



Meetings (3rd Sunday)
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Next – 17 September

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Issue 66 - September 2000 - Email version

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Editor’s Note

There was a good response to the last issue. Thanks to all who put pen to paper, especially to Alex who added to his already heavy workload by acceding to my request for an expansion of his last contribution on Anthony deMello S.J. Feedback, in the form of challenges to or extensions of what others have said, is the best way of breathing life into our dialogues - both spoken and written. I have received some contributions that I haven’t included because they are not the work of the person who sent them in and it is not clear that they are relevant to current issues or the purpose of the Nowletter (see below). So, it would help, if you feel moved to send something in which doesn’t meet these general conditions, if you include some explanation. All I need from you, to make sure it goes in, is some accompanying comment on why you want it to appear, a fragment of you to go with the quote, poem, cartoon or whatever.

The annual Krishnamurti weekend at Springbrook, Qld., is on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th November. More information on last pages.

Help
 I have three tapes of the DEH Melbourne ’91 talk out on loan. If you are sitting on one please let me know. I’ve lost the list.

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

14th JULY 2000

Dear Francis

This is my last letter to you, but not my last thought.
It was always good to have a talk with you.
You always had something to say – rarely were you lost for words.
And your words were not empty words.
You were a wondering soul, and sometimes I think, a wandering soul.
So, we knew each other from about the age of nineteen or twenty.
Thanks to your persistence and perspicacity we continued to have
an enjoyable dialogue – over the sea and over the years.

And so you continued to wonder, and to support, and to listen.
I think your last journey was difficult and tried even your temperament at times.
I always felt a studied placidness emerge from you.

I enjoyed your philosophies, your frankness, your willingness to share.
Of me you were never demanding.

I know that your heart was in the Pacific Islands, and in your diving.
I know that you travelled far in your spirit.
I suspect your spirit was harnessed by your body, and I think you did justice to both.

I had the feeling you were around on the Wednesday you died
and on Thursday and I wondered.
You felt a bit closer, but you felt peaceful.
You circled lightly and moved on.
If you were visiting me, I thank you for thinking about me.

Your family will be feeling tender – losing you not long after your mother.
They will wonder too.
They will take time to come to understand the void you leave behind.
And if the void is never understood, only time will help them live with it.

You have other friends I knew not.
And they were very special to you, and you to them.
I know they too will miss you.
You were capable of a frank intimacy as well as allowing a person unlimited space.
Was that always, or was that something you learned? I wonder.
You did seem wise.
Was that always, or was that something you learned? I wonder.

My tears and sorrow are selfish I know.
They reflect sadness at my own loss.
I don't begrudge you leaving.
You had many losses that you had to live with.
You needed to go.
I like to believe eternal peace is yours now.

I wonder if in your state now it takes as much getting used to
as it does for we mortal ones left behind!
No doubt Francis you will have the last word - and I will just have to listen carefully for it!

You always sent your warmest regards
And so for you I now send my warmest regards to those around you.
Always

Carol McAllum

‘Nature Bats Last’ – letter from Barry Hora

I enjoyed Gary' s writing called "Nature bats last". It came at a time when I was realizing how unconsciously I responded to authority, mainly the inner type, my own thinking (thoughts). All my life I have been bucking some (not all) forms of external authority while living (existing would be a better word) under the authority that I created of inner, conditioned thinking. I have no need to go into what might be the connection between my self-observation and your "Nature bats last" other than to thank you for sharing with us, the readers of The NowLetter.

Barry Hora

‘Nature Bats Last’ – letter from Jim Clatfelter

Dear Alan, Thanks for the Nowletter. I' ll pass it on to Virginia. I' m glad to hear you will be including more John Wren-Lewis articles. They always seem just right to me. As for the Krishnamurti-oriented views, oh well. If I had to give a one word impression of him from hearing his (recorded) talks and reading the books, I' d use the word cranky. The article by Gary H. seems a little cranky too.

"Why don't we want to see the truth about ourselves? Is it too painful? Too shocking? Makes us feel uncomfortable? Are we all being too polite about these things? Getting involved in endless theories about life or enlightenment, but not prepared to stay with the facts."

My reaction to it:

Life' s not mean and nasty
When seen through proper prism
Those who see may find they lose
All trace of fuddyduddyism.

Seeing looks at all the facts
And willingly embraces
Everything including
The Central Fact of Stasis

Well, it' s not T.S. Eliot, but maybe it' s the Truth? Thanks for keeping me on the list. I do enjoy the articles.

