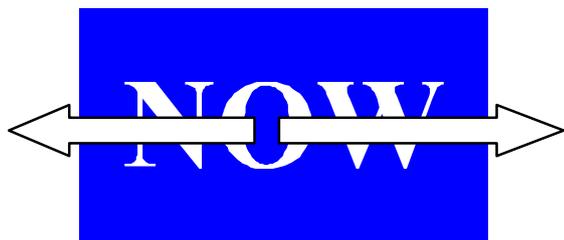


## Issue 157—November/December 2011

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### Harding Meetings

Monthly, on the first Saturday of the month, starting again on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2012

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#### Editors note

The November TAT Forum provided a link to some interesting talks from the 2011 Raleigh Self Enquiry Group <http://vimeo.com/album/1745120>. One of the benefits of listening to these talks is the recognition of how varied are the individual responses to the discovery of the 'aperspectival'. On pulling this issue together I found that we have quite a few angles on the question of the 'one or the many' issue. This was not a deliberate editorial choice, it just happened.

A reminder that the NOWletter is an attempt to provide a forum for a range of views and relies principally on its readership for contributions, so my thanks to this month's contributors and please keep them coming. Robert Penny has written about his journey with Douglas Harding which will appear as a series over the upcoming issues. The first instalment is included here.

## 'Ere, What's all this then??? From Chris Cheney

*(Extract from the LookforYourself email conference).*

Here's a picture. This is basically whatever it looks like where i am (the "view out" is the direction where the scene appears, and the scene will likely vary from moment to moment).

The "view in" (towards the viewer) is where 'my own face' (as a person) would be seen from some distance, is not anywhere in evidence, rather only a clear space that has no separate qualities of its own, simply pure undifferentiated awareness without edges our boundaries.

And there is really nothing that separates this clear space from "the view out" either.

Everything "else" is thinking, even the perception of "the view out" can be colored by my thinking, but then, I am not attending to what I actually see, but only to what I think I see.

Various thoughts and reactions to what I see and hear are basically "karma". "Karma", in that sense, is kind of like "programming". That is conditions, likes and dislikes, attachment and rejection, "yes" and "no", "+" and "-", are related to whatever I see as influenced by my thinking. The thought "I" is also formed and conditioned by those programs, which arise with experience, and they also build one upon another.

That "I" is kind of a long term program, which engages with various short term programs with different areas of responsibility (e.g."moods", "convictions", "beliefs", "logic") but which also identifies itself with the core of experience (which is actually only pure undifferentiated awareness itself) as well as with the mental and emotional content that is fetched through all those other "programs". (Thoughts, feelings, and actions strung together, as with a chain, from moment to moment.)

I think it is possible, that there may not really be such a thing as "good and bad people", just "good and bad programs". (Good and bad in terms of the actions that result from them, and their effects on the world and other people.)

Sometimes "good or bad results" are due to "good or bad intentions", (good or bad programming) and sometimes they may just be due to "unconsciousness or ignorance" (something that some particular experience based program set just isn't programmed to deal with at all.)

That person's actions may look "good or bad" to some other person, either based on their own programming, or sometimes perhaps based on the clear perception that the results are good or bad for all people, in a very real sense.

It is not enough, in my view, only to perceive with the senses alone, that one is at center, empty, void of all qualities, open pure awareness, "our Void nature". For we are also, "filled with the world" and that world is a process that happens \*in\* each of us and all of us, and not to some "exclusive I" thought alone.

When Seeing original Nature falls into the heart, then what arises is compassion for all beings, and this arises by itself. It is not a human program devised by thinking, although thinking may still be engaged in service to action.

This is not to say, that any person needs to "give up their personal identity", their "likes or dislikes", their culture, their expression as a human individual, their thoughts, or all of the things about their existence as an individual, that contribute to the richness of life, but rather simply, to recognize the simple truth, and locate it all properly, for all of these individual qualities, while they may be necessary and important to every individual human life, are not central to the fact of aware existence itself, which includes all of life.

*Chris Cheney*

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### **Krishnamurti and Harding from Alan Mann**

*A note from the annual Krishnamurti Gathering at Springbrook Queensland*

Two of the most influential people in my life were Krishnamurti and Douglas Harding. The annual Krishnamurti gathering is held every November at the Theosophical Retreat Centre in Springbrook Qld. I have missed the gathering for a few years but decided to go this year when offered the opportunity to present my case for the relevance of the Harding experiments to Krishnamurti's teaching. My workshops at previous gatherings met with very limited success as the experiments seem to come up against the Krishnamurti warning that any method is doomed, this notwithstanding his suggestions about watching thought.

