

Harding Meetings—81 Greville Street
Next Meeting—November, date to be advised
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*The Nowletter appears between 8 and 12 times every year and is a vehicle for news and views about awakening to what is really going on. The content is based **primarily on contributions from readers** and subscription is free.*

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Editor’s Note,

Margot and I have been travelling and I wondered whether there would be anything to put in the October issue but, on our return, I found a number of excellent articles waiting for us. I’m always grateful for input from readers and doubly so on this occasion. Thank you. Most readers are aware that the small font is due to the need to keep the NOWletter within the standard postal envelope rate. Postal deliveries have fallen to a level which allows me to print at home but we still have 16 postal readers and any of you receiving by surface mail but, having installed email, are able to take the email version please do so as it eases the monthly workload quite significantly.

Harding Meetings – usually first Sunday of every second month (next meeting probably mid-November). I will circulate the proposed date. Anyone wishing to add their name to the list for notification of these meetings please send me an email or phone 02 9419 7394)

How Harding's "IN-POINTING" may happen to you: in galleries, even when looking at posters, magazines or newspapers! by Gerhard Crombach, M.D., Austria

I am writing about portraits with some significance to NOW-readers. Portraits with eyes looking straight ahead at the viewer – giving him or her the chance of meeting by eye contact, inviting mutual gazing.

Eye-to-eye contact is generally very special, complex, even mysterious – different to any other kind of gazing. Eyes of a person may be felt as “Stars, stars. And all eyes else dead coals” (Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*). Remember also the “evil eye”; nowadays we have “eye gazing parties” and “eye gazing sesshins”! --- In preparation for my perspective here let me start with quotations:

“Stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God.” (*Herman Melville*)

“thine eyes are as a vase of divine silence” (*E.E.Cummings*)

“Eye-to-eye contact is direct communication through space, taking us beyond the whole subject/object split.” (*John Welwood*)

“When two pairs of eyes look into each other for a long time, one man comes across to the other through gazes, and what remains is a feeling that does not know bodies.”(*Robert Musil*)

“The gaze of the other may be experienced as streaming into my whole being – I am filled out and irradiated by it.”(*John Heron*)

This possible space-opening, silencing and streaming quality of mutual gazing interests us here. **Let's jump into experience – right now!** I invite you – thanks to the Internet – to join three of my favourite portrait paintings.

It is quite obvious that flat reproductions are only poor reflections of what the shimmering originals can offer us. – And to be very personal: my most favourite portrait is an opaque photograph of my wife's face, taken through a windowpane. When I raise my head at my desk, I meet her gentle gaze: a gaze which makes me feel wide and spacious. Her joke is: “I know you like this picture because there I am silent!”

As you are sitting at the computer right now, please have a look at:

Rembrandt's “Resurrected Christ” (Alte Pinakothek Munich)

Rembrandt's “Self-portrait as the Apostle Paul” (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

(go to “A web catalogue of Rembrandt paintings: 1660-1669” via Google)

Renoir's “Portrait of Madame Henriot” (National Gallery of Art Washington)

(go to “Wikimedia commons image pierre auguste renoir madame henriot”)

In all three cases it is possible to get enlarged pictures: eyes up to natural size. Dwelling on the portraits you should allow yourself to be captured and grabbed by those dark eyes. Take your time!

After a while you may make a very astonishing experiment: Still looking at the eyes, remaining in their gaze, move away from the screen, to the left, to the right, to the remotest corner of your room. Much to your surprise, those eyes will follow you – **they don't let you go!** You may even choose to look at the pictures from an extreme angle: the eyes carry on gazing at you. Walking around in a museum room makes it much more impressive. (You may be interested in the fact that *Nicholas of Cusa* made this observation as early as 1453. He used this “portrait phenomenon” for a nice parable for God's universal caring. First: His gaze would never abandon you; and second: every creature has the same impression of being the only one looked at, cared for.)

When you feel the lasting gazes of Madame Henriot or Rembrandt or Christ, can you feel the “streaming” *Heron* (see above) talks about? Being caught by those eyes can you experience “a unitive field of consciousness with two poles”?(*Heron*)

Remember *Harding's* in-pointing finger (see “On having no head”)! **Aren't the warm, tender, nonjudging gazes like “pointing” into the spaciousness, capacity, concavity on your side?**

Or do you feel the depicted persons inspect your eyes - like an ophthalmologist, perhaps looking for colours and forms? Is this a look **at** - or **into** your eyes? (You cannot inspect the eyes in the portraits either, because there are no visible details.) At least this is clearly the case for me: Dozens of paintings in the world's famous galleries had given me such a

“sense of reciprocal widening out” (*Heron*). Standing in front of Rembrandt’s “Self-portrait as the Apostle Paul” *Roger Housden* remarks: “These eyes, so open, open me. They open a gate, dissolve my defenses.”