Jim Clatfelter

‘Nature Bats Last’ – Question from Alan Mann

Gary concluded his contribution to the last issue ‘Nature Bats Last’ with the following paragraph:

Therefore, I have not got a clue what this existence is all about, or what “I” am supposed to be doing here. I cannot know! As soon as “I” try to open my mouth to help anyone else, I become a pathetic little ego fragment again. Who is it that can't stomach the way some people want to deny reality, and worship some authority figure? Who is it that is judging others? Gary Hipworth please shut-up! Silence is the only remedy for the limitations of human thought – but not the silence that human beings can imagine.

Whilst sympathetic to the general drift of the article which denounced the way people tend to avoid reality by adopting other people as authorities, getting involved in dialogue, seeking enlightenment, etc., I felt that, after putting the question, Gary provided an unsatisfactory answer.

The answer “*Gary Hipworth please shut-up!*” is just not good enough. What, for instance, would I do, as editor of this fine periodical, if all my contributors followed his advice? We have to live and that involves some ‘doing’ – so what might that be?

There is an interesting parallel between Gary’s article and the traditional Buddhist meditation “Since only death is certain and the time of death uncertain, what shall I do?” Well, I suggest that the answer might be “Chin up and carry on!”

Before realisations of the sort that Gary described in his article we eat our breakfast, read the newspaper, watch TV, edit newsletters, paint the kitchen, listen to gurus of all persuasions, get ourselves involved in endless philosophical disagreements with our friends and so on. After such realisations as Gary describes what happens? Well, we eat breakfast, read newspapers, watch TV, edit newsletters, etc., etc...

The difference is that we are no longer locked into the idea that these activities are what the ‘I’ is doing (as an imaginary me-entity acting, observing, etc) - it is now seen that these activities are what I am. Or, if you prefer, how the ‘silence’ is making itself felt through the individual organism. (For a very clear exposition of what I am trying to say here see Eric Best’s article in issue No 59.) It becomes a matter of being what happens rather than doing or observing ‘what happens’ and if ‘what happens’ happens to be going to dialogue meetings, seeking enlightenment, trips to the zoo –isn’t that alright?

So I now put the question to Gary:

Since, as you have explained, only death is certain and the time of death uncertain, and since I am now claiming that ‘shutting up’ short of death is impossible what shall I do?

Alan Mann

de Mello’s Demise

(A ‘Whodonut’ (all hole and no donut) (*Offered in in reply to Alex Reichel’s dismissal of deMello*))

Holey Donuts! Can’t say I’m donuts about his letter (all donutions gratefully deceived)

Remember: donut unto others that which you wish them to donut unto you

And: let him (why not her?) who is without sin cast the first donut

And: who, if a child asks for a donut, will give them a stone? (answer: generations of vipers)

VIPERS: Vatican Internal Police Elimination of Religious Scandalizers (the Donut Holes-in-the-Head Squad, motto: ‘Do NUT sin or we’ll fill you full of holes’)

The Notification is plainly a sentence of death on one or more levels (including wishful thinking) and you don’t have to be particularly paranoid (like me) to imagine that poor Anthony’s death was not natural (he was probably bibliicated)

Dr Reichel’s torridly toroidal metaphor seems to stand on its head and is theologically and spiritually upside down, back to front and inside out:

The donut: materiality, earth, dust, dirt, stones, mud, blood, flesh, sweat, suffering, sin, execration of saints, beloved of fundamentalists, blah blah blah

The hole: emptiness, the void, all-embracing, pure, ineffable, pristine, unfathomable, source of all, cynosure of sages, goal of gurus, drivel, drivel.....

'Watch the donut, not the hole' is verily the mantra of the blind who look but do not see, of the deaf who listen but do not hear, of the dumb who speak but to no effect (probably because they have a mouthful of donut when what they need is an unobstructed mouthful of hole.)

Peter (soon to be martyred – donut mourn me) Marjot

P.S Donuts are made out of disks of dough from which the centres have been excised to form the characteristic ring shape. The removed portions are in turn cooked and sold by enterprising/ thrifty/ metaphysical/ fundamentalist vendors as donut holes. Just which are we supposed to keep our (crossed) eyes on?

De Mello and the Vatican

Dear Alan, Thank you for printing my little note in NOW. Also I was really thrilled to see it followed by a contribution from my friend John Wren-Lewis taken from the Chesterton Review, in which he quotes liberally from my favourite poet T.S.Eliot. After the reference to Chesterton in my note I felt like shouting "Bingo!" .

Your invitation to expand the theme of my note is somewhat daunting. There needs to be a huge expansion to do this theme justice.