On this occasion the experiments, and the Harding approach generally, were much more warmly received. As one of the attendees pointed out to me, it presents an effective form of actualising the teachings. I was helped this time by Richard Lang's recent interview of Alan Rowlands which I screened to underline the connection. (See link below) Alan taught music at Brockwood. He knew both Krishnamurti and Douglas Harding. My ability to show this living bridge between the two was, I think, what helped me cross the resistance barrier.

Krishnamurti regularly referred to his low hit rate, complaining that only a handful of people had ever got the point. During discussions following the presentation it was suggested that Krishnamurti was demanding a fundamental change which somehow reorganizes our brain cells. Consequently, the revelation of the experiments would be regarded by him (and his most dedicated followers) as a fairly low-level transformation. I have difficulty with this notion of a transcendental shift, it remains a conceptual possibility, with no means of realization until it actually occurs. On the evidence available this seems to be an extremely rare event whereas the revelation of a simple me-free awareness, an ultimate immanence, is always the case and here for the looking.

*Alan Mann*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xC3qwVmXNRY>

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## Tacit Knowing & Polanyi From Garry Booth

Hi Alan, Trust you & Margot had a wonderful time overseas. By the way you will be pleased to know I had an “out of the blue ‘ headlessness experience in Darling Harbour of all places, in the middle of Pyrmont (pedestrian) Bridge, which has allowed me to transfer that experience to more natural settings, but that’s another story . After our last get together where we explored subjective experience of presence I was in the throes of exploring consciousness. What is consciousness? Can subject know subject ? Interesting how one thing leads to another and when attention to a subject is applied, information flows , action, synchronicity happens and .....

So I have spent three fascinating months exploring the experience of consciousness starting with intellectual knowledge and then moving to a place where words no longer have meaning. By chance I came across several good second hand books, Shadows in the Cave: Mapping the Conscious Universe by Martin, Graham Dunstan, an English school teacher/philosopher and Music of The Mind & Death Of Forever by New Zealand microbiologist Darryl Reaney. Shadows In The Cave is based on Hungarian scientist/ philosopher Michael Polanyi’s work in early 20<sup>th</sup> century about tacit & empirical knowledge. You mentioned in the Nowletter the direct knowing approach of Nisargadatta so I thought I would investigate and downloaded life story of both from Wikepaedia.

Nisargadatta ‘s writing and talks appeared fascinating. The next day I dropped by my local 2<sup>nd</sup> hand bookshop and lo and behold there was a rare book Pointers from Nisargadatta. His whole focus of “I am that” and the simplicity pointed me towards the threshold of intellect and words. Polanyi’s work revolves around human knowing, i.e., all knowing is either tacit or empirical - and posits that tacit knowledge plays a much bigger role than empirical or rather more than we ever realise . I am now more aware of feeling /seeing things from the tacit rather than empirical. Seeing things (object) as an appearance in consciousness (subject) Mind creating matter. Subject looking at subject.

Net result beyond words - just a feeling. Intuitively, the eternal present and consciousness are one and outside space/time. Subject is indivisible. Objects arise out of subject. Subject and object are one. Only without words.

For years I have been reading about the quirky world of quantum theories and I was reminded by a theory that the Big Bang is viewed as a quantum fluctuation in the void. (and Hindus would say “in cosmic consciousness”) Also the classical materialist’s theories of determinism and reductionism simply do not apply at quantum level. “Free will” is synonymous with quantum fluctuations. Some physicists go so far as to posit that thoughts are quantum waves and quantum fluctuations.

Attention (subject focused) causes the wave to collapse which in turn creates action—an idea, a decision, physical movement, laughter, etc . A thought wave across the synapse creates matter—a molecule in the blood—by creating a chemical reaction—all suspended in consciousness.

So I thought “consciousness” would be a good dialogue topic for the gathering to contemplate one day.

*Garry Booth*

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### **The Bellows by Art Ticknor**

Lying in bed,  
 Luxuriating in a few minutes between waking and arising,  
 I listen to the sound of my breathing...  
 Where will I be when the bellows are silent?  
 What will I be?  
 After years of searching within, I discovered the answer –  
 I recognized what I am  
 that subtends the waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep states,  
 that remains unchanging with the passing of nights and days,  
 of seasons, of years, of life.  
 Life and death I now see in perspective...  
 And see that they don't affect me.

