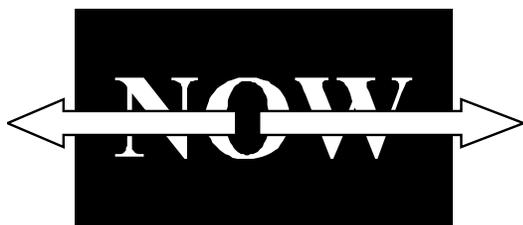


Issue 138—February 2009



Harding Meetings—81 Greville Street
 Next Meeting—5th April
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Editor's Note,

This issue includes a number of contributions held up by the two, single-subject NOWletters for December and January. Thanks for the input. We have added a blog at www.capacitie.blogspot to provide some ongoing dialogue and to replace the very inefficient email shuffle that follows many of our meetings, as participants fire in their second and third thoughts about what happened. It also provides an opportunity for people who can't get to the meetings to have a say. All a bit creaky at the moment as I learn how it works but I've had some helpful advice from Joanna. Anyone can access the blog but if you want to contribute as well as read the posts it is necessary to sign up. A simple procedure but it involves me listing your email address and activating the invitation to join which goes out from the blog to initiate the sign-on process. It sounds complicated but it's really quite simple. Please let me know if you are interested.

Harding Meetings – usually every second month. Next meeting Sunday 5th April. Anyone wishing to add their name to the list for notification of these meetings please send an email or phone 02 9419 7394)

SEE THE NOTE ABOUT THE NEW HARDING MEETING BLOG ABOVE.

Gaze—from Gerhard Crombach

Working for 35 years in psychiatry and psychotherapy (until June 30, 2008!) I am not surprised that many people don't "get it" (Harding's experiences)! I have tried it with social phobics (as Harding had been one - in his youth): most patients were not impressed at all !! You know: lots of people are unable to enjoy good art - even music & nature. The biggest obstacle (for experiencing art as well as pointing) seems to be perceptual and cognitive rigidity: a lack of flexibility, curiosity and creativity. They cling to their world view. In preparing my book I use art & literature as a preparation for doing the experiments. Especially modern art (installations, abstract painting...) may be useful; but also ancient Chinese/Japanese paintings... (In "Queensland Art Gallery" you can find an interesting example: Anish Kapoor's "Void # 13, 1991-92"). - The "starter" for my book will be a quotation from Robert Musil's tale "The blackbird": "It is very difficult to describe, but when I think back, it is as though something had turned me inside out; I was no longer a solid, but rather a something sunken in upon itself." In his great novel "The man without qualities" Musil talks about two opposing self-experiences: "a feeling of concavity and convexity", "a spaciality as well as a corporeality" ("spaciality" corresponds very well to Traherne's "capacity").

I would like to add three quotations to my recent suggestions:

- "Looking isn't as simple as it looks." (Ad Reinhardt, painter)
- "Looking is already a creative act which needs effort. Everything we see in daily life is distorted by acquired habits." (Henri Matisse, painter)
- "I hope to show that the world of perception is, to a great extent, unknown territory as long as we remain in the practical or utilitarian attitude." (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, philosopher)

Harding's view has to be learned too!

Gerhard Crombach

(See also Gerhard's "In-Pointing" article in Nowletter 134, October 2008)

Letter from India 2—Contemplating the Buddha—from Riche du Plessis

Varanasi is not an easy city to understand. Its myriad of narrow, winding streets, cobbled and scattered with potholes, cow dung and the evidence of a thousand years or more of human habitation, are home to Hindi pilgrims from across the sub continent. They come here to bathe in the waters of the Ganga and to receive both the blessings of their Lord Shiva and release from the cycle of rebirth. Smoke from the riverside crematoriums hangs over the city. I followed a funeral procession through the streets of the ancient city yesterday and attended a cremation at the edge of the river. I was told that the burning process takes three hours and that the ashes are then scattered into the river.

Afterwards, walking away from the Ganges, I stopped to photograph four pilgrims, dressed in orange, long white beards flowing, sitting cross legged on the road with a bowl in front of them, they cooperated and showed grace as I placed a five rupee coin in the bowl. Evidence of their faith in the Lord Shiva was unmistakable.

It is July, the start of the monsoon season in India, and heavy rain fell as I attended the evening festival of light and water at the edge of the Ganges. Priests in flowing orange and gold robes rang bells and lit fire pots to attract the attention of Shiva. They chanted mantras, translated, for my benefit, by my guide. 'Let there be peace, let there be fellowship, let there be understanding between all, Om urri om, Shivananda.' As a prayer, I could not argue with that.

The 20th century appears to have bypassed Varanasi. The old city is in an obvious state of decay. Many buildings are crumbling. The streets, not wide enough for motorcars, are crowded beyond description. Cows, people, cyclo-rickshaws, motorbikes all vie for space. The noise of hooters, bells, voices, 2-stroke engines, fills the air. There is no place where one can be alone. Physical solitude is impossible. The only silence has to be within oneself. And I believe that the pilgrims find the silence they are here to search for. As Einstein stated: 'The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious.' Without doubt Varanasi, and the practices one sees here, is mysterious.