However!

I was delighted to see that you could accommodate a "headless" interpretation to II Cor. 3.18. This could explain the elements of rapport which I had with your presentation on "Headlessness" at the Academy of the Word. Scripture is like that. There could be seven or eight different levels of understanding for a scripture text, each one intended by the Holy Spirit. The context (in this case the story of Moses) and many other issues must be considered. Nevertheless there are some "readings" of scripture (and of philosophy), which are not intended by the Holy Spirit and this is why we employ a host of learned and gifted experts in Rome (and elsewhere) to point out understandings which are inconsistent with Christian life. Indeed if John Wren-Lewis could have availed himself of this resource as a young person he would not have had to suffer from an *ersatz* man-made interpretation of Christian culture. As Chesterton has said, the Church has had to be careful in order that we can all be careless. It is a relatively easy job to check out what the Church says for any individual with just a modicum of learning.

It is a fact of experience that the Christian life is utterly unique, *viz-a-viz* all spiritualities stemming from other world views, even though this life is manifest in an infinite variety of ways. The Church and its scriptures exist to feed this life and bring it to maturity. As Chesterton has said, "There are a thousand angles at which a man falls, but only one at which he stands."

When folk who do not share the Christian life make comments on scripture they invariably get it wrong, in the same way that scientific endeavour can never give us truth since it is an attempt to describe reality in terms other than what it is, i.e. in terms of difference. As Chesterton has said "The only way to be an entomologist is to be an insect".

In Christianity, what is required is well expressed by T.S.Eliot in one of the Four Quartets, "Dry Salvages". After a lengthy chronicle of New Age fiddlings, he writes;

*Men's curiosity searches past and future
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless*

*With time, is an occupation for the saint-
No occupation either, but something given.*

The uniqueness of Christian life results from the act of self surrender to the unique Person, the second Person of the Divine Trinity, who became man and dwelt among us, died on a Cross and rose from the dead. (Phillipians 2:6-11). His name was Jesus and He became the Christ. This surrender in faith, inspired and enabled by the Holy Spirit of Jesus, involves the submission of intellect, will and body, ie the entire heart, the whole self. The Christian life is not possible without the revelation of these essential "seeings".

Incidentally, Christian life entails much more than 'headlessness', there is also ' heartlessness' and ' bodilessness' , But to say this is to see that none of them are fully existentially possible. There will always be, with headlessness for example, the pointing finger and the ' seeing' , the ' filling' and ultimately the displaced ' me' ;

‘From glory to glory He’s changing me,
His likeness and image made perfect in me,
The love of God shown to the world”

(Chorus based on IICor. 3:18)

This is not to deny that there is a role for faith in God stemming from other world views, as John Wren-Lewis' article implies. However, a person enjoying the Christian life has too much reality already to be too much concerned with the religiology of other systems, eg. Zen, Advaita, "Lila", "Wisdom" and so on. One can only marvel at the providence of God. The little bit of religiology which I have seems to associate these systems with nature rather than the transcendent. I'm happy to stand corrected on this but can clearly see that the Christian "feeds on transcendentals". Eastern systems give me the impression that they involve an eternal round of intellectual mind games, relying on merely human endowments. For me they have a "metallic" feel. Christian life, on the other hand, is a simple and beautiful free gift requiring only an "I" rearranged into a "C", the cave of the heart.

I hope I didn't misunderstand you Alan, when you wrote of Traherne' s two categories of Christians, the "next worlders" and the "this worlders". I want to suggest that there is a third category of those who see this world and the next as made essentially of the same stuff; the heaven now which will be fully manifest as soon as the body drops off. The heaven now is not unmixed with tribulation.

It is tribulation indeed to have to deal with Anthony De Mello. He is someone who should know better. There is much that one can agree with (eg no theory adequately covers reality-hence my statement above about science) but this simply tells me that we are dealing with natural theology, not revelation. But even at the level of natural theology the Church will have grave misgivings about his "via negativa". A little bit of this is OK but total apophaticism is a "No-No". We know, not only what God is not, but we do know what he is "like" and what he is "more than". Certainly we can never know what He is. (Ignore the "He" if you have feminist sensibilities-that is revealed theology). The philosophy (as well as the dogma) of Creation points us in the right direction. God is certainly not a beautiful mountain lake, but His beauty is like a beautiful mountain lake, He is infinitely more beautiful than a beautiful mountain lake, since the source of all beauty etc. Christianity, even at the natural level, involves hosts of natural symbols. Christian baptism is profoundly "ecological".