Is this triggering of “headlessness” limited to outstanding and rare works of art? No, it is not! Of course there are highlights, but a lot of less valuable portraits (paintings and photographs) can offer the same experience. Look into art books, go to a museum or a photo exhibition! After some training you will discover this gazing into your own spaciousness, even when looking at posters, magazines, newspapers. It happens nearly everywhere. Psychologically speaking, a kind of “generalization” has taken place. Now “streaming” can be triggered even by unimpressive “face-stimuli”, being reminders of your limitless capacity here. - The next time you walk through a shopping street, pay attention to the “gazing posters”! They will follow you with their eyes!

The most important requirement for an emerging quality of “streaming” is a face with a discreetly friendly expression: softly smiling at the most. A big smile or a laughing mouth would distract from intense eye-to-eye contact. (Portraitists know that.) The tenderness must lie in the eyes. The three pictures discussed here are very eye-centric! – But there can be a gaze which is not a gate to spaciousness at all:

A face devoid of love or grace,
A hateful, hard, successful face,
A face with which a stone
Would feel as thoroughly at ease
As were they old acquaintances –
First time together thrown. *Emily Dickinson*

Such a gaze can freeze you to a stone-like object, or pierce you like a spear. “One and One – are One” (*Dickinson*) – one space, or one stone! Try looking at Hitler portraits at the Internet, and also at the compelling recruitment posters with their pointing fingers: “Lord Kitchener Wants You” (Wikipedia)!

What may be the source of such a streaming or opening quality of mutual gazing? I suggest that it is rooted in very early childhood. Babies as young as two days of age look significantly longer at photo-portraits with **direct** gaze than at ones with **averted** gaze (*Farroni*). Mother and child gaze at each other for long times: 30 seconds and longer; on the other hand, adults do this only for few seconds - except when having sex, or when fighting (*Stern*). Eye-to-eye contact between adults is highly ritualized and emotionally charged. Subconsciously we always ask: “What do I mean to you, what am I worth?” Adults do not **enjoy** eye-to-eye contact **as such**: they are always concerned with its meaning. A philosopher has recently compared mutual gazing – even a friendly or an erotic one – to a wrestling match (*Schmitz*). (Because this should not happen in the “tunnel experiment” *Harding* gives us the advice not to stare into the person’s eyes – rather to look at the colour of those eyes or at the eyebrows: no gazing in the “tunnel”, only inspection!)

There are rare exceptions. Art historian *James Elkins* writes about gazing silently at his wife: “The two of us are like the two sides of a bowl, and the water between shimmers with an intricate pattern of crossing waves. Some of the most important moments in my life have been spent looking into her face as she looks back into mine and watching the liquid motions of her eyes as they make their silent points. In comparison to that kind of communication everything else is crass.” Generally in daily encounters – even between close friends and relatives – this spacious quality “may be presented only in brief and fleeting episodes” and “may only be subliminally noted” (*Heron*). – Possibly after some “portrait training” we may become more often aware of this innate, but very much overlaid “streaming”. – Anyhow, I recommend portraits as a trigger to “headlessness”:

“I saw you and became empty.” *Rumi* (- empty for you and the world)

Gerhard Crombach

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Cupitt and Harding on Emptiness and Peace— from Doug Lloyd

Don Cupitt and Douglas Harding are significant writers on reality. Both are well worth reading.

Emptiness – Cupitt

In his book “Emptiness and Brightness” Cupitt has a chapter entitled “Solitary Buddhas”. He quotes the Buddhist writer Nagarjuna.

When Buddhas don't appear
And their followers are gone,
The wisdom of awakening
Bursts forth by itself.

Cupitt takes this to mean that everything within our experience and everything within ourselves is contingent and changing.

That everything is contingent means that it just happens to be; it could have been otherwise. It just happens that Sam Rue is alive at the beginning of the 21st Century. It just happens that he is an Australian by birth and is a member of a Christian church.

Everything is changing. Sam's religion, his ethics, his philosophy is temporal. They will change.

In the same chapter Cupitt goes on to say that in order to do any new kind of thinking in philosophy, in religion, and in ethics each person will need to begin with a program of unlearning. We need anti-philosophy, anti-religion and even anti-ethics in order to clear our heads.

In other words we need to become empty of many ideas acquired through tradition and culture in order for “the wisdom of awakening” to happen.

Emptiness – Harding

Harding also writes of Emptiness. However it is the heart of reality for him. It is the No-thing that is the source of everything. It alone is the reality that is truly alive and gives to us our biological life.

Yes, we are all empty of mind, of consciousness of spirit, and all of us are in constant flux until the change to death. Yet we do so within the Emptiness that is unchanging, for this reality is No-thing and therefore cannot change.

The Experience

For Harding the “wisdom of awakening bursts forth by itself”. It isn't something he arrived at by long arduous meditation. Nor was it achieved after many lessons by a teacher. It simply happened. He looked inwards and found Emptiness. No-thing or things. No nose, ears, eyes, hair or chin. He gazed on a translucency that was seemingly endless.

