004) Comment on piece by Tedeschi and Calhoun also in this issue.

John Wren-Lewis

Sydney, Australia

At first reading, I was surprised and puzzled by the fact that Tedeschi and Calhoun's conceptual analysis of what they call posttraumatic growth contained not a single reference to the phenomenon that in recent decades has come to be widely known as near-death experience (NDE), wherein highly positive life changes are often reported by people who have in one way or another been snatched back from the very brink of death itself. On further reflection, however, it became evident that the undeniably impressive life improvements studied by Tedeschi and Calhoun were significantly different in kind from the change I underwent in 1983 when a medical team in Thailand resuscitated me – after a long struggle, from deep anoxic coma caused by potentially fatal opiate poisoning, a radical identity change that I have since found echoed in hundreds of other NDE reports from all around the world (Wren-Lewis, 1994, 1999; Wren-Lewis & Faraday, forthcoming). Moreover, the difference seems to me very important for the conceptual understanding of both NDEs and posttraumatic growth.

The contrast is epitomized in the word *trauma* itself, which is commonly associated in psychiatric circles with subsequent mental disorder or neurosis, as Tedeschi and Calhoun emphasize. In fact a key element in their presentation is insistence that even in cases where a severe crisis experience has led to very positive life change, this often coexists with continuing personal distress, sometimes even to the point where the experiencer says he or she would prefer it had not happened at all, despite having grown emotionally by living through it. (Rabbi Harold Kushner's widely known experience of having become a better rabbi by living through his son's terrible disability and death is cited as a classic example.) A key feature of NDEs, on the other hand, is the astonished experience of the body's dying as not unpleasant at all, still less a trauma – but rather transition to a far, far better thing than the experiencer has ever known or even imagined possible.

Most remarkable in this respect are those so-called out-of-body experiences (OBEs) wherein the experiencer seemingly floats out of a body that is highly traumatized in medical terms (e.g., in cardiac arrest or a serious traffic accident with multiple injuries) and views the whole affair, often including the extreme distress of loved ones, with complete equanimity that totally transcends ordinary human concern. In these accounts there is no hint of finding unexpected personal strength by a struggle against trauma, on which Tedeschi and Calhoun focus as a major factor in posttraumatic growth, nor is the OBE recalled after the event as anything remotely like a character-building ordeal, as the term *growth* suggests. It is sometimes spoken of as a kind of ecstasy in the basic meaning of that word, standing outside the self as hitherto perceived. The experiencer almost always loses all fear of death afterwards, giving a kind of literal fulfillment to Woody Allen's famous quip that he would not fear death at all if he did not have to be there at the time.

Dramatic OBEs of this kind figure in only a minority (albeit a substantial minority) of NDE accounts, but self-transcending consciousness of some kind, bringing freedom from suffering and anxiety, is the common factor in all the NDE descriptions that have come my way, many by direct personal testimony, many more from the now-extensive worldwide literature on the subject. (For abundantly referenced overviews of worldwide research on NDEs, see Zalesky, 1994 and Fox, 2003.) I myself experienced no OBE, and have no memory at all of what happened between dozing off on a long-distance bus after eating a toffee offered me by the charming young man in the next seat (later identified from police records as a well-known thief) and waking up to find myself in a hospital ward several hours later with a doctor saying, "We really thought we'd lost you." In the next few hours, however, I gradually became aware of experiencing what I can only call a depth of meaning and beauty in everything, such as I had never known before in my nigh on 60 years of life, and the prospect of bodily death evoked no anxiety at all.