Only eleven kilometers away is the village of Sarnath. Once a separate principality, Sarnath is now incorporated into the sprawl of Varanasi. Yet, within the very lush and green of its fields and lawns, Sarnath retains the peaceful, quiet atmosphere that may have attracted Sidharta, the Buddha, for it was here that he preached his first lesson to his five attentive followers. The lesson, engraved in granite, is here for all to read.

Sidharta, born to a wealthy and princely family, much like Saint Francis, gave away all his possessions in his search for meaning. This occurred during a period of great turmoil in India. The Brahmins had taken control of religious teaching. Traditionally the 'teachers', their position was, at first, not questioned. They proceeded to establish a new order, claiming the farming, artisan and labouring classes to be 'untouchable'. The Untouchables were ejected from society, not permitted to eat in public, not permitted to worship in public, not permitted free association with those 'above them'. This obviously led to a division in society; those who had much, and those who had nothing. The Jain philosophy developed and grew amongst the Untouchables to counter the influence of Brahminism. It was in this environment that the Buddha received enlightenment.

His philosophy, described in India as 'the middle way', that is midway between Brahminism and Jainism, largely states;

- 1: that one should neither have too much nor too little,
- 2: 'that you yourself, as much as anybody in the universe, deserve your love and affection'

The first could, politically, be interpreted as a statement suggesting greater equality during a difficult period of social and economic turmoil. The second statement could be interpreted as a call to the Untouchables, saying that, though they may have little, they should retain faith in themselves. Seen from a political perspective, both are very relevant to their times. Perhaps it is time to 'de-mystify' the Buddha.

I put this argument to a Hindi companion yesterday. He instinctively realized, I think, that I am a non-believer. 'Ah, you see my friend, it does not matter if you believe or not. For being religious is a one-sided affair. It doesn't matter to God if you believe in him or not. It matters only to us.' With this point of view in mind, I feel that I can write whatever I like.

Aristotle argued that, basically, humans are 'rational animals'. I find this difficult to accept. Yesterday I watched the spiritual Hindi festivals on the edge of the Ganga, this morning rituals at the Buddhist temple at Sarnath. I can't call the behaviour of the observed humans at either festival rational. Neither can I call the practices of the Christian church rational. Belief in some unseen, formidable and all-controlling, all wise God is not, in my view, rational behaviour. Yet, the 'Middle way' as taught by Buddha, certainly is rational, when seen from a socio-political perspective. But, of course, it all depends on one's understanding of 'rational'.

If 'rational' means, *understanding and living by the rules of logic*, then the obvious fact of our numerical thriving on this planet, would indicate that humans are rational. Why then, in our diverse spiritual practices, and despite the 'rationality' of the initial message from the sage, are we so 'irrational' Could it be that so many people believe fervently in and follow patently ridiculous practices, without which their lives might not have sufficient meaning. Then of course, seeing the billions of poverty stricken people of India, it could be argued that numerical proliferation of humans is not 'thriving'. Perhaps a truly 'rational' populace might cut down the rate of propagation of its own species.

The Buddha was following a rational, socio-political path when he announced, to an audience of Untouchables, that 'all nations and races should be taught to respect those .. compassionate ones who have renounced all that life holds dear and have gone forth to champion the cause of their fellow creatures...' The Buddha struggled with the religious intolerance of his day and championed the cause of the common people, condemning all extremes. He taught that ignorance is the cause of all worldly misery and that only self-knowledge, and the knowledge of the relationship of self to the 'Great Plan' can combat this ignorance. That, if humans could see clearly (or rationally?) they would 'do right'.

His basic four truths are of great interest.

'To exist as a separate personality predestines suffering and sorrow.'

This is, to my mind, a rational fact. It argues that there is an inter-relationship, not only amongst all humans, but with all that exists in the universe, and even beyond. All actions, Einstein stated, create an equal but opposite reaction. This is from his Theory of Relativity. In the time of the Buddha, it could be seen as an argument against the divisions that existed in the society.

'The greatest cause of misery is the desire to possess and the desire to preserve things possessed.'

Once again, this is an obvious socio-political call aimed directly at the two extremes of the society in which he preached; The Untouchables who possessed little, but envied the wealthy, and the Brahmins who possessed much and guarded their wealth.

'Freedom from suffering is attained by the slaying of all desire save that for right knowledge.'

Spiritually, one can see from this 'truth', when read in conjunction with the one above, that attachment to possessions is the basis for fear. Mother Teresa stated 'The more you have, the more you are occupied, the less you give.' Within the context of the social environment of his time, this can again be interpreted as a call, directed to both Brahmins and Untouchables, for a redirection of effort, away from physical desires or possessions, to a search for self-knowledge, or freedom.

'The way of liberation and to the cessation of all opposites is the noble eightfold path, the way of immortality'

I won't, in this letter, continue to the eightfold path. But it is apparent to me that, in this *truth*, the Buddha is referring to the extreme opposites (wealth and poverty, inequality) of his society, arguing that '*liberation*' (of each individual within the society) can be found only in the '*cessation of all opposites*' (Brahmins vs Untouchables) and arguing that '*immortality*' (or could he be referring to a just society?) will only be found once a better socio-political is found.