The Meaning

This Emptiness had given birth to him. This reality was him and is all creatures. It just happened that the Emptiness gave birth to him in 1909 and into the English culture of that time. Harding quotes many people living in different eras and cultures for his view on Emptiness. For example,

Every creature is an appearance of God. Erigena.

He who sees the supreme Lord dwelling alike in all beings,
and never perishing when they perish, he sees indeed. Bhagavad Gita.

Only the invisible can see the visible. Eckhart.

Peace – Cupitt

In a chapter entitled Faith without Creed of the same book, “Emptiness and Brightness”, Cupitt states that after many years of religious thinking and practice he has at last found contentment.

He has achieved this by giving up the quest for objectivity. Given up the idea that the truth is out there. Given up the desire for timelessness. Instead, he says, yes to Be-ing. Yes to pure contingency, yes to life, and yes to the life-world as a self-producing, self-renewing work of art that forms in us and pours out of us.

Peace – Harding

For Harding peace is the Emptiness. It is the Emptiness that can be seen by pointing inwards. The Emptiness that is Nothing or things, hence cannot be harmed.

Sam Rue was involved in a group discussion on religion. He was feeling jittery, for he thought he would be looked upon as a fool if he uttered his thoughts to the conservative religious members. The matter of heaven came up. Sam said, “St Paul wrote of the ‘Peace that passeth all understanding’. I am feeling jittery now, but I am experiencing it within the ‘peace that passeth all understanding’. Heaven is here.”

In his book, “Head Off Stress”, Harding uses the analogy of the television screen. Going on within the television set are scenes of people distressed, shooting one another, bombings, etc. Yet the screen is not harmed.

Conclusion

As a person who has experienced two-way looking, inwards and outwards simultaneously and practises it daily, I agree with Harding on Emptiness and peace. The Emptiness is the source of all objective reality, and being empty, cannot be disturbed. Hence is peace.

Yet Cupitt’s writings can be of great value to those of us who are conditioned to two-worlds thinking. That is, that there is an invisible eternal world as well as this temporal earth. That there is a perfect unchanging world of forms such as beauty, truth, justice and goodness, and also this imperfect and mortal earth world that we inhabit.

Cupitt might help us to empty ourselves of two-worlds thinking and so pave the way for that “instant awakening”. To that inward seeing that awakens us to who we really, really are. To that Emptiness that contains the writings of Don Cupitt and Douglas Harding.

Doug Lloyd

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(Joan Relke <http://sculptors.net.au> sent me this exchange which she extracted from emails posted by the Fairfield Satsang group and which I reprint with the permission of the people involved. Joan mentioned she had sent John Wren-Lewis's interview with Caroline Jones to a friend from in this group, and she's had it copied and is spreading it around. He's making quite a splash in Fairfield at the moment Ed.)

Waking up— from Isaac Nevas

On Jul 6, 2008, at 3:34 PM, Isaac Nevas wrote:

It's been about a year, and I feel like reflecting back, to help clarify things for myself, and because I have some questions for you guys. Things have been settling down, and becoming very normal. So much so that at times it's very easy to forget anything has changed at all. If it wasn't for my memory of the huge difference in my behaviour, it would be very easy to say I'm just completely normal and nothing has changed.

I feel wrong calling this enlightenment. This ain't anything like what I thought enlightenment would be. It's not that uber-wonderful. It's just. Normal. less suffering less pain, both still exist. But the burning, maddening desire for enlightenment... well, it's gone. And the questions, the questioning consciousness, where I always felt something was wrong, where I always felt confused, in the dark, wondering if I would ever really 'get there' ... by now it's all faded to something more mellow. Once again, not gone, just.. it's lost its edge.

I can't worry like I used to worry. I no longer feel I want something I don't understand called 'enlightenment.' I want something I do understand. I want more. More of what I've got, more of what I've gotten. Which is basically just life; living, fully. I always wanted something super-natural, something extra-ordinary, as proof that I had achieved my goal of enlightenment. It was supposed to be something big, something completely different from what I currently was, from what I currently experienced. And it was supposed to solve all my problems instantly, like a light switch going on and illumining the darkness. All my addictions, fears, laziness, ineptitude, they were supposed to disappear, instantly, upon achieving enlightenment, because it was going to be like my best temporary experience of bliss and flow, except even

more powerful, with superpowers and omniscience and photographic memory to boot. And it was supposed to happen completely and unmistakably, at a completely random time, after a life of being a good regular meditator. Or, randomly, if you got lucky/had good karma, it would happen sooner, possibly without very much provocation at all, a single meditation or getting stung by a scorpion.