When I racked my brains to find words for this strange expanded mode of awareness, my prior research on the relations between science and religion threw up the term *eternity dimension*, which I later found echoed in the writings not only of several others who had experienced NDEs, but also of mystics all down the ages from across the spectrum of religious traditions worldwide. As I learned to live from this radically new perception in subsequent days, weeks, months, and years, I experienced many of the surprises cited by Tedeschi and Calhoun as typical results of posttraumatic growth, ranging from perceiving marvel in the texture of sidewalks to finding surprising new skill in coping with difficulties and feeling greater warmth toward people I would hitherto have found boring or irritating. For me, however, these new gifts did not feel at all like lessons I had somehow been taught by the crisis experience, as in the testimonies quoted by Tedeschi and Calhoun. My feeling was much more like that of having been suddenly and instantaneously cured of something akin to a brain cataract that had obscured my perceptions for as long as I could remember. Far from seeming like a new and more spiritual stage in my personal development, the deepened consciousness felt more natural, almost more ordinary and obvious, than the life awareness had previously taken for granted for over half a century. This experience, reinforced by finding kindred statements in many other accounts of life after close encounter with death, has led me to embrace Maslow's (1971) transpersonal paradigm wherein a mystical dimension of consciousness is seen as the true norm of psychological health, and unawareness of such a dimension is evidence of unhealthy inhibition of human consciousness by unenlightened cultural conditioning.

With this paradigm, the positive life-changes following NDEs suggest that when the brain approaches the point of complete shutdown, the conditioned patterns of thought, feeling, and perception lose their grip on consciousness, allowing the eternity dimension to break through – a revelation that brings profound reorientation of life when the brain resumes working after resuscitation. Tedeschi and Calhoun come close to a kindred understanding of posttraumatic growth when they suggest

that severe life crises may have positive results by virtue of shattering taken-for-granted assumptions about life, the world, and personal identity – but although they cite Maslow with approval as one of the "several clinicians and scientists" in the 20th century who recognized that life improvement can result from such "seismic" shaking of mental foundations, they stop short of an explicitly transpersonal paradigm.

This becomes evident in their emphasis on cases in which unexpected crisis situations shatter a formerly easygoing self-perception based on taken-for-granted optimistic assumptions that the world is a fairly safe, predictable, controllable place, thereby drawing out hitherto undiscovered strength for struggle against adversity. For me and many others who have been through NDEs, however, the resulting identity change has been precisely the opposite: mind-boggling discovery of oneness with an essentially benign inner reality underlying a world that had hitherto been superficially perceived as hostile, competitive, and red in tooth and claw. Far from being a sense of "dauntless human spirit," as described by one of Tedeschi and Calhoun's sources, the post-NDE feeling is one of being able to relax into everlasting arms at the core of existence (Wren-Lewis, 1992).

Moreover, in the decades since my opening to what I call eternity consciousness, NDE research has discovered that similar radical awakenings can occur without the kind of brain shutdown denoted by flat lines on monitors when the body comes to the brink of physical death. Such experiences, bringing lasting positive life changes, have been reported by people facing what seemed like certain death; in fact one of the very first serious studies in this area was made by a Swiss alpine climber named Albert Heim back in the 1890s. Heim fell off a high cliff, only to land on soft snow with very minor injuries. As he went down, time seemed to become infinitely extended, fear vanished, and he experienced wonderful colors and music, plus a panoramic review of his life right from childhood, with a sense that even his nastiest acts were then somehow accepted without being in any way whitewashed.

A scientist (geologist) by training and profession, Heim was moved to publish a scientific paper about his experience when he found it echoed by many other mountaineers, but this work was not translated into English until the 1970s, after Moody (1971, 1975) had begun to draw attention to NDEs experienced in clinical situations. By the 1990s, however, this kind of life change at the apparent brink of death had become sufficiently well-known to be made the subject of Peter Weir's widely acclaimed movie *Fearless*, in which it happens as a plane crashes – an experience so close to that of geology professor Sally Walker cited at the beginning of Tedeschi and Calhoun's article that I wonder if it was her experience that inspired the novel on which the film was based. From my Maslovian transpersonal perspective, such experiences seem to indicate that the well nigh universal social conditioning that shuts out the eternity dimension of consciousness can lose its grip not only when the brain is at the point of clinical close-down, but also when death seems certain and the body seems to have no future.

This leads me to hypothesize that at least some of the positive life changes that Tedeschi and Calhoun call posttraumatic growth involve just such a radical undermining of conditioned personal identity by a sense of "no future for me," rather than a gradual process of learning to cope with traumatic suffering. This would considerably reinforce their contention that assistance with cognitive processing is an essential part of providing support for trauma sufferers, and that hitherto unconsidered spiritual notions on the sufferer's part should no way be downplayed or dismissed as illusions. I would strongly demur, however, from their embrace of traditional religious notions about the transformative power of suffering, which all too often translate into puritanical disciplines wherein unpleasantness is deliberately imposed (or even self-imposed) in the belief that it is necessary for spiritual development.