One should remember that Sidharta was the son of a king. As such he must have matured in a political environment. Decisions of State must have constantly been made in front of and around him. He could not have avoided growing up in a politically orientated household. His later announcements could be seen as socio-economic-political statements.

His four basic truths are, within this context, rational.

Buddhism, after becoming a major force in India, rivaled the State beliefs of Hinduism. Once again political pressures were brought to bear, causing Buddhism to depart from India. Although it is today the major spiritual philosophy of the world, only small pockets of followers remain in India.

India has reverted to, or is still, a country of haves and have-nots. The man who pedals the cyclo-rickshaw works incredibly hard for perhaps three hundred rupees per day. Of this he pays the owner of the rickshaw one hundred, and is responsible for the maintenance of the bicycle. He and his family live on what remains- perhaps Rupees 180, (less than \$5) for rent, food and education. On my ride to the Ganga, he vied for space on the overcrowded streets with a new, white Mercedes. Both drivers undress and plunge waist deep into the muddy waters of the Ganga to wash away their sins, give praise to the Lord Shiva, and believe that they have now broken the cycle of re-birth.

India, though incredible, is not rational.

Riche du Plessis

Traherne meets Husserl—from Richard Birt

...Traherne's mystic poetry, focusing on the achievement of meditative state, has attracted comparison with twentieth-century phenomenology. Traherne sought to achieve "A Naked Simple Pure Intelligence", and, in two of the most conceptually challenging essays of the collection, Gary Kuchar and James J. Balakier explore Traherne's depiction of consciousness. These essays move far beyond a seventeenth-century

context, as Kuchar applies the Freudian term "uncanny" to Traherne's poetry and Balakier sees Traherne as a precursor to Husserl. Applying more a philosophical than a literary perspective, these essays treat Traherne's words not as art but as a transparent representation of "experiences of pure consciousness".

(This extract from a reprinted Times Literary supplement article is taken from the Traherne newsletter. Ed.)

Nothing Matters—from Colin Drake

An earlier article posited that *awareness can* be described as 'nothing special'... This is a companion piece considering the idea that 'nothing matters'. There are three different interpretations of 'nothing matters' which will be considered in turn:

1/ **'No thing matters'**. There is no 'thing', in existence, that truly 'matters' i.e. is 'important or significant' (OED). Now this judgement is usually made on a subjective basis, but this is not what we are considering here, as there are obviously things which seem important to individual minds. What we are considering is whether any 'thing' has significance, or importance, in absolute terms. As all 'things' are ephemeral, appearing and disappearing, coming and going, rising and falling, in the absolute field of consciousness and energy, leaving this field unaffected (in itself), then no-thing can have any lasting significance or importance. Thus 'no thing matters' in absolute, or cosmic, terms....

This 'absolute field' is actually only consciousness existing in two different states, at rest and in motion. All 'things' are manifestations of 'cosmic energy' (Quantum Physics and the 'string theory' support this), and as manifest energy (rather than potential energy) is synonymous with motion, then all 'things' are just different configurations of consciousness in motion (or motion in consciousness). Consciousness at rest (*awareness*) is the 'no-thing-ness' in which (and from which) all 'things' arise, exist, are 'known', and subside. This is shown by the fact that all motion arises in, and from, (a field of) stillness, exists in this same stillness, is known by contrast to this stillness, and finally subsides back into stillness. Thus no 'thing' can possibly have any lasting importance or significance to this field; in which the 'thing' in question arises and subsides, leaving the field unchanged. Therefore 'no thing can truly matter'...

2/ **'Nothing matters'**. That is to say that 'nothing' is, in itself, of great significance or importance. The 'nothing' that we are talking about here is the field of consciousness at rest (*awareness*), which as we have already shown is the 'no-thing-ness' which is the source, existence, knower, and dissolution of all 'things' (manifestations of consciousness in motion). Thus it can be readily seen that this 'no-thing-ness' is of great importance and significance as no 'thing' could possibly exist without it!

The 'standard model' of the universe that is presently overwhelmingly favoured by astronomers, and physicists, is one of 'matter/energy', 'dark matter' and 'dark energy'. In this model 'matter/energy' accounts for only a small percentage of the universe, whilst 'dark matter' is required to create enough gravity for the universe to 'hold together' the way it does, and 'dark energy' is needed to account for the measured rate of expansion of the universe. Computer models have shown that the universe cannot manifest in the way it does unless 'dark energy' accounts for at least 50%, 'dark matter' for at least 25%, and 'matter/energy' the remainder.

Unfortunately this 'dark matter and energy' is totally undetectable as it is not manifest, i.e. unmanifest... That is to say that it is 'no-thing', but even from the point of view of our universe (the manifest) it is of great significance and importance, as without it our universe would not exist in its present form.