Somehow enlightenment has both been reached and dissolved at the same time. That unreachable goal really was unreachable, because as soon as I got to the place where it appeared to be, I fell through, and it turns out it was just an illusionary apple, hung up to spur me on. And now I find myself in strange new territory, without an apple of my eye to guide and goad me on. You in this group call this awakening, and I can't deny (and why would I want to) that all that you've said about it is observably true, or else just still unexplored territory to me, and I know the pattern will hold up. Which means I can't deny that I must also be that. That's the only way I can know all that I know. One of the few giveaways that something big has indeed changed. I have answers to questions that I shouldn't have unless I am IN the state of consciousness I'm talking about... Not intellectual answers. Just...seeing it. Which is very fun when questions about it come up, 'cause it's fun to explore. Just like harri said. But when the spiritual aspect isn't activated, it's easy to forget it exists. It may not exist, when it doesn't have any attention on it. I don't know.

It was more dramatic in the beginning, though it was also more full of doubt. There was witnessing, there was intense stuff going on, energy moving around, ecstatic bursts, and depressive sags. It was noticeable, it was changing. But it seems to have settled down somewhat. And so I've acclimated to it, and it's become normal and unnoticed. Perhaps I've even started to undervalue it. Life is kind of...neutral. and I guess that's not enough anymore. I want life to be really frikkin' good. That's why I did this whole shindig... well, I guess at first I just did it because I wanted life not to suck. But then when I found out how amazing it could be, I wanted that. So here comes the question:

Mary, you've mentioned the rheostat before. That's one of the things I wasn't expecting about awakening: I wanted a total bliss drive-by as my wake up call. Angels, God, Maharishi, and the bestowment of bliss. Plus the unveiling that I was actually an amnesiac super-man. Instead, I got this damn rheostat.

There's an experience of...what to call it, presence? awareness? knower? some thing. Something that makes life better the more there is of it. But how much there is goes up and down. There's usually less when I'm interacting with other people, and more when I'm alone or in a halfway state between sleep and awake (like for the uncomfortable but incredibly lucid plane ride over here (to Israel)). You said sooner or later the rheostats gonna blow. Is that as good as it sounds, or is it another enlightenment/awakening switcharoo?

This segues into the question at large on my mind: what am I supposed to *do* now? There must be either some bit of the map I'm missing, or else I'm trying to apply old rules to a new world, in which case, what are the new rules of the game? There must be more than this. People like Maharishi and Christ and Hafiz.

I feel like I should be doing something. Awakening was just a beginning. Awakening was just saying: ok, time to start living life. Time to begin. twenty one years just to be born. Yeash. Our society sucks. God I hope I can bring up my kids in a place where they're born when they're born, and grow up uninterrupted from there. Sorry, digression. So, how does one live well? How do I grow from here? I can't use my old tricks. The apple is gone. And yet, the potential for growth is unlimited. Is there another shift as dramatic as initial awakening? What is the pathway there, or it being to personal, how do I find the pathway.

It would be easy to walk away and just pursue whatever interests me, and live my life, but I wonder if perhaps this is what Maharishi was talking about when he said it was easy to get stuck in CC if you didn't know about GC and UC. Well I know about them intellectually, but perhaps that's not enough.

So, you people, who've been climbing longer than me, and can look down and see where I am: Where am I? Where do I go to next? How do I avoid getting lost and stuck in traffic, and what's the fastest way there? Heh. You know, perhaps all I needed to write, for the question, was this last paragraph. Anyways, thanks, as always, for your time and attention. I was just looking back at the first two questions I asked on here, and the answers I received are still some of the most useful writing I've ever read. So thanks for this opportunity to ask. (also, as I was re-reading them, I think I saw a comment from George to the effect of: I'd love to be here where you're at in a year. Well, here it is.) Thanks, Love Isaac

Mary's response:

We had a name for it, back before scientists had invented the Unified Field. We called it, The Big and Beautiful Wise everything. Wow—a very clear and well written post—I enjoyed reading every word, and hope my response is not boring in comparison...

Dear Isaac,

The answers to all of your questions will be answered. Most of them by just being, just living. I can't tell you what's next for you. What comes will be what your body can sustain. There does not seem to be extra juice coming from some unknown place that you can use to blow the rheostat but it will surely blow, in due time.

I can't really say how long that will be but I will say that you will know when it does. Just when you thought infinity was already known, it will get even bigger and your experience of it will be bigger. The first time for me was like infinity turned inside out. No other words can explain how it felt. But it changes because that is the nature of the relative experience. It is based upon change. So your experience will morph into more. More than once, countless times. It's that thousand petalled lotus forever opening, turtles all the way down... How can that be? You are just freshly awoken, like you are in the morning when you first rise out of slumber. There is the whole day ahead of you. Lots can happen in a day and what is ahead for you is a spontaneous flow from moment to moment, experience to experience, up, up, and away! I don't know what is next but there is a next.