My own continuing day-by-day (and night-by-night) eternity experience since 1983 disproves the common religious assumption that such consciousness is a very high state to be achieved only by a long struggle of spiritual practice and purification. In fact, my experience and research suggests that this assumption is part of the very mindset that has kept humanity in general locked into the petty, pace of time (with very low life satisfaction) for most of its history. My conclusion from the evidence of NDEs (Wren-Lewis, 1994; Wren-Lewis & Faraday, forthcoming) is that the conditioning which blocks out the truly natural human condition of eternity consciousness is something like a hyperactivity of the mind's survival programs passed on by conditioning from one generation to the next, and puritanical spirituality can only reinforce that hyperactivity.

It is no doubt for this reason that many people have hailed the growing number of NDEs made possible by modern medical advances as the advent of a new kind of spirituality free from the "no pain, no gain" ethic so dominant in traditional religions. For myself, I would see it as possibly nothing less than the advent of a spirituality freed from what the prophetic poet William Blake called the age-old takeover of spirituality by Satan, "the God of This World."

John Wren-Lewis

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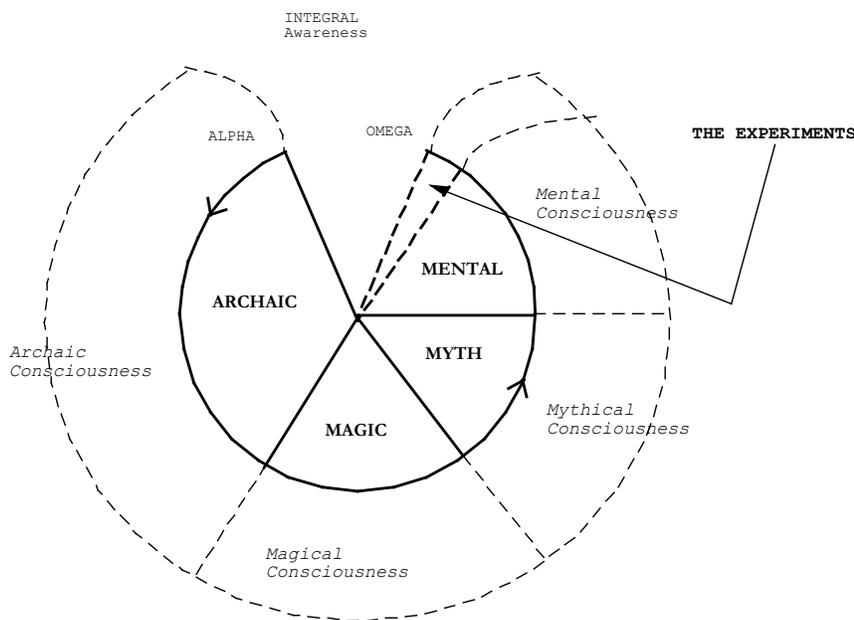
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Schloss-Gebser-Harding – A Commentary on the latest George Schloss *Letters to Carl* from Alan Mann

I recently added a series of George Schloss letters to the Capacitie website where they can be read under the heading *Letters to Carl*. They are too lengthy to fit into a Nowletter so this is my attempt to provide a summary. George draws on the work of Jean Gebser to illustrate his thesis that the Harding experiments provide a doorway to the Integral Awareness which Gebser says is the threshold on which humanity now stands.

The drawing numbers in this article are not in sequence. They are the numbers of the drawings as they appear in the documents which are referred to in these notes. When reading the draft, Margot pointed out the problem of words like ‘verition’, ‘waring’ and ‘presentation’ and suggested I include definitions. Well, I’m not sure whether these words were coined by Gebser to get his message across or whether they are the best the translators can make of German words for which there is no exact English equivalent. I decided to include quotes from Gebser’s book to provide the context in which they are used and they are added as a footnote to this article. I also slipped in an extra diagram, at Margot’s suggestion, to reduce page turning.