3/ **Nothing 'matters'**: Nothing is 'mattering', that is producing 'matter'... Isn't English a wonderful language! This is particularly apt, for as has already been pointed out:

Consciousness at rest (*awareness*) is the 'no-thing-ness' in which (and from which) all 'things' arise, exist, are 'known', and subside. This is shown by the fact that all 'things' are manifestations of 'cosmic energy' (Quantum Physics and the 'string theory' support this), and as manifest energy (rather than potential energy) is synonymous with motion, then all 'things' are just different configurations of consciousness in

motion (or motion in consciousness). Now all motion arises in and from, (a field of) stillness, exists in this same stillness, is known by contrast to this stillness, and finally subsides back into stillness.

Also at the (seemingly) personal subjective level this ‘nothingness’ is vitally important, for all ‘things’ are known, or seen, or perceived by their contrast with ‘nothingness’:

There is *awareness* of all thoughts by contrast to the ‘silence’ (no thought) in which they appear, exist and subside.

There is *awareness* of all forms (things seen) by contrast to the ‘space’ (formlessness) in which they appear, exist and subside.

There is *awareness* of all bodily feelings by contrast to the neutrality (‘lack of feeling’) in which they appear, exist and subside.

There is *awareness* of all sounds by contrast to the ‘silence’ in which they appear, exist and subside.

There is *awareness* of all odours by contrast to the ‘odourlessness’ in which they appear, exist and subside.

There is *awareness* of all flavours (tastes) by contrast to the ‘neutrality’ (lack of flavour) in which they appear, exist and subside.

As the only things in our direct experience are thoughts (including all mental images) and sensations, *awareness* of which is only possible due to contrast with the ‘nothingness’ in which they appear, then this ‘nothingness’ is absolutely vital for *awareness* of any ‘thing’; and is in fact a property of *awareness* itself.

As has been previously shown this *awareness* is the sub-stratum in which all ‘things’ arise, exist, are ‘known’ and subside. When we identify with this deepest level of our being, rather than the surface level of thought/sensation (body/mind) we can see that not only does ‘nothing matter’, but also that at this deepest level ‘no thing matters’...

Colin Drake

Genes and things—from The Guardian

The following extract is taken from a Guardian article by John Crace entitled The man who mapped the heart in which he interviews the physiologist Denis Noble about prisoner genes and disagreements with Richard Dawkins.

...Ever since Richard Dawkins published *The Selfish Gene* in 1976, the notion of genetic determinism - the idea that our lives are controlled by our genes - has become one of the central tenets of much scientific understanding. Noble is reluctant to get into a row with Dawkins - after all, they are closeish neighbours in Oxford - and tries to explain his differences with him as a matter of metaphorical interpretation. "In one sense we agree," he says elliptically, "yet in another we disagree." But if push comes to shove? "Then we disagree more than we agree."

Where Dawkins talks of selfish genes, Noble talks of prisoner genes. Where Dawkins writes of genes: "They are in you and me; they created us, body and mind; and their preservation is the ultimate rationale for our existence", Noble writes: "They are in you and me; we are the system that allows their code to be read; and their preservation is totally dependent on the joy we experience in reproducing ourselves (our joy, not theirs!). We are the ultimate rationale for their existence."

Neither is it just a matter of argument or interpretation, as research on epigenetic marking in rats, published last year, showed that the stroking behaviour of adult rats changed the protein levels in a particular gene to

alter the behaviour of their young. In other words, genetic determinism was not an absolute truth; rather, genes were as much a part of the system as they were its cause. "This doesn't invalidate our understanding of genetics," Noble is quick to point out. "It just shows that things aren't quite as straightforward as some people thought they might be, and that there is room for a variety of scientific approaches."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/dec/16/denis-noble>

The Tolstoyan view—from the novel *Resurrection*

I became very interested in Tolstoy after seeing Antonov's painting 'The appearance of Christ to the People' which our Moscow guide said had either inspired Tolstoy to write "The Kingdom of God is within you" or confirmed him in what he'd already written. The following extract is lifted from Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection* which embodies the Tolstoyan view of what matters. The central character Nekhlyudov is accompanying a group of prisoners being transported to Siberia. Nekhlyudov stood at the edge of the boat, looking at the broad river. Two pictures kept rising in his mind—one was the shaking head of Kryltsov, who was dying in anger, the other, Katyusha's figure vigorously stepping along the road beside Simonson. The first impression, that of Kryltsov, dying unprepared for death, made a heavy, sorrowful impression on him. The other, that of Katyusha, full of energy, having gained the love of such a man as Simonson and found a true and solid path towards righteousness, should have been pleasant, and yet it also created in Nekhlyudov's mind a heavy impression he could not conquer.

The vibrating sounds of a big brass bell reached them from the town. Nekhlyudov's driver, who stood by his side, and the other men on the boat, raised their caps and crossed themselves—all except a short, dishevelled old man who stood close to the railings and whom Nekhlyudov had not noticed before. He did not cross himself, but raised his head and looked at Nekhlyudov. The old man wore a patched coat, cloth trousers, and worn and patched shoes. He had a small wallet on his back and a high cap of much-worn fur on his head.