It will keep getting more and more beautiful, more and more grand, more and more clear. Your understanding may soon come right along with the experience. They can come from all directions, day and night in the forms that all of the human senses can take; hearing, sight, taste, smell, touch. The miracle of the human body's senses allow us to experience consciousness. That is what our bodies are for.

There is an unspoken progression. Maybe it is written somewhere in the veda, or some other holy manuscript. But I trust that this progression moves on its own, challenges you to keep looking, keep wanting, keep opening, until you are in the place where you can stand and look into the face of the grand, supreme creator and know that you need not look any further. That time must come for everyone at some point in human existence once your eyes are open.

It will all unfold in this thing we call time and you will know the immortality and more, spoken of by Maharishi. I wrote in my book and to Maharishi; "Enlightenment is not like you said at all but it is exactly like you said." And it continues to be so.

I have been wondering how you are doing and glad you wrote to us. And happy to know that everything changed and nothing changed. The smoothness and gracefulness continues and continues to grow. There can be some illusory rewriting of the rules. You may appear to change some, mostly to yourself, or you may not appear to change at all. But you will know what you alone can know and you will experience it in your own way. Truth lies in beauty, hand in hand.

Trust yourself, doubt your doubts, treat your body well and look ahead to infinitely more. It is there waiting for you. Gleam on! Safe travels and all good to you always Dear One, Mary

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Home is where the Heart is—from Colin Drake.

To be truly 'at home' in the universe is to be totally free from all existential angst and anxiety, to be utterly at peace, to feel absolutely free to be what one is, to feel completely accepted and loved, with no judgement whatsoever. One of the best definitions of such a 'home', in the Oxford English Dictionary, is: 'a place where something flourishes or from which it originated'. Another definition is: 'the place where one lives'; which gives the clue to being totally 'at home', for if one could truly 'live' in the 'place in which one originated and where one flourishes' then the problem would be solved.

This may be all very well but where is such a place and how do we find it? Here that old saying 'home is where the heart is' gives the clue; not the physical heart but 'the central, innermost, and vital part' (OED) of our being. Also 'where the heart is' symbolises that which we love and where we are totally loved and accepted. All that needs to be determined now is: where is the 'central, innermost, vital' level of our being, where there is absolute oneness; in which all things arise, exist, and subside? For in this all things are loved and accepted as they are never separate from this.²⁰

This is pure consciousness which has two different modes, or levels; firstly when it is totally still, at rest, aware of everything that is occurring within it (that is pure awareness); to be totally aware of what is going on in a busy environment one has to be still, just witnessing the activity. Secondly when it is in motion (cosmic energy) manifesting as the physical universe; for the 'string theory', and the theory of 'relativity', both show that matter is synonymous with energy. Now all motion arises in, and from, stillness, exists in stillness, is known by its comparison to stillness and finally subsides back into stillness. For example if you walk across a room, before you start there is stillness, as you walk the room is still and you know you are moving by comparison with this stillness, and when you stop once again there is stillness. Therefore every thing, which is a manifestation of cosmic energy (consciousness in motion), arises in awareness (consciousness at rest) exists in awareness, is known by awareness, and finally subsides back into awareness.

Thus our true essence, from whence we originate and where we flourish, is this level of awareness, where there is only peace and tranquillity, being the level of consciousness that is totally still and at rest. This awareness is always present as we are always aware of our thoughts and sensations, which in themselves are manifestations of cosmic energy (consciousness in motion). These are just ephemeral, and fleeting, and arise in (exist in and return to) awareness, the constant, conscious, subjective, presence; which at the deepest level we truly are.

This is the sub stratum of existence, the most fundamental and essential level of being; for even at the level of manifestation we could not exist without awareness of our thoughts and sensations. This is our true 'home' where there is only 'oneness' (consciousness), and thus everything (just a movement in this) is loved and accepted as one with this. So to be truly 'at home' all we have to do is identify with (and as) this pure awareness, and see thoughts and sensations (indeed all physical objects) as what they truly are, ephemeral movements in awareness. This is easy to see just by taking a few moments to notice how thoughts, and sensations, come and go in awareness, leaving it totally unaffected.

To put it in a slightly different way: before any particular thought or sensation there is effortless awareness of 'what is' (the sum of all thoughts and sensations occurring at any given instant), during the thought or sensation in question there is effortless awareness of it within 'what is', and then when it has gone there is still effortless awareness of 'what is'. So awareness is the sub-stratum in which thoughts/sensations arise, exist, and back into which they subside.

All that is needed to be 'where the heart is' (and thus totally 'at home') is to live in, and from, this 'central, innermost, vital' level of our being, which is awareness itself. For this is truly where we originate, in which we exist, to which we return, and that which we truly are. In this we are absolutely 'at home', totally free from all existential angst and anxiety, utterly at peace, free to be what one is, completely accepted and loved, with no judgement whatsoever.