I drew on the two-page summary of The Ever Present Origin I wrote for the Nowletter, Issue No. 84 in September 2002 which might be helpful to anyone interested in exploring further. The diagram below is a modification of the George Schloss originals which appear in his *Letters to Carl*.



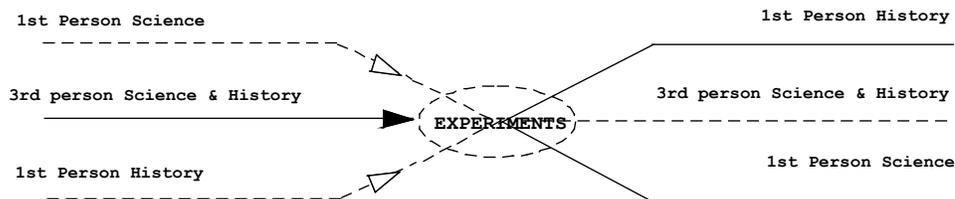
Dwg 6

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

realize and effect the reality of origin and the present in their entirety, supersedes "beginning" and "end" and the mere here and now.

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

(George Schloss Drawing 4 – which I used as a model to check my interpretation of what he is saying).



Dwg 4

This is a Diagram of Awareness before and after the experiments.

At the left of the diagram the solid line indicates the dominance of the objective and generally accepted world view as represented by 3rd person science and history shown as a solid line. The dotted lines of the left side represent the non-realized or barely realized aspects of awareness, that is, 1st Person Science and History. This situation has prevailed throughout human history, through the levels illustrated in Dwg. 6, up until the present and the appearance of the experiments.

At the centre of Dwg. 4 sits a dotted egg representing the Harding experiments which reveal that what appeared as shadowy (dotted-lined) prior to the experiments is, in fact, primary and encompasses as secondary what was formerly regarded as primary (third person science and history. Right side of Dwg. 4). The *shadowy nothing* now recognised as 1st Person Science and History embraces 3rd person science and history which is now seen to arise within and as an aspect of Awareness, i.e., the Integral.

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

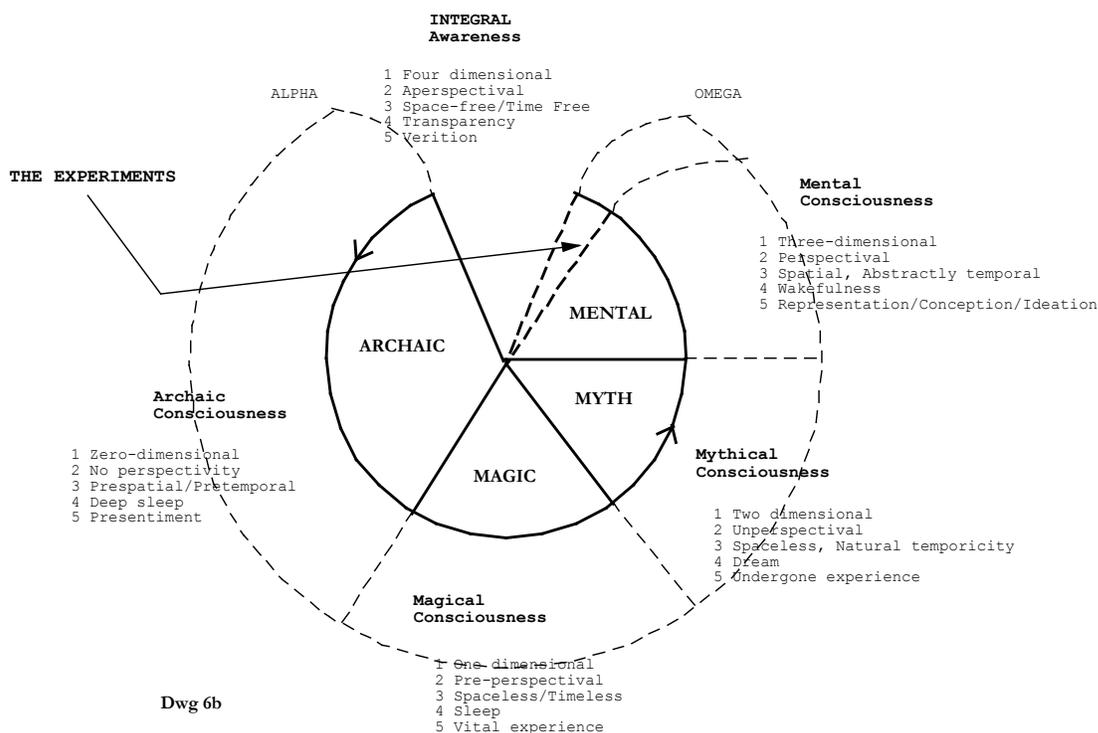
Somehow, this diagram and what it describes has to be apprehended from the openness of no-viewpoint revealed by the experiments; what I think Gebser means by *aperspectival*. This involves a transition from the ‘mental’ to the ‘integrated’. The whole has to be seen not from the gap but somehow as the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