"Why don't you pray, old chap?" asked Nekhlyudov's driver, as he replaced and straightened his cap, "Aren't you baptized?"

"Who's one to pray to?" asked the tattered old man quickly in a determinedly aggressive tone, pronouncing each syllable.

"To whom? To God of course," said the driver witheringly.

"And you just show me where He is—this God?"

There was something so serious and firm in the old man's expression that the driver felt he had to do with, he was a strong-minded man and somewhat abashed; but trying not to show it, and not to be silenced and put to shame before the crowd that was observing them, he answered quickly:

"Where? In heaven of course."

"And have you been up there?"

"Whether I've been or not, everyone knows that one must pray to God."

"No man has ever seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," said the old man in the same rapid manner, and with a stern frown.

"It's clear you are not a Christian, but a hole-worshipper. You pray to a hole," said the driver, pushing the handle of his whip into his girdle, and straightening the harness on one of the horses.

Someone laughed.

"What is your faith, old man?" asked a middle-aged man, who stood by his cart on the same side of the ferry-boat.

"I have no kind of faith, because I believe no one, no one but myself," said the old man, as quickly and decidedly as before.

"How can you believe yourself?" Nekhlyudov asked, entering into conversation with him. "You might make a mistake."

"Never in my life," the old man said decidedly, with a shake of his head.

"Then why are there different faiths?" Nekhlyudov asked.

"It's just because men believe others, and do not believe themselves, that there are different faiths. I also believed others, and lost myself as in a swamp—lost myself so that I had no hope of finding my way out. Old-Believers and New-Believers, and Judaizers and Khlysty, and Popovtsy and Bezpopovtsy and Avstriaks and Molokans and Skoptsy—every sect praises itself only, and so they all creep about like blind puppies. There are many faiths, but the spirit is one—in me, and in you, and in him. So that if everyone believes himself, all will be united; everyone be himself and all will be as one."

The old man spoke loudly, and often looked round, evidently wishing that as many as possible should hear him.

“And have you long held this faith?”

“I? A long time. This is the twenty-third year that they persecute me.”

“Persecute you! How?”

“As they persecuted Christ so they persecute me. They seize me and take me before the courts, and before the priests, the Scribes, and the Pharisees. Once they put me into a madhouse; but they can do nothing, because I am free. They say, ‘What is your name?’ thinking I shall name myself. But I do not give myself a name. I have given up everything; I have no name, no place, no country, no anything. I am just myself. ‘What is your name?’ ‘Man.’ ‘How old are you?’ I say, ‘I do not count my years, and cannot count them, because I always was, I always shall be.’ ‘Who are your parents?’ ‘I have no parents, except God and Mother Earth. God is my father.’ ‘And the Tsar? Do you recognize the Tsar they say’ . I say, ‘Why not? He is his own Tsar, and I am my own Tsar.’ ‘Where’s the good of talking to him?’ say they: and I say, ‘I do not ask you to talk to me.’ And that’s how they torment me.”

“And where are you going now?” asked Nekhlyudov.

“Where God may lead me. I work when I can find work, and when I can’t, I beg.”

The old man noticed that the boat was approaching the bank, and stopped, turning round to the bystanders with a look of triumph.

The ferry reached the opposite bank. Nekhlyudov got out his purse, and offered some money to the old man, but he refused, saying: “I do not accept that sort of thing: only bread.”

“I beg your pardon.”

“There is nothing to pardon, you have not offended me, and it is not possible to offend me,” and the old man replaced on his back the wallet he had taken off. Meanwhile the post-cart had been landed and the horses harnessed.

“I wonder you should care to talk to him, sir,” said the driver, when Nekhlyudov, having tipped the brawny ferrymen, got into the cart again. “He is just a worthless tramp.”

Leo Tolstoy

To view Alexander Ivanov’s painting: <http://01varvara.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/aleksandr-ivanov-appearance-of-christ-to-the-people-1857.jpg>

Untitled Poem

I am a window for the Light;
our boundaries shatter as the Whole hugs its parts
a lens through which You see Yourself as me,
and through which I see myself as You

There is only One Reality,
the Singular Source and Substance of all Diversity...
Blessed is the One who manifests as the Many

When I am free from ancestors,
free from traditions,
free from truths, free from words,
free from thoughts,
free from even the need to be free
there is God and there I am not,
Blessed is the One at the heart of my emptiness.

Thanks to Andrew Hilton for the above untitled poem by Andrew Shapiro

Letter—from Garry Booth

Hi Alan & Margot, Welcome home. Your recent trip must have been wonderful. Good to keep in touch through the NOW letter to which I always look forward. It has been 3 years since I met you both and am very grateful to Liane for the introduction and the "exposure" to the many inspiring esoteric concepts . Thought you might like share some feedback on "my journey" so far (as well as Headlessness) as related in a wordy email extract below to a likeminded soul . (Shame to not share so many thoughts, you may like to edit and publish in the next NOWletter)

I took the link to the Headlessness web site (for the 1st time !) and found Richard Lang's view on The Hierarchy of Heaven & Earth, fascinating reading and so succinct. For me it crystallised so much of the reading and thinking (& the no thinking) that I have been doing over the past couple of years. At the present time it struck a chord, in particular the relationship of the micro and macro in which I literally love to lose myself as I did this weekend whilst in the great outdoors.