It is typical of several Eastern philosophies that they do not share the philosophy of creation. The doctrine of eternal returns rules out any sense of ultimate meaning and leads logically to pessimism and despair. These systems cannot handle the reality of evil, usually regarding evil as

merely wrong thinking, suffering something to escape from etc. There is something radically illogical in the notion of ultimate reality as pure void. Nothing is a kind of something! Or rather, emptiness is a kind of fullness! Some Eastern mystics claim to reach a final stage of total abnegation of consciousness but this finality is denied by Christian mystics and even by very gifted natural healers. I cannot see that the void is some kind of truth. As Chesterton once said, if you can believe this you can believe anything. It may be saying something about psychology but not about reality. (See my remark about science above).

De Mello's Christology is appalling. It is also contradictory. If Jesus is a "Master alongside others" how come his teaching is utterly other than that of the others? How can a belief system "which makes you unhappy" be at the same time a belief system with which you are happy. The latter can happen just by listening to the Church which provides copious healing symbols, But can't you see, Alan, that what De Mello is saying by telling us that the Church has lost the authority to teach in the name of Christ implies that its mantle has fallen on Anthony De Mello. This is surely the implication of his story of the public sinner which ended your article. Anthony De Mello is at last out in the cold with God. Yours sincerely,

Alex Reichel

P.S. Out in the Cold with God

As there a couple of questions directed to me in Alex's article I thought I would take advantage of editorial opportunity to reply immediately.

Alex: Incidentally, Christian life entails much more than 'headlessness', there is also 'heartlessness' and 'bodilessness'. But to say this is to see that none of them are fully existentially possible. There will always be, with headlessness for example, the pointing finger and the 'seeing', the 'filling' and ultimately the displaced 'me'.

Alan: *We can dispense with the pointing finger from the first moment we see the aware capacity it is pointing to. Thereafter, everything is, or can be, seen to be arising and falling away in that wonderfully aware space*

Alex: I hope I didn't misunderstand you Alan, when you wrote of Traherne's two categories of Christians, the "next worlders" and the "this worlders". I want to suggest that there is a third category of those who see this world and the next as made essentially of the same stuff; the heaven now which will be fully manifest as soon as the body drops off. The heaven now is not unmixed with tribulation.

Alan: *Well, I'm not sure how Traherne would reply to that. He would probably say that God does not desire us to forfeit the ever present heaven which he so bountifully provides, and which we enjoy through direct experiencing now, in exchange for some speculative version of a hereafter-heaven which mankind has had the cheek to dream up as an optional extra. I'll research the Traherne specification for heaven and include in the next issue.*

Alex: But can't you see, Alan, that what De Mello is saying by telling us that the Church has lost the authority to teach in the name of Christ implies that its mantle has fallen on Anthony De Mello. This is surely the implication of his story of the public sinner which ended your article. Anthony De Mello is at last out in the cold with God.

Alan: I don't think so but this is probably the crux of our difference Alex. I don't accept that the Church ever had such authority. To put it crudely, Christ seems quite capable of speaking for him/herself. Once the security of external authority is abandoned we are open to that 'speaking' - directly. That seems to be very close to what deMello is saying so we will probably not reach agreement on this one?

Alan Mann

By Computer and Spacecraft to God and Eternity

Essay-review by John Wren-Lewis

The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead by Frank Tipler. Macmillan, 1994, \$39.95

If you want to know what a real 'new paradigm' scientific worldview might look like, as contrasted with the old-hat pseudo-scientific worldviews which often currently sail under the 'new paradigm' flag, read this book by the professor of physics at Tulane University in New Orleans.

I don't mean read it as something to be believed - nothing scientific ever asks that. Only time and experiment can show whether Tipler's specific ideas are viable or not, as he himself continually insists (offering a 120-page Appendix for Scientists, with the equations they would have to examine and test.) I mean read it to have your horizons expanded and some old-age prejudices blown apart, particularly prejudices about the supposedly necessary oppositions between materialism versus spirit, technology versus "small is beautiful," economic rationality versus social altruism, progress versus the here-and-now, and perhaps most important of all, reductionism versus holism. Where most contemporary spiritual, ecological and New Age thinkers start out by deploring scientific reductionism and end up calling for loyalty to Planet Earth, Tipler takes the reductionist bull by the horns and rides it all the way to the heaven of eternal life, in which infinite love has "put all things under Its feet."