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### **The Silence of the Mind - Ilie Cioara from Alan Mann**

I received a final draft copy of this book from Petrica Verdes with the suggestion that it might be of interest to readers of the Nowletter. The introductory summary reads as follows

Ilie Cioara was an enlightened mystic who did not belong to any lineage. He is unique in a way, in the sense that he lived in almost complete isolation, in Eastern Europe in a communist country, completely oblivious of nonduality, Zen etc. Originally a Christian mystic, he practised a mantra for over 20 years. One day, he felt an intuitive impulse to drop the mantra, and just practise the silence of the mind, by listening to the noises on the street, in the now. After following this practice for a few years, one morning, when he woke up, he experienced Enlightenment. His description of meditation is fresh and devoid of any tradition and jargon.

His writings in 16 books describe the experience of meditation and enlightenment, as well as the practice of Self-knowing using all-encompassing Attention. Like Ramana Maharshi, Krishnamurti, Eckhart Tolle, his is a simple message of discovering our inner divine nature through the silence of the mind.

The Silence of the Mind is the first in a tetralogy by Ilie Cioara to be published by Obooks. Soon to follow: *The Wondrous Journey into the Depth of Our Being*, *Life is Eternal Newness* and *I Am Boundlessness*.

There is an extensive interview with Petrica Verdes talking to Non-Duality Magazine and this can be read at: [http://www.nondualitymagazine.org/nonduality\\_magazine.5.petrica\\_verdes](http://www.nondualitymagazine.org/nonduality_magazine.5.petrica_verdes)

The book opens with a series of chapters, each chapter introduced by one of Ilie Cioara's poems dealing with such subjects as: Listening and Watching, The Power of Emptiness, etc. The final section of the book is an autobiographical account of the author's journey.

As mentioned above, the message follows in the steps of Ramana Maharshi, Krishnamurti and is similar to the Eckhart Tolle approach though the inspiration undoubtedly arises independently and from the author's own discoveries. I found myself in agreement with the content and recommended practice, however, Ilie lost me when he moved into the realm of astral journeying. In fairness, I should add that he points out that this was one of the aspects he let go as he progressed.

Amazon Link <http://www.amazon.com/Silence-Mind-Ilie-Cioara/dp/1846948290>

*Alan Mann*

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#### **Doing from Jim Clatfelter**

*The function of Doing*

*Is whole and is One*

*And shouldn't be split*

*Into Doer and Done.*

*Jim Clatfelter*

#### **The Essential Duality from Alan Mann**

I had volunteered to explain to our regular group what I meant by 'essential duality' and why I make so much fuss about it. I attempted to do so at the last Harding meeting. The perspective of awareness, as revealed by the experiments, does not result in the denial of the virtual self but simply puts it in its proper place. The extreme non-dualists say, or imply, that a realization of the wholeness of life somehow denies the diversity which, in my view, is undeniable. I mean the sort of extreme non-duality teachings which lead to absurdities such as you don't exist, I don't exist, it's all a dream, etc., I find that incomprehensible, a closing of eyes to creation, spitting in the eye of creation as it were, and a condition of serious endarkenment. The proponents of this explanation, and it is just another explanation, tell me I'll abandon my explanation in favour of theirs when I awaken and see that they are right!

I have been told that, because third-personhood is secondary, labelling it as essential is misguided and that the word essential should be reserved to describe only our first-personhood. I take the point but, as the two are not served up separately, I think I'm justified in hanging on to my description if only to make the voidists stop, look again and cease to confuse a battered metaphor with reality.

My choice of term 'essential duality' is an attempt to describe the condition following restoration of *our* first nature and the relegation of *my* second nature to its proper place. In other words, third personhood or second nature is not denied but integrated into a broader perspective. Traherne was called in defence of this view, together with a number of other expert witnesses past and present. Traherne said "... till we see our nothing we cannot understand the value of being". In other words, our inescapable individuality is not properly appreciated till we rediscover our undividedness. Dave Knowles sent me an email some time ago summarising Max Velman's '*Understanding Consciousness*', a contemporary work, in which Velmans refers to what I call *Essential Duality as Reflexive Monism*.

Reflexive monism : In this vision, there is one universe (the thing itself) with relatively differentiated parts in the form of conscious beings like ourselves, each with a unique, conscious view of the larger universe of which it is a part. In so far as we are parts of the universe that, in turn, experience the larger universe, we participate in a reflexive process whereby the universe experiences itself. (p. 233)

Which all adds up to the need to come down firmly on both sides of this fence and affirm with Wren-Lewis and Blake that 'Eternity is in love with the productions of time'.