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

If this is actually apprehended, as opposed to merely conceptualised, then we have arrived at what George Schloss refers to as the Gap, in his own words: “*where Omega is joined to Alpha courtesy of the Gap*”. (The Gap is revealed by the Harding experiment in which people stand in a circle and note the break in the circle of heads where their own is assumed to be). Gebser talks about this as concretization of origin and says it comes about through the ‘waring’ of it (see below). As far as I know, he doesn’t say how to go about ‘waring’ and I first wondered whether he realized it could be ‘done’. He most likely became aware himself through some spontaneous revelation. He didn’t seem to be aware of the experiments. I concluded my September 2002 summary Gebser’s Ever Present Origin with the following observation:

‘My only complaint about the Gebser approach is that whilst he provides examples of the imminence of the integral phase which is now opening up he doesn’t say anything about the ‘how’ of it. For that I was able to turn to another great work, which I had read the year before, *The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth* by Douglas Harding.’ After writing that I came upon a review in which Gary Seeman refers to a letter written by Jean Gebser to Georg Feuerstein in which Gebser acknowledges achieving satori.

Drawing 6b is Dwg. 6 repeated with the characteristics of the various aspects of consciousness, as defined by Gebser, added to the picture.



The transitional segment in drawing 6, representing the experiments, is meant to indicate a period at the end of the historical circuit in which the experiments are available but the consequences limited. That is to say, in this segment the inversion is incomplete. I am on tricky ground here because George would object “surely you are not claiming it is possible to be a little bit headless?” I acknowledge the objection but I’m also aware that, in spite of the experiments working and working well – providing at last, the means of Gebser’s ‘waring’ and demonstrating his ‘presentation’– the pull of history is extremely strong and I think there is a dither area in which Douglas’s injunctions:

"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".

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

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

This helps me explain what I mean by being hit by the second barrel of the shotgun which blows off my head. Barrel one, or pointing, finger, BANG! transparency revealed. Clearly seen, so obvious, undeniably true. As Douglas says *"Everybody gets it*

but few believe what they see" That has been my story too as history kicks in with its qualifications and doubts, 'it couldn't possibly be so simple', etc. That is what I mean by that transitional segment or incomplete inversion. When I really see that what I directly apprehend is really IT – source, origin then the second barrel has gone off. *Till we see our nothing we cannot understand the value of our being* says Traherne.

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

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

I wonder if, in addition to the 'brain cataract' diagnosis referred to by John Wren-Lewis in his article (above), the continuing influence of the magical, mythical and mental components of consciousness may be another reason for failure to grasp what the mystics are asking us to share. The magical creating an expectation of supernatural experience, the mythical creating a story line for which illumination must provide a conclusion, in line with the terms of the myth and the mental requiring us to find illumination by way of ever-improving explanations, as opposed to direct experiencing.

Alan Mann

These notes cannot come anywhere near capturing the extent and depth of the George Schloss contribution to the unfolding of the Harding message. I offer them as an appetizer and recommend interested readers to follow up by referring to the material archived on www.capacitie.org (go to the Harding page then select 'Articles').

[Headlessness and the End of History](#) – George Schloss Letters [July 4, 2002 \(34 pages\) - to Carl](#)

[December 28, 2002 \(7 pages\) - to Anne and Carl](#) – [January 4, 2003 \(2 pages\) - to Carl](#)

[Letters to Carl – written between February and June 2004](#) – A series of sixteen one-page letters combined in a single document. [Summary of the letters](#) – A diagrammatic interpretation and summary of the letters by me (Alan Mann) compiled to test his understanding of the letters. [Questions & Answers](#) – Alan Mann's questions arising from the preparation of the summary and George's replies. [Experiments](#). Notes on the experiments referred to in the correspondence.