Oddly, I did not fully appreciate the background to Douglas's concepts, only on "face" value (no pun intended) via the experiments etc. I'd like to know more about his written philosophy, as well as more about Richard Lang's association. I am now seeing "capacity". Maybe I wasn't attuned previously as I was on my own journey learning / looking / seeing from a different direction.

Interestingly, at the same time as I read the article I felt that I was reading it from an ego-less place. (I am fascinated by the function of brain vision and imagination, that is, placing one's centre anywhere.) I could sense that at my core I was not there, even that my mind was a portion of space or a mirror shared by all.

Hard to explain in words of course. It's comforting to know that I have sought the same "place" yet using different sign posts. Sometimes when I drift off to sleep, I imagine I am a view or an eye, that is, "nobody", drifting through space and looking back at Earth or travelling out of the Big Bang and entering the Milky Way, past the Sun then onto Earth, then travelling inwards to atomic and subatomic levels where the voids are enormous, and arriving in the universe. The beautiful mental picture of a blue and white Earth has most probably become more etched in my imagination (and for that matter most of us) from the images taken during the moon landing and text book satellite photographs as well as sci-fi movies like 2001.

I recall many years ago one of my favourite "exercises" daydreaming on the beach (as I often do, contemplating life) was to imagine flying through so called "hostile" space towards Earth and adjusting in my mind from approaching the sphere shape, to vertical approach and onto horizon orientation and then splashdown in a tropical ocean. Imagine travelling through "hostile"space (in human terms) and arriving in "paradise"

Anyway my journey has been a journey through historical/scientific evolution as well as endeavouring to "live the journey". Empathise with the evolution of species. When I had done a huge amount of my so called research which was "historical-science-stuff", I asked myself where was G-d in all this and where was the feeling of love and feeling of creation and protection in all this scientific "cold theory type" information. I then went through a paganist period and could not fully understand Sun worship. How can one get emotionally attracted to something so huge, hot and violent. Further pondering, I realised it was "me" the observer all along bringing all of this into "existence". It was actually me that creates the feeling of love and spirit out of all the "factual" name stuff . Without the observer there was no knowing self / consciousness. I realised that my whole journey (and for that matter everyone else's, without meaning to lecture) was about knowing myself and how I connect to the whole. Then I felt love, connected, protected and not alone in my Universe because I was one with the Universe. Nothing external to find. And looking inwards cell, molecule, atom, subatomic, finding myself arriving at the ultimate fabric of the Universe, eternal, infinite no-thingness of infinite interconnectedness, infinite creativity and possibilities out of which every-thing manifests including space/time. This no-thingness is eternal and EXISTED pre Big Bang and now supports our space/time Universe, the very fabric of our existence (as well as an infinite number of other universes)

Having said that, I do not believe that human beings are at the centre of the universe, the "reason for being", but we are in a unique position to "wake up," to evolve from "animal instinct" through the battle of "ego free will" to a higher consciousness and become self aware. All life forms through instinct (and living in the now) are closer to the "source" that unawakened human beings. I have often pondered what the Earth would be without human beings. (The branch-falling-in-the-forest concept, what would it look like?) We are often tagged with title of highest intelligence, most evolved but what does it really mean, say for example from the viewpoint of animals. They might see us as "evil" considering the atrocities inflicted, culminating in the threat of habitat destruction. If only our calendar was not based on the Christian calendar and was based on the evolution of the ape breaking away from animal instinct to free-will and today's date was 2,000,008 we would better appreciate how far we have come, the enormous struggle and how much we have changed ourselves and the planet in such a short time. So called "civilisation" has only been around for 10,000 years or so yet our animal "cousins" have been around for tens of millions of years. Not to mention the 3.5 billion years it has taken life to evolve from single cell bacteria or indeed the Solar System's 8 billion year journey from the Big Bang.

By the way, I came to realise that all the sciences are really the study of the mind of G-d and given a man-made title. Interestingly though, I can see a paradox where human beings (including my own previous self) label the sciences, somehow taking credit and somehow fragmenting nature, losing sight of the total picture and without "feeling" science holistically or indeed spiritually as nature, but as a great human achievement of discovery. As we know humanity has always struggled with Nature and tried to control Nature making it more like a conquest (in egocentric terms) rather than a true understanding of its interconnectedness, beauty and complexity. The human brain/mind is as complex as Nature because it IS Nature and intelligent enough to one day "know" itself yet at the same time retain plenty of mystery (as inferred in Sam Blights observation below.)

Words can get in the way, can't they? It appears that when human beings find and (must) name something its deeper meaning is often lost. Once named, no more thought or sensing. Although naming is necessary, taking everything for granted once labelled is very much an erroneous human ego state leading to possession and separation. So called primitive peoples experienced their view of the world with very few labels and were instinctively connected to the flow of life. Much as animals. A state of mind worth seeing and practising.