Colin Drake

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Nothing To Get—from Jim Dodds

I think the point where the balance really shifted was June 22, 2008, at David Carse's satsang, when Lee Alden said, "I got that there's nothing to get," and I said to myself, "...and no one to get it." Should I put it so bluntly? Awakening is. I am that. And I purposely leave "that" uncapitalized. In fact, I should say, "i am that," or even, "i=that." There are not two. No effort is needed to make it so. No exercises. No practices or devotions. No meditations or magic potions. Every effort that is made simply adds to the problem. Every effort strengthens the illusion that this is not it. No matter how I feel, happy or depressed, strong or weak, crabby or serene, this is it. Right now, as I type these words, there isn't anything else but suchness. For the theistic, there is nothing but God. And i am that.

The apparent life continues, but it's like I've been coated with Teflon. Nothing sticks. There are comforts and discomforts. All of that is in the bodymind, mostly resulting from conditioning, from the kind of memes that are generated in a brain that throws in with the consensus that we are all separate creatures, and we have to protect ourselves. The great pandemonium of thoughts plays endlessly on the screen of the mind, but I know that they are no more mine than the trees and the clouds and the grass that the brain sees as "outside of me." Nothing is outside of me. Nothing is inside of me. The looking out is also looking in. There is no beginning, no end, no center, no edges, no order, no chaos. Once in a while the whole thing opens wide and the universe pours through me for a moment. Part of the turning was realizing that there's no one here that needs that to be happening all the time.

I ran into a word as I was surfing the web the other day. I looked up the Sanskrit for formless, and it's *arupa*. I'd been thinking *avidya* was a good one, because that means ignorance. But my final teacher, Byron Katie, describes it as the "don't know" mind, and that "don't know" doesn't feel like ignorance. *Arupa* means formless, and that feels better. If you try to explain it to someone who's very attached to the idea of God, you could say that what this world turns out to be is God frozen, and as we melt back into "that" we return to the formless, which is where we all came from to begin with. If they're not attached to that, maybe they can hear that the formless is what we all "always already are," to borrow Adi Dam's phrase. What's looking out of you at me and what's looking out of me at you is That, all one, not two. Where the rubber meets the road we are one being. This understanding is always right there, whenever you're ready to settle down and really just look, or just *see*, as Douglas Harding would put it.

Doubts, fears, second thoughts are all in the mind, just shadows passing by. It's so simple to awaken. So simple we miss it over and over again. Please listen. It's good news! We're here! This is it – right now, as you are. I promise you.

Arupa

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The Sydney Secular Mysticism meetings—from Alan Mann

The October Friday Forum meetings at Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney are designed to present a view of mysticism which rescues it from the opinion that it is necessarily mysterious, inaccessible and/or available only to the few. As coordinator of the series I designed it as an enquiry into what is meant by mysticism; exploring what various teachers, scientists, philosophers and teachers have to say about it and including a series of experiments designed to bring direct experience of the so-called mystical back into everyday experience.

What I am calling *Secular Mysticism* is the direct apprehension of the so-called secular, free of the explanatory baggage I hang upon it and which prevents us from experiencing of the world as it really is. (Selected Definitions OED):

Secular — ... belonging to the world and its affairs as distinguished from the church and religion, civil, lay, ; non-religious, non-sacred.

Mysticism — ... having direct spiritual significance ... mental tendencies characteristic of mystics, belief in the possibility of union or absorption into God by means of contemplation and self surrender.

The reason for the choice of this apparently self-contradictory term is to underline the fact that we have, by and large, come to see the everyday world as unsacred and projected the sacred into some transcendental dimension inaccessible to everyday consciousness

Whilst I am clear that this is a most appropriate line of enquiry for me I have no illusions about it being the right way or the only way. I think the notion that there is only true way is the cause of much unnecessary friction. So, my aim is neither to persuade or teach but to share the approach I have taken and the influences I have found most beneficial.

Some of you are aware of my interest in Douglas Harding. The reasons for that will become clear during this series of meetings but the main reason is that whereas I have found numerous teachers, past and present, very capable of *telling* me what is important in exploring reality and what needs to be done I didn't find any, apart from Harding, who were able to *show* me.

My basic position is that what the spiritual quest is about is *immediate*. That is, it is not to be mediated by complex teachings, teachers or authority of any kind. It is simple. But that simplicity comes at a cost.

Lack of meaning. I have a strong desire for meaning and in the urgency of my need to discover and express meaning in my life I tend to seek it where it seems easiest to find and that is usually in the words or writing of others. A good example of this would be those who, claiming to seek Christ, end up worshipping the Bible and ignore Christ completely. That, of course, goes for fundamentalists of all persuasions and they would be better labelled peripheralists having abandoned direct experience, the presumed foundation of their belief system and inspiration of their prophets, for interpretations and explanations of a priesthood no longer in touch with truth..