Here are the extracts I lifted from the website which carries Gebser's great work and the extracts from his writing which provide context for the tricky words.

<http://www.integraleweltsicht.de/html/epo2chap12.htm>

[JEAN GEBSER: THE EVER-PRESENT ORIGIN](#)

[Authorized Translation by Noel Barstad with Algis Mickunas](#)

[Ohio University Press, Athens, 1985, ISBN 0-8214-0769-4](#)

Extract 1 from:

The Ever-present Origin, Part Two, Chapter One

The Irruption of Time

1. The Awakening Consciousness of Freedom from Time

The courage to accept along with the mental time concept the efficacy of pre-rational, magic timelessness and irrational, mythical temporicity makes possible the leap into arational time freedom. This is not a freedom from previous time forms, since they are co-constituents of everyone of us; it is to begin with a freedom for all time forms. Only this form of freedom which proceeds from the concretion and integration of all time forms, and which can be achieved only by a consciousness which is free to stand "above" the previous time forms, can bring about a conscious advance or approximation to origin.

It is from origin, which is not bound to time, that all time forms constituting us have mutated. Origin lies "before" all timelessness; temporicity, and time. Wherever man becomes conscious of the pre-given, pre-conscious, originary pre-timelessness, he is in time-freedom, consciously recovering its presence. Where this is accomplished, origin and the present are integrated by the intensified consciousness. The irruption of time into our consciousness is the first indication, the initial motif of the consciousness mutation that is today acute. This mutation will bear its fruits of transforming the world if we succeed in superseding the irruption of time; but that is tantamount to what we have called the **presentation of origin**, which can be achieved only by the successful fulfillment of the main task posed by the new mutation: the coming to consciousness of time-freedom, of the achronon. (the time-free present)

The Concretion of the Spiritual**Extract 2**

This diaphaneity is all-encompassing: it is a transparency of space and time as well as of light, of matter and soul as well as of life and death. An utterance of Max Picard that "Everything that stems from spirit is transparent" understates, for the transparency of the spiritual pervades the whole and the whole is transparency. Thus the perception and imparting of truth, the "**verition**" of diaphaneity, supersede the mere mental-rational validity of antitheses and is the realization of the achronon shining forth in it. **This time-free present (the achronon)** is just as real and efficacious a time-form as those that have preceded it in consciousness, and failure to recognize them would impede its realization. We should note that this syncretic process, which makes the integral consciousness structure accessible, is a new capacity, and not a mere sum of the old. Anyone who understands this syncretic process to be a summation is thinking mentally and synthetically; consequently he fails to perceive arationally and does not attain the basis for the meaningful solution to our task.....

.....Once man sought truth; this was achieved over the millennia by philosophy; once man believed truth, and this bond was made possible over the millennia by relegio and later through religion. And wherever we think and believe, those attainments endure. But for those capable of "**a-wareing**" the whole, the true, this "**verition**" is no longer a philosophical search nor a faith beset by doubts but a discovery without that search which throughout the ages was, as it were, merely the preparation.

The undivided, ego-free person who no longer sees parts but realizes the "It-self," the spiritual form of being of man and the world, perceives the whole, the diaphaneity present "before" all origin which suffuses everything. For him there is no longer heaven or hell, this world or the other, ego or world, immanence or transcendence; rather, beyond the magic unity, the mythical complementarity, the mental division and synthesis is the perceptible whole. To this he does not need the retrospective bond (religion). It is pre-ligious; its presence is achronic, time-free, and corresponds to man's freedom from ego. Magic *pro-ligio*, mythical *relegio*, mental religion become co-supports for praeligio(n) which is the intensified and overdetermined expression of all the others. What is "before" space and time, what has become ever more intensely realizable via the time-lessness, temporicity, time and space (owing to the various consciousness structures), becomes perceptible in conscious achronicity.