We tried the 'Card with Hole and Mirror' experiment to compare the observer perspective with the observer-free awareness. This led to a number of interesting consequences for me as I always seem to come upon something new at these get-togethers. There is a Buddhist prescription of 'Not one, not two' which seems close to the mark and my recent research into Krishnamurti's work revealed his view of a holistic trinity comprising the undivided, the individual and the illusory self, a trio which I think can be interpreted as: Being, human being and imagined being. Perhaps I should start talking about the essential multiplicity rather than the essential duality.

*Alan Mann*

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### **Is 'Practice' Necessary? from Colin Drake**

This is a common question that I believe needs to be answered on three levels: those of body, mind, and establishing oneself in 'awareness of awareness' i.e. in Awakening.

1/ As far as the body goes it is obviously beneficial to be fit, supple and healthy. For then the body is a suitable instrument through which Universal Consciousness, manifesting as oneself, can enjoy its projection as the physical world. It is obviously difficult to enjoy life when unfit, stiff and suffering from ailments. From this point of view I believe that yoga,

physical exercise and a healthy moderate diet are important. I have a 15 minute hatha-yoga routine which I enjoy every morning. I can actually feel the pleasure that joints and muscles feel as they stretch and 'rotate' and that the whole body experiences as it twists, spins, inverts, and 'salutes the sun'. I am a potter and play golf which takes care of the physical exercise, and I eat a balanced, nutritious and delicious variety of foods. I find eating/drinking to be one of the greatest pleasures in life so do not deny myself anything that I enjoy but am careful not to overdo anything. So only one (occasionally two) glasses of red wine with my dinner, between 2-4 squares of chocolate for dessert etc. These little treats are delightful if not over-indulged in, when they lose all of their appeal ...

2/ With regard to the mind it is good if one can stay relaxed, fresh and alert as possible. Of course becoming established in, and as, awareness plays a very important role but this becomes more difficult if one is tired or overworked. So I lie down every lunchtime for 20-30 minutes practicing yoga-nidra, a guided relaxation of surprising power. Also I try to keep my life as simple as possible avoiding becoming overworked, stressed or overcommitted. That is not to say that I am not committed to anything, in fact I am totally committed to living as awareness and pointing to this in as many ways as I can. However, this type of commitment is an absolute joy and any such commitment which helps keep the mind in the right 'head space' is obviously beneficial. On the material level it is amazing how little money is required if one simplifies one's life and does not chase after unnecessary consumer goods.

3/ For establishing oneself in awareness practice is vital, for it is not enough to become 'aware of awareness' once and assume that this will produce profound awakening. This seeing is an awakened moment which will soon tend to be submerged by old thought patterns. To overcome these requires experiencing these awakened moments regularly on a daily (hourly, or minutely would be better) basis. That is why I recommend relaxing into the recognition of pure awareness at least three times daily. Sri Ramana Maharshi says that self-realization is easy, but only the beginning, after that the practice begins!

It's rather like having a disease and being given a course of antibiotics and pain-killers. It's not enough to take the medication once and feel much better, one must continue until the course of medication has been finished and the disease is completely cured. In the same way, for most of us, the dis-ease of misidentification with the body/mind is chronic, having been established as long as we can remember and to cure it completely is going to require a prolonged course of treatment.

However, in the same way that each pain-killer relieves the symptoms of a physical disease, so each investigation and discovery of awareness will relieve the symptoms of misidentification. Also as one takes more pain killers when the symptoms return, so when mental suffering and anxiety (the symptoms of misidentification) return these can be dispelled by becoming 'aware of awareness' and re-identifying with this.

This brings up a very important point: any time where there is any mental suffering caused by identifying with painful thoughts, or feelings, this should be a wake-up call to the fact that we are misidentifying. Any mental suffering can be used as a direct pointer back to the deeper level of our being: pure awareness.<sup>1</sup>

I sometimes use a mantra to aid me in relaxing into this pure awareness; which I do for the joy of it, rather than to achieve, find, or get anything. The mantra I use is 'Om Namah Sivaya' which means 'salutations to pure awareness (or consciousness) which is the Absolute Totality of Being'. As this is repeated it points directly to this pure awareness by its meaning and the experiential fact of awareness of the repetition. It is this attention on the awareness itself that is the key, for this awareness is always absolutely still and totally silent, which is perfect peace. This meaning and the noticing of awareness has the power to diffuse the restless mind, especially after some practice where the value of relaxing into awareness itself has been experienced. Mantra repetition also reveals the 'nothingness' relative to which all 'things' can be recognized. For the thought is known (there is awareness of it) relative to the no-thought in which it appears.