One of the highlights of our recent trip to Russia was a guided visit to the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. One of the Tretyakov gems is a massive, wall-size painting by Alexander Ivanov 1837-1857, *The Appearance of Christ to the People*¹. The painting shows Christ as a lonely figure on barren ground in the distance, symbolic of truth. In the foreground, the people are milling around largely ignoring Christ, indifference and scorn seems to their response and John the Baptist is the only one seriously attentive to the distant figure. According to our guide, Leo Tolstoy found in this painting either inspiration for or affirmation of his book entitled *The Kingdom of God is within you*. In the book he decries the failure of humanity to heed the message of Christ and to produce instead the watered down versions appearing as bibles, creeds, etc. and to worship these rather than conform to the teaching, or, to put it another way, to engage with truth. He describes how this corrupted version, institutionalised in the Russian Church, became an instrument of oppression of the serfs in the hands of the ruling classes. I thought this highly relevant to our exercise here, an example of the preference for explanations and interpretations over truth.

We have arrived at this meeting here tonight by different routes. Theosophy, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Advaita and we've listened to contemporary teachers like Krishnamurti, Nisargadatta, Raman Maharshi, etc. All these paths seem to be pointing in the same direction but using different words to trigger understanding. Krishnamurti is a good example. Here are a few of the Krishnamurti aphorisms:

The observer is the observed.
To cross this river you must start from the other side
Freedom is freedom from the known
You are the world
The first step is the last step
Seeing is the only truth—there is nothing else.

We could make a similar collection from the New Testament or any of the major schools of spiritual knowledge.

I hear the words of Krishnamurti and others and there is sometimes an intuitive grasp of their truth. Occasionally, I find myself spontaneously delivered into the area they are speaking about. So, the combination of the words of the wise

¹ http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Alexander_ivanov_-_appearance_of_christ_to_the_people_668.jpg

coupled with my infrequent experiences of the wider dimension leads to a sense of something missing from life, an incompleteness of things.

Experiment 1. Hold ears and consider what, **on present evidence only**, lies between the sensations created by the finger pressure on the ears. And then, consider where those sensations themselves are located. Start with eyes closed then continue the experiment with them open. Consider whether the consequences can be taken seriously and whether we are regressing to a child like level of apprehension or progressing to a trans-rational and inclusive level.

I tried to think of a visual analogy to deal with my understanding of what is required to resolve these paradoxical statements and resolve the ‘something missing’ business. I thought a jigsaw puzzle might do the trick. I took a simple jigsaw puzzle representing the world, the universe, everything—the wholeness of life. I painted all the pieces white and removed one piece of the puzzle to represent the ‘sense of something missing’

This was partly inspired by something I’d read by Thomas Traherne:

*This spectacle once seen, will never be forgotten. It is a great part of the beatific vision. A sight of Happiness is Happiness. It transforms the Soul and makes it Heavenly, it powerfully calls us to communion with God, and weans us from the customs of this world... I no sooner discerned this but I was seated in a throne of repose and perfect rest. All things were well in their proper places, **I alone was out of frame and had need to be mended...** For all things were God’s treasures in their proper places, and I was to be restored to God’s Image. Whereupon you will not believe, how I was withdrawn from all endeavours of altering and mending outward things. They lay so well, methought, they could not be mended: but I must be mended to enjoy them.* Traherne Meditations 3/60

It is easy to accept a loose jigsaw piece as a symbol of what I sense to be missing but what is harder to realize is that it also represents me; that the missing piece is representing me. I am what is missing. All that has to be done is for me to find and then rest in my ‘proper place’.

So it is not so much that something is missing from my life but that life is incomplete because I have separated from it. I have extricated myself and become an observer and no longer see myself as a participant. Replacing the last piece of the jigsaw—wholeness is.

It is my deep identification with the separated part rather than the whole, which I believe is a common problem and that is the issue I hope to address in these four meetings.

This oft-quoted piece by Eliot underlines a number of the points I am trying to make:

We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And know the place for the first time.
 Through the unknown, unremembered gate
 When the last of earth left to discover
 Is that which was the beginning;
 At the source of the longest river
 The voice of the hidden waterfall
 And the children in the apple-tree
 Not known, because not looked for
 But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
 Between two waves of the sea.
 Quick now, here, now, always—
 A condition of complete simplicity
 (Costing not less than everything)
 And all shall be well and
 All manner of thing shall be well ...

T. S. Eliot Four Quartets—Little Gidding IV

There are several enigmatic statements in this extract, which become crystal clear on making the shift in perspective I am proposing. I started to underline them but found I had to underline all of it. The first plank in my platform is immediacy and the second is that it is now and ever. The aim is to experience what I’m talking about here tonight not on some future occasion when we think we might be good and ready. The I is never ready for this, because it involves its eclipse. It will talk about it endlessly and attend seminars, read books until the cows come home but the step into emptiness is usually too much of a threat.