The pre-temporal becomes time-free, vacuity becomes plenitude, and in transparency the spiritual comes to perception: origin is present. In truth we ware the whole, and the whole wares us.

When all thoughts

When all thoughts
Are exhausted
I slip into the woods
And gather
A pile of shepherd's purse.

Like the little stream
Making its way
Through the mossy crevices
I, too, quietly
Turn clear and transparent.

By Ryokan (1758 - 1831) from *Dewdrops on a Lotus Leaf: Zen Poems of Ryokan*, trans. John Stevens

(I received the above from Poetry Chaikana, a website run by Ivan M. Granger who selects and sends a daily poem to anyone interested. All you need to do for this daily delivery is to go to <http://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/> and enter your email address.)

Boundless

Like the wind searching,
 lifting feathers
 round the sparrow's neck,
 lifting leaves in a wave
 across the bean field,
 I find no place
 where I can say,
 here my being ends.

From Stepping Into Brilliant Air by Colin Oliver

A collection of over 80 poems written over more than twenty years. See www.headless.org for more details.

Pathways

When young we're introduced to Death
 And two of his best friends.
 Mr Should and Miss If-Only,
 Who'll ensure you're never lonely,
 They'll hound you to the end.

Mr Should's a Demon
 who will force you to perform –
 'You should, 'you have to', 'must',
 'You've got to' or lose trust.
 Life's a game and you're a pawn.

Then there's little Miss If-Only,
 Friend to the lonely and half dead.
 Queen of regrets, lost chances, dreams,
 Longed for pasts and hopeless schemes.
 She'll really mess your head.

You can see it in the faces
 Of people high and low.
 You think they're only walking
 But they're putting on a show.

They run ten crooked miles
 Through mean streets dark and lonely
 With Mr Should 'You must....you Must!'
 And pretty Miss If-Only.

Mr Should, he cracks a whip
 He's screaming in their ear.
 They Mustabate at his command,
 Their hearts are dried with fear.

Then little Miss If-Only, laughing
 Waves 'What-might-have-beens'
 Till blinded, sick and stupid
 They fall into a dream.

They sleepwalk in their offices
 They sleepdrive in the car.
 Truth's just a sneaky feeling
 Soon drowned in Mall or Bar.

Wake up, Wake up, why don't you?
 Choose life on this new day.

Pretend we're human after all
 Answer to God's Holy call,
 Love is the Only Way.

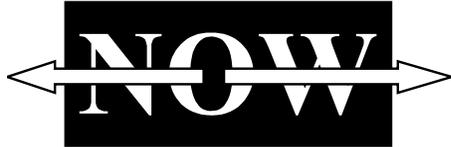
P. Tulip

Academy of the Word Seminar Programme Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504 – 2nd & 4th Tuesdays– Under St Peter’s Church, Devonshire St., Surry Hills. **Second** Tuesday 6.15pm - *Healing & Well-being* - **Fourth** Tuesday 6pm - *State of the World*

Blavatsky Lodge of The Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., Sydney (near Town Hall Station) Talks Programme Every Wednesday at 2.30pm and 7pm – Printed programme available 02 9267 6955 and at – <http://www.matra.com.au/~hpb/index.html>

Melbourne – Evening Satsang/Dialogue with Penny Fenner 23a Britten Street Glen Iris - Monday evenings 7.30-9.30pm - To confirm attendance and for further information please call 03 - 9885 0119 T: + 61 3 9885 0119// 0411 554 007 - E: penny@fenner.org - www.skilfulaction.org

Look for Yourself Meetings First Saturday of the month at 10-30am, 81 Greville street, Chatswood (off Fullers Road) Alan Mann 02 9419 7394



Nowletter 104 – December 2004

**If unable to deliver please return to:
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Regular Dialogue Meetings				
<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>DAY</i>	<i>MEETING PLACE</i>	<i>TIME & ONTACT</i>	<i>Phone Nos.</i>
Sydney City	Third Saturday	Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society - Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 8218 5900 M.Box770184
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Nowra	First Saturday	The Tea Club, Berry Street, Opposite Roxy Cinema	4-6pm –Riche du Plessis	4423 4774
Nowra	Third Sunday	3/117 Berry Street, Nowra	10.30 am Riche du Plessis	4423 4774