This is the 'nothingness' which can be revealed by repeating the mantra with intense concentration, thus blocking out all other 'things' from the mind. However, this nothingness may be immediately realized by seeing that every 'thing' appears in nothingness, exists in nothingness, is known relative to this nothingness and disappears back into nothingness. Without this background of nothingness there would not be awareness of any 'thing'. 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. 'Consciousness at rest' (awareness) implies the 'subjective field' which is conscious (aware) and still, that is 'nothingness' as all 'things' are forms of cosmic energy, and thus in motion.

So if one repeats the mantra (or any mantra) noticing the awareness of the repetition and the nothingness (no thought) in which it arises, exists and subsides, then the mantra has done its job in revealing the nature of reality.<sup>2</sup>

*Colin Drake*

1 & 2—C Drake, *A Light Unto Yourself*, 2011, Halifax, NS,

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### **Philosopher and Mystic, Douglas Harding from Bob Penny**

A Brief Overview of His Life and Work.(1)

#### 1. Introduction

Douglas Harding's new sense-perception based approach to personal enlightenment and philosophy, although relatively little known in the mainstream, has been steadily workshopped, studied, and lived, by a small but steadily increasing number of people, over the past seven decades. Taken from the cover of one of his books, here's a briefest of brief thumbnail sketch of Douglas' life and work.

‘Douglas Edison Harding was born on February 12, 1909, in Lowestoft, a small seaside town in Suffolk, on the east Coast of England. His parents belonged to the Exclusive Plymouth Brethren, a fundamentalist Christian sect notorious for its ultra-Puritanism and intolerance of other denominations. At 21, while studying architecture at University College, London, Harding apostatized from the Brethren much to his parent’s horror. To justify this step, he sent to the elders of the Brethren a thesis explaining that he saw the great religions as complementary rather competing, and as having, at their common core, the Beatific Vision. You could say, stretching a valid point, that this book – ‘The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth’ – developed out of that youthful (and now lost) apologia.

From age 21, Harding was remarkably successful in leading a double life. Without knowing quite how he did it, he managed to earn a respectable living as an architect in private practice, while devoting most of his time and energy to “the discovery of what and who he really is”, to piecing together an elaborate but credible cosmology-cum-epistemology, and increasing to work out its application to everyday life.

In fact, Harding’s crowning achievement has been to devise a toolkit of exercises or tests or experiments for getting behind words and concepts to direct seeing into our True Nature. In all the great spiritual traditions, the true mystics – the Seers – have, hitherto, been limited to words or silence in their attempts to share their vision. No wonder they rarely succeeded. But now at last, thanks to Harding’s toolkit, the essential vision is entirely shareable, indeed obvious and natural. It is also revolutionary, and therefore resisted in traditional circles – decreasingly, it seems’.

## 2. Harding’s Hierarchy

The first philosophy book that Douglas Harding wrote was his magnum opus, ‘The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth: A New Diagram of Man in The Universe’. He wrote this book, of 650 huge pages, over eight years to 1950, after ten years previous to this in which he acquired a great deal of knowledge about himself and the world that he built onto during his writing of the book.

Douglas’ main purpose in writing this book was to answer his two questions: ‘What am I?’ and ‘What do I amount to in the universe?’ Although this book *is* an answer to these questions, it also goes much further, due to what Harding saw as a public crisis, as well as his own private need. From Harding’s extensive studies, his conclusion, given in the Preface of the Hierarchy book, was this: “Philosophy has failed us...Our real need is neither castle nor shack, but a home in the universe --- something between a hovel and an equally uninhabitable front parlour, something that is neither the sceptic’s cosmic slum nor the tidy (but insubstantial and draughty) constructions of the arm-chair metaphysician. I believe we are desperate for lack of a world picture in which our lives fill a perceptible corner --- a picture with enough richness of colour and generous detail to fire the imagination, with that conformity to science which any robust intellect demands, and with that clear portrayal of cosmic unity and purpose which alone will satisfy the heart. This book is a rough cartoon of such a picture”.

Further on in the Preface, Douglas Harding promises the reader “ancient teachings in modern dress – teachings that are difficult only because they are simple, and must be lived to be understood – together with some old recipes for hope and confidence.” And he adds, “The

merely new-fangled is as useless as the merely traditional. We must go forward to new ideas and back to old ones; we must get down to the facts of science and wake up to those of religion. Genuine advance is not a one-way advance from the present into the future, but a systematic expansion of the present pastwards and futurewards, so that time is in some sense transcended.”