Sam Blight's observation of Will Wright's God game Spore is terrific. What a wonderful perspective. I had never considered such predictability and a "finished product" and therefore potentially a bored G-d .

Garry Booth

Spore from Sam Blight

I came across the quote below in a New Scientist Magazine (Sept 27 2008) interview with Will Wright, the creator of the highly successful Sim City series of video games and more recently the soon-to-be-released "Spore", in which you get to design & shepherd your very own life form from microbial soup to galactic domination. I'm no gamer but I was struck by what he had to say about the "perfect game":

"Although people interpret Spore as a God game, you always have a point of view on the game - you are within a species, a culture or a civilisation. If you truly had the power of God it would be boring - the world would unfold exactly as you intended. What makes it interesting is that the game challenges you and is unpredictable. I try to give the players the perspective of a god, but not the powers or control of a god."

Remind you of anything?

Sam Blight

All of God

"All of God is right where you are now and nowhere else. I AM is one. There is no second I AM to stand in your light, to put up the feeblest opposition. All is as you would have it because you are Who you are. Here is no spark of that Fire, but the blazing Furnace itself." ~ Douglas Harding (Copied from Clearlight bulletin *The Seer*)

Review of *Arunachala Talks*—from Alan Mann

Arunachala Talks by Premananda—Open Sky Press

Some of you will remember Premananda (johndavid). He lived in Sydney for several years and held Satsangs in Bondi and other places in Australia. He came to one of our dialogue meetings at Chatswood and was perplexed at the lack of eager interest in what he had to offer. He felt we weren't ready for his message and got up to go. However, the people who had quite strenuously rejected the message were equally strenuous in accepting the person and persuaded him to stay for lunch. On another occasion he joined us in welcoming Richard Lang on one of his visits, which we rounded off with the walk from The Spit to Manly.

The book opens with an outline of his life. Premananda was born in Bangor, North Wales in 1944 (He is unaware that at the time I was at school, up the road in Colwyn Bay a few miles away.) He trained as a civil engineer and architect and continued his studies in Japan where he met a German professor of architecture who told him about Osho (Rajneesh). This provided the direction of his life and he spent many years with Osho in Pune, India and later, some time after Osho's death with Papaji, a teacher in the lineage of Ramana Maharshi, at Lucknow. He consequently became one of the Papaji, students ordained by their teacher to carry the message forward, thus joining such luminaries as Gangaji and Andrew Cohen in carrying the word to the West.

He is now the focus of a closed Sangha group community living in a 17th century mansion located between Cologne and Dusseldorf. In addition to his European meetings and gatherings there are frequent tours to India, designed to hold Sangha at the Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram at Arunachala, and visits to various sages in the district.

The book comprises transcripts of Premananda talks and his answers to questions arising from the teaching. I am always a bit nervous about insistence on unquestioning 'surrender' and 'acceptance'. In the teacher/student context, this is often taken to require complete submission to the teacher and total acquiescence with whatever the teacher does. I don't think this is a problem as far as Premananda is concerned but there are many examples of where these 'principles' have been abused by people claiming to represent the Indian spiritual tradition.

There are a number of interesting anecdotes arising from his time with Osho and with Papaji. I particularly liked his story about saying one day to Papaji "Your experiences of Presence seem to be much longer than mine" to which Papaji responded "That's not the right way to look at it. Presence is not experience. Presence is your nature. Your life is an experience".

Premananda is an interesting character, artist and teacher with a friendly personality and I recall we got on well. This is probably not regarded as a suitable testimonial for someone whose message is largely about transcending identification with 'our story', the foundation of personality—on the other hand, why not? This book is equal to any of the many alternatives now on offer and I imagine both the book and the Sanghas, etc., will be of interest and benefit to people setting out on the search or looking for a more fruitful direction than whatever they might have got themselves stuck in at the moment.

There are other books and a video of Premananda talking to a range of Indian sages. These can be accessed through his website at www.premandasatsang.org. One of these books *Papaji—Amazing Grace* arrived in the same mail and I persuaded Jeff Holland to share the reviewing load which he kindly agreed to do and his contribution follows.

Alan Mann

Amazing Grace— review from Jeff Holland

PAPAJI - AMAZING GRACE; by Premananda; Open Sky Press, London 2007

"A true master cannot be identified thru his words or actions but your mind will likely become quiet around him" - *Papaji*

H.W.L. Poonja (known affectionately as Papaji) held satsangs in Lucknow between 1990 and his death in 1997, and elsewhere in earlier years when smaller numbers congregated around him. This attractive volume gives us transcripts of interviews with 15 people who experienced awakening at these satsangs. The interviewer/author, Premananda, was also a member of this sangha which numbered up to 100 semi-permanent members with another 100-200 during times of more comfortable weather. I knew little about the path of devotion to a guru so the book made fascinating reading. Each interview revisits the subject's childhood before moving on to the often circuitous adult search and its culmination in the presence of Papaji. A glossary of Indian concepts is appended and this helps the reader to transcend the notoriously limited vocabulary of English in this field.