One of the results of carrying out the Harding experiments over a number of years is an increased awareness of the importance of the space between things. I often talk about the need to look at the space between and around objects. This helps restore three-dimensionality to my perception. Although this three-dimensionality of everyday experience is assumed to be an unavoidable aspect of our engagement with the world it can become more or less closed down and two dimensional through habit. I think part of the problem lies in an unnoticed loss of depth in our perception of the world around us, this loss of depth being analogous to our putting the sacred out there, somewhere else.

We talked about this at a recent meeting, after I'd given my familiar sermon on watching the space between trees rather than merely looking at the trees themselves, one of our group said that artists deliberately develop and sustain this way of looking. A couple of days later I caught the tail end of a TV documentary on John Olsen. Betty Churcher, the presenter, was interviewing him as he fiddled about with a large, particularly yellow painting and explaining how he adored the colour yellow. Betty then mentioned that the white (of the background) was also very vivid and important. Olsen agreed and then added; "...don't forget the sacredness of the empty space". His tone of words implying we must not forget because we habitually do forget to include it in our looking and, perhaps, when we do include the 'empty' space the looking becomes seeing; the participating as opposed to the observing perspective. His use of the word sacredness underlines the demystification I am suggesting is necessary.

I was once challenged about the Harding approach and advised that I would be well advised to find out what Goethe had to say about all this. When I did follow up on this suggestion I discovered that Goethe had a very similar view, he wanted to encounter reality not the names of reality and talked of the 'Ur Experience' as the primary perceptive take on the world, which, through habit, we tend to lose. This is similar if not identical to the first-person perspective recovered by means of Harding experiments. Goethe spoke of the world as the mirror of man, a reversal of the everyday understanding, and about *...a delicate empiricism that makes itself utterly identical with the object.*

Experiment 2. Pointing Finger. Dropping assumptions and knowledge of what is going on, point to various objects around you observing shape, colour, size distance. Then then point your finger at the place where others see your face and, **relying strictly on present evidence**, ask yourself what it is pointing to. Then **see** what it is pointing to.

There is a tendency to resist these experiments as too simple, they are seen as regressive ; a return to childishness. However, more careful attention reveals them to be progressive and trans-rational; recovering a level of being in which the objective, third person world view is reintegrated as wholeness.

Armed with the realization of the experiments, return to the statements by Eliot and Krishnamurti quoted above, which are now made plain and stripped of their mystery by these simple tools.

In conclusion, and as food for thought in the light of the follow on meetings, a few thoughts on why this perspective is so elusive. It is: completely different from anything else we normally do and doesn't fit our familiar framework, thus, habit ensures we default to the familiar, it cannot be passed on by the usual means through either example or words—it has to be directly experienced. And finally, there is a fear factor arising from the 'me' finding its proper place.

Alan Mann

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Thanks to Pete Sumner of ClearSight <http://peterspearls.com.au/>, for the following:

The genuine followers of the perennial philosophy shall remain few, not because it requires great understanding, but because the following of that philosophy requires so great a moral courage and unflinching determination. The philosophy of mysticism, unlike some others, is not dependent upon intellect for confirmation, but upon experiment. It remains incomprehensible to all but those who are willing to carry out the experiment with their very lives.

From: 'The History of Mysticism' by Swami Abhayananda, (Stan Trout) page 385

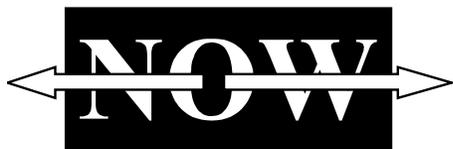
One of The Greatest Poems I Ever Wrote:

***"Nothingness"
is not everything.***

**Compassion
is.**

Greg Campbell

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Academy of the Word Seminar Programme Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504 – 2nd & 4th Tuesdays– Polding Centre, Level UB, 133 Liverpool St., SYDNEY. 00 - The New Phone Number is (02) 9268 0635. 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 – www.TSsydney.org.au Email: contact@TSsydney.org.au

Mountain Heart Retreat – Meditation retreats of two or four days offered in a peaceful bush valley in the southern tablelands close to Braidwood, NSW. Phone Maria Bakas on 02 4842 8122 or 0421 5476 65

LookforYourself (Harding) Meetings - Approximately bi-monthly, by email notification of date and programme. See upcoming dates at top of page 1.

Krishnamurti DVD Screenings followed by Dialogue – Every Thursday 7.15pm at Blavatsky Lodge, address above.

Melbourne. 1st Sunday, 2 to 5pm, Room MR B311 Level 3, CAE Bldg. 253 Flinders Lane, Joan Deerson (03) 93862237

Andrew Cohen Discussion groups – Sydney 1st Tuesday in the month-3rd Tuesday in the month - Andrew Cohen teachings. Enquiries: Graeme Burn 0416 177 012 or Christopher Liddle 0406 755 758

Eckhart Tolle Group – Enquiries: Marion Northcott 9967 8067