There are two versions of ‘The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth’: the full sized original manuscript, and a much smaller abridged version with the same name which Douglas wrote for publication immediately he had finished the full size version. The small version was first published by Faber and Faber in 1952, and is now published by University of Florida Press. C.S.Lewis read only the manuscript of the small version, but wrote to Douglas stating that, while he did not entirely understand it, his sense was that it was “a work of the highest genius”. Below are excerpts from C.S.Lewis’ lengthy foreword to the small version of Harding’s ‘Hierarchy’ book.

“This book is, I believe, the first attempt to reverse a movement of thought which has been going on since the beginning of philosophy” And further on: “Now there is of course nothing new in the attempt to arrest the process that has led us from a living universe where man meets the gods to the final void where almost-nobody discovers his mistakes about almost nothing. Every step in that process has been contested. Many rearguard actions have been fought: some are being fought at the moment. But it has only been a question of arresting, not reversing, the movement. That is what makes Mr. Harding’s book so important. If it ‘works’, then we shall have seen the beginning of a reversal: not a stand here, or a stand there, but a kind of thought which attempts to reopen the whole question. And we feel sure in advance that only thought of this type can help”.

This big version of ‘The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth’ was first published in 1998 in a limited edition of 300 copies, by the Shollond Trust (England), and Crowquill Press (Ireland). It’s a superb book. From July 2011, it’s been available in digital form, for cost of £20. Here’s the link:

<http://www.headless.org/e-books/the-hierarchy-full-manuscript-scan>

### 3. Harding’s Experiments

“If there’s no way to test a proposition it’s not worth testing: it amounts to meaningless nonsense at worst, or a species of poetry or pleasant noise at best. Verify it if it’s true, demonstrate its falsity if it’s false. And just how do you do these things? Mainly by looking at it, but also by touching it, smelling it, tasting it if possible, listening to the sounds it’s making. In other words, by noticing and attending with special care to exactly what it is that’s presented to your senses, attending to the primary, unedited data, to what’s actually given, before it’s moulded and all distorted into socially acceptable shape. Before it’s conventionalized – sometimes out of all recognition” Douglas Harding.

It’s been widely acknowledged that the greatest aspect of Douglas’ philosophical and teaching work has been his devising his thirty or so sense-based workshop experiments. Douglas began to devise his experiments in the 1960’s, in order to teach people how to see Who they really are, which is personal enlightenment. Over the following 35 plus years from age 60,

Douglas travelled the world, to more than 20 countries across the 5 continents, running ‘Look for Yourself’, or ‘Seeing Who We Really Are’ workshops, based around his experiments.

Participants in Harding’s workshops ranged from handfuls to more than 2,000. For open minded people interested in self-inquiry, the experiments have proven close to 100% effective. Harding’s experiments are a breakthrough in the field of self-inquiry. On the back of Harding’s experiments, a new movement has been slowly spreading throughout the world. The basic question is ‘What am I for myself, here, at Centre, in contrast to what I look like, there, off Centre, to others?’ Now we have Harding’s experiments, which are the most efficient, effective, and conclusive way of answering this question, by way of the empirical experience of each participant’s own direct sense perception.

To finish off this section, I now present Douglas Harding’s essay, entitled ‘The Headless Way’ in order to introduce or re-introduce six of the thirty or so experiments in Douglas Harding toolkit, and to place these experiments into the context of the new Headless Way movement founded by Harding, and to also place these experiments into the context of the stages of our human development. Most of us go through the first three stages of development listed below. After the arrival the Harding’s experiments, stages 4 and 5 are now readily available; available to all ordinary women and men the world over, across cultures, and belonging to any religion or none. This is an exciting and revolutionary breakthrough for individuals and society.

*The Headless Way* By D.E.Harding (Written in the 1970’s)

Over the past thirty years a truly contemporary and Western way of ‘seeing into one’s Nature’ or ‘enlightenment’ has been developing. Though in essence the same as Zen, Sufism, and other spiritual disciplines, this way proceeds in an unusually down-to-earth fashion. It claims that modern man is more likely to see who he really is in a minute of active experimentation than in years of reading, lecture-attending, thinking, ritual observances, and passive meditation of the traditional sort. Instead of these, it uses a variety of simple, non-verbal, fact-finding tests, all of them asking: how do I look to myself? They direct my attention to my blind spot – to the space I occupy, to what’s given right here at the Centre of my universe, to what it’s like being 1<sup>st</sup>-person singular, present tense.

Five stages of development are distinguished:

Stage 1. Like an animal, the new-born infant is for himself no-thing, faceless and at large, unseparate from his world, 1<sup>st</sup>-person without knowing it.