Papaji was a student of Ramana Maharshi and his message is the simple pointing to non-duality (see youtube for video clips) combined with what might be called the intersubjective "contact high" experienced in his presence. All of the subjects were strongly affected by Papaji at their first meeting and many of them mention that the presence of Papaji would stop the mind and induce altered states.

All felt a profound love for the guru and (indistinguishably) for the formless whole, though it's unclear whether they all felt boundless love for their fellow devotees. Gossip, jealousy and manoeuvrings are reported by some.

Awakenings happened frequently; the author remarks that during his own 10 years with Osho (the artist formerly known as Rajneesh) awakening seemed almost an impossible dream, while around Papaji it was like falling off a log.

Papaji himself was interested in people's descriptions of what happens in awakening, and these descriptions are a highlight of the book. No one attempts any causal or conceptual explanation, rather their words about the ineffable are poetic and evocative - lovely to read before meditation or when inspiration is needed.

Some of Papaji's students have themselves begun teaching - Gangaji, Andrew Cohen, Arjuna Ardagh, Isaac Shapiro and Premananda among them, although none of these are interviewed here.

The book intimates a flavour of satsang with a powerful guru without one having to undergo a near death experience from Delhi belly in the 47 degree heat of a Lucknow summer.

It features photos of Papaji, often candid shots of him smiling while wearing a selection of dubious hats (Lucknow winters are cold apparently) and accompanied by aphorisms from his book "The Truth is"

I can recommend the book as a useful insight into a man who influenced so many. It was a good read, and enjoyable to dip into again later.

"Before a wave arises it is Ocean; before desire moves it is Emptiness." -Papaji

"You are the unchangeable awareness in which all activity takes place" -Papaji

Jeff Holland

The Man Without Qualities—from Gerhard Crombach

(This quotation arrived after our last two Greville Street meetings where we considered that ‘space behind—the space an individual never sees for herself. We rarely consider it worth considering because we prefer to know what is there, based on what our colleagues and mirrors tell us, rather than experiencing what is. Ed.)

"...and in one of those wonderful moments when the place where she was standing seemed to melt away, she was able to believe that behind her, in that space into which one could never see, God might be standing. This was too much, and she recoiled from it. An awesome immensity and emptiness suddenly flooded through her, a shoreless radiance darkened her mind and overwhelmed her heart with fear. Her youth, easily prone to such anxieties as come with a lack of experience, whispered to her that she might be in danger of allowing an incipient madness to grow in her; she struggled to back away. Fiercely, she reminded herself that she did not believe in God at all."

ROBERT MUSIL, *The Man Without Qualities*. Page 933

Gerhard Crombach

The Mystery of Time—An excerpt from the book of Lama Anagarika Govinda

<http://www.purifymind.com/MysteryofTime.htm>

Our recent explorations of time, particularly in connection with the the work of Douglas Harding and the commentaries of George Schloss, made reference to Jean Gebser—Gebser popped up again in an article referred to me by Heinz Rahn. It is available at the above link. The following is the reference to Gebser:

This integrating vision, and the new conception of the world that is born from it, has been formulated by one of the most creative and significant philosophers of our time, Jean Gebser, in his monumental work, *Foundations and Manifestations of the Aperspective World*, in which he writes:

“The origin, out of which every moment of our life is lived, is of a spiritual and divine character. He who denies this, denies himself; and there are many nowadays who do this. He who does not deny it, in all simplicity and openmindedness, is already a promoter of the aperspective conception, of the integral structure of our consciousness, which has its origin in the process of becoming conscious of the whole, as well as becoming aware of its transparency”.

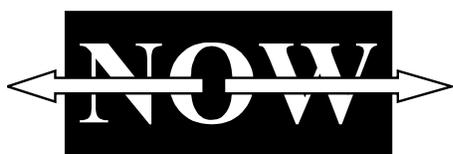
I think that the reference to ‘simplicity and openmindedness’ will ring bells for many of us.

Alan

March Friday Forum Meetings at Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney.

EXPLORING COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

Christopher Liddle is hosting the March Friday Forum Meetings and invites you to join in an experiment, an investigation into coming together in Oneness. These Friday night sessions aim to explore and demonstrate, in a practical way, how we can live together as more awake human beings. What we are attempting to share is an experience of profound intimacy and a sense of oneness that far surpasses our common experience in human relationship. For this to happen the individuals involved need to come together in a serious, committed interest to discover a place beyond personal ideas, belief systems and conditioning. We have found that for individuals to go beyond their separate self-sense, their interest needs to be more focused on what arises in the group rather than on their own individual experience. In the very simplicity of listening one's focus shifts from the personal to the collective and in that shift lies the opening for a greater consciousness to emerge. For a collective emergence we have found a few key elements are needed. These include an intention to come together, an open and allowing mind, active listening and a readiness to speak authentically. We are a small group of people from different backgrounds, who have been meeting and developing in this process for the last 2 years. **Join us each Friday in March 2009. Arrive in time for a punctual 7.30pm start. Tea/Coffee and an informal chat at 9.00pm.**



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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

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