Stage 2. The young child, becoming briefly and intermittently aware of himself-as-he-is-for-himself, may ask his mother why she has a head and he hasn’t, or may protest that he isn’t a boy (he’s not like that at all!), or may even announce that he’s nothing, not there, invisible. Yet he’s also becoming increasingly aware of himself-as-he-is-for-others – a very human and special 3<sup>rd</sup>-person with a head and face. Both views of himself are valid and needful.

Stage 3. But as the young child grows up, his acquired view of himself-from-outside comes to overshadow, and in the end to obliterate, his native view of himself-from-inside. In fact, he grows down. At first, he contained his world; now, it contains him – what there is of him. Victim of the adults’ universal confidence trick, he is 1<sup>st</sup>-person no longer. Shrunken from being the Whole

into being this contemptible part, he grows greedy, hating, fearful, and deluded. Greedy, as he tries to regain at whatever cost a little of his lost empire; hating, as he revenges himself upon a society that has cruelly cut him down to size; fearful, as he sees himself a mere thing up against all other things; deluded, as he imagines (contrary to all the evidence) that he is at 0 feet what he looks like at 6 feet – a solid, opaque, coloured, outlined lump of stuff.

Stage 4. His cure is to take a fresh look at himself-as-he-is-for-himself and discover Who he really is. Of the many recommended pointers to his Self-realization (some of which use other senses than vision) the following are typical. (Warning: it's no good just reading about them: you have actually to carry out these simple experiments, for yourself.)

POINTING HERE. Point to your friend's feet, then to his legs, then yours; to his torso, then yours; to his head, then yours. What, on present evidence, is your finger pointing at?

- a) **SINGLE EYE.** In your own experience at this moment, are you peering through two little holes in a kind of meatball? If so, what's it like in there – dark, stuffy, congested, small? Slowly put on a pair of spectacles and notice how those little 'windows' become one vast 'window' – spotlessly clean with nobody looking out of it.
- b) **PUTTING ON A NO-FACE.** Cut a head-sized hole in a card. Hold the card out at arm's length, noting the hole's boundaries. See how they vanish into your boundlessness as you bring the card forward and put it right on – to your face?
- c) **PAPER BAG.** Get an ordinary paper bag (preferably white) about 12" square, and cut the bottom off. Fit your face into one end while your friend fits his into the other. How many faces are given in the bag? Dropping memory and imagination, are you face-to-face or face-to-no-face?
- e) **IN THE BODY?** By stroking and pinching and pummelling, try to build up here on your shoulders the sort of thing you see over there on your friend's shoulders. Now try to get inside it, and describe its contents. Aren't you still out of doors, as much at large as ever? Look at your hand. Are you in it, or is it in you?
- f) **MIRROR.** Notice where you keep your face – over there in your mirror, and where your friend is on receipt of it (and can accordingly tell you all about it) and where he holds his camera (which can accordingly register it in full detail.)
- g) **ONION PEELING.** Get your friend to check your faceless emptiness (at 0 feet) by coming right up to you with his camera (a viewfinder-hole in a sheet of paper will do). He starts at a place (say 6 feet away) where he finds you to be a man, then comes to where (at, say, 3 feet) he finds a torso, then a head, then an eye, then a mere blur. If he has efficient instruments, the blur reads as an eyelash, then as cells, then as particles of descending order, and in the end as practically empty space – featureless, transparent, colourless. The closer he gets to you, the closer he gets to your own view of yourself as No-thing whatever.

Stage 5. You have actually seen, by carrying out such exercises in basic attention, what it is to be 1<sup>st</sup>-Person Singular – the No-thing that is nevertheless keenly aware of Itself as the Container or Ground of the whole display. This seeing is believing. Altogether unmystical (in the popular

sense), it is a precise, total, and all-or-nothing experience admitting of no degrees – so long as it lasts. Now your task is to go on seeing your Absence/Presence in all situations, till the seeing becomes quite natural and continuous. This is neither to lose yourself in your Emptiness nor in what fills it, but simultaneously to view the thing you are looking out at and the No-thing you are looking out of. There will be found to be no times when this two-way-attention is out of place or can safely be dispensed with.

The initial seeing into your Nature is simplicity itself: once noticed, Nothing is so obvious! But it is operative only in so far as it is practised. The results – freedom from greed and hate and fear and delusion – are assured only while the One they belong to isn't overlooked".

*Robert Penny*

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### Letters to Carl—George Schloss

Letter 9 – May 10, 2004 Dear Carl, Sorry to have had to cut off my previous note so abruptly, especially since, reflecting, however tangentially, the parlous nature of our current dilemma, it seems to bear all the earmarks of the cliff-hanger we're actually living through. For instance, will he—Voegelin—take the leap or won't he? And if he does will he make it and so, by extension, help us to, with what consequences for the destiny of humankind we no longer have to leave to the imagination, it, too, being quite worn out from overuse and, like the rest of us caught up in the process of succumbing to FACT, very much up for grabs? Am I being too dramatic? Given the potential for the first time in history of a universal rescue operation to go along with the co-responding disaster that occasioned it, I don't think so. As a former teacher of mine used to point out: ideas, especially at their extremes, have consequences.

Seriously, just for the fun of it let's divide up and choose sides. Let's take a look at a couple of those ideas just for the sake of orientation, the most obvious being the absence of any at all or so close to absence as to constitute virtually nothing. Events like being born, eating and sleeping, breathing and laboring and fighting, leaving descendants, aging, dying—broadly speaking, the way the world works and, except for a hypothetical interruption or two like Athens or Jerusalem, has worked for ninety-nine and forty-four hundredths of its animal, vegetable and mineral, not to mention its human, life since the beginning of time. And not such a bad procedure at that considering its common sense approach has managed to get us where we are, so almost irretrievably lost as may—who knows?- provoke yet another advance cadre ready, willing and presumably able this time for one more run at converting never-never to ever-ever land and all in the twinkling of an eye.

I say "may," even though it doesn't look bloody likely at the moment. All the more reason, if past is prologue, to expect, to hope without hope as it were, for a rabbit out of the hat (one of which, it so happens, I just happen to have here under mine. Not that I've been asked, mind you). Meanwhile, discretion being the better part of valor, sufficient unto the day to head, if not quite for the absolute bottom of things—only the magic of the experiments can

do that—at least close enough to that consummation devoutly to be wished to enable us to sniff out our bearings that others may take theirs. And for that, in addition to Voegelin, we can call upon two other speed merchants of sorts, Nishitani and Altizer, making in all a promising trifecta on whom to place our bets. And, please note, this is in no way an attempt to set them up as sure winners (since there’s only One anyway and It only wins for losing) or even to indulge in an exercise in name-dropping but simply to establish a quick and convenient method for defining positions by employing a kind of short-hand: by their readings, if you like, if not pictures; their soundings if not sightings. With Nishitani, for instance, and his younger colleague, also from the Kyoto School, Masao Abe (still with us, I understand, though, like Douglas, in his nineties), we get a perfect example of what I call the Alpha approach, the attempt to break the back of duality by a deliberate regression to the Gap as it is or, as we see now, was before the beginning. And I must admit that, until I discovered the experiments, Zen and its promise of sudden enlightenment seemed to me as to so many others, if not the only, certainly the quickest and surest way for us reputedly in-the-know moderns to get to heaven. (That is, if we can describe as “sudden” what takes a lifetime of sitting cross-legged to achieve. We’ve only to think of the original subtitle—since withdrawn—to *On Having No Head*). But, then, as I say, I discovered the experiments and all my notions of Buddhism’s reputed superiority to Christianity, at least in this regard, went, if not straight to hell where it could go up in smoke, at least close enough to get itself singed. As I keep pointing out if only to remind me, I saw that though the one may very well have constituted the last word by going back to the beginning via the negation of speech, the other went it one better, if only by a hair’s breadth, by pursuing history to the bitter end in order to announce as well as render, and in no uncertain terms, the affirmation of silence.

Now I realize there might be something distasteful, not to say odorous, in playing this comparison game—after all, who’s keeping score?—but I do think it important, if only for the sake of defending the workings of Providence from the canard of being mysterious, as if mystery—from “mystes, closed lips”—pertained to that which cannot be known rather than to that which cannot be spoken, a dualist charge that, so far as I know, Hegel was the first to expose and we’re now in a position to confirm. In any case, how else account for a Buddhism, one of the great religions of the world (assuming, that is, that it’s a religion at all) and, as Douglas has consistently recognized by acknowledging its influence, arguably at the top of its game in Zen, coming in second best to an abysmally failed Christianity in the Person, the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the experiments, if not to the ways of a Providence operating in its native habitat where “abysmal failures” like crucifixions, for instance, or “the cunning of reason” we know as history, take to it like mother’s milk? And thereby hangs a tale.

*George Schloss*

*These letters are serialized, one in every issue, the complete series is available in a self-published book *The Language of Silence, Volume 2* available from :*

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