He makes this intention clear right from his very first paragraph, which should win some kind of prize for *chutzpah*, even if he doesn't get the Nobel Prize (as he well might) for his co-authorship, with Britain's John Barrow, of the so-called Strong Anthropic Principle in relativistic cosmology. Having recently spent months struggling to find an arresting opening for my own book (I think with some success), this one leaves mine for dead:

"This book is a description of the Omega Point Theory, which is a *testable* physical theory for an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent God who will... resurrect every single one of us to live forever in an abode which is in all essentials the Judeo-Christian Heaven. . I shall make no appeal, anywhere, to revelation. I shall appeal only to the solid results of modern physical science... I shall show *exactly* how physics will permit the resurrection to eternal life of everyone who has ever lived, is living, or will live. I shall show *exactly* why this power to resurrect, which modern physics allows *will in fact be used*." (The italics are mine, but Tipler is completely serious about all these claims, and gives detailed calculations to back them up.)

Yet he's not trying to square science with any prior Christian belief, for he himself is not a Christian. He gives cogent reasons towards the end of the book why he can't personally accept formal Christianity, boiling down to the fact that it's too exclusive to encompass the sheer generosity, power and wonder of the Omega-Point Theory. Rather, he draws on top scholarly authorities on African and native American shamanism, Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, to argue that all these religions are humanity's pre-scientific intuitions of a potential in the *physical* universe which science is at long last beginning to recognize - namely, the potential for eternal conscious life, ie., conscious life not subject to 'the thousand natural shocks the flesh is heir to' in organic life as it has so far evolved on Planet Earth. He takes his term 'Omega Point' from Teilhard de Chardin, but considers Teilhard's attempts to reconcile Christianity with

evolutionary science flawed, by the fact that Teilhard's mid-twentieth-century science was a very primitive affair in the light of subsequent advances.

And here, speaking as a former scientist and a born-again mystic (since my near-death experience in 1983), I would say that both the weakness and the strength of Tipler's book is that he takes no account - indeed seems largely unaware - of the fact that mystics all down the ages in all religions (of whom Teilhard was one) have actually experienced a timeless "dimension" of aliveness in and through the transience of organic human life, and have thereby been able to experience that transience without suffering. But I think the strength outweighs the weakness as far as the book's value is concerned, because my own extensive studies since getting reborn into eternity-consciousness have led me to the conclusion that about 99% of what is taught about mysticism is pie-in-the-sky fantasy, which does more injustice than justice to what mystical consciousness is really about.

Why? Because the whole structure of the human mind is "incarnational," i.e., oriented to expressing eternity in finite or space-time terms - so unless you are by some "act of grace" already experiencing eternity-consciousness, your ideas about it are likely to be more false than true. Probably the only way to get any remotely realistic imagination of it (as distinct from escapist fantasy) is to start by thinking seriously what the universe would look like if finite consciousness could survive *physically* without being subject to the organic limitations of decay and death. This, as Tipler points out, was what the ancient religious ideas of "spiritual bodies" were trying to do, but they were only vague imaginings, because humanity's notions of the real potentialities of matter were then so limited.

For the same reason, purely philosophical arguments purporting to show that consciousness includes matter rather than the reverse, from Plato and Nagarjuna to Hegel, Aurobindo and Teilhard, never really carry existential conviction (and therefore never really convince sceptics), because in current practical experience matter is quite obviously so much bigger and more powerful than consciousness as we experience it. The strength of Tipler's book is that it shows how really modern science brings these ideas down from the realm of vague imagination to possibilities of practical realisation - so even if he's wrong in his specifics, he takes a major step forward in giving "a local habitation and a name" to what otherwise risk being "airy nothings."

Well, not exactly local in the ordinary sense, nor in the sense in which our contemporary ecologists want us to recover the sense of locality on Planet Earth. Yes, we are children of the earth along the line of time past, and technologies which render the planet unfit for human habitation must surely be curbed, yet there is something in the human soul which knows it is not just "of the earth, earthy," and philosophies which deny that impulse do so at a psychological and spiritual peril every bit as great as the dangers of fouling our current ecological nest. And this is where Tipler, the self-styled unrepentant reductionist, speaks like a true mystic who knows there is more to matter than evolution has yet uncovered - but true to his scientific brief, he makes no appeal to magic or the supernatural. He appeals to what science and technology are already uncovering right here in our present earthly backyard about the potential of matter to support intelligence in non-organic forms, in machines such as the one on which I'm writing this review right now.

Flesh and blood, said St. Paul, cannot inherit the kingdom of God - and it's pretty unlikely, even with the greatest possible advances in space-travel, that they'll ever inherit much beyond our own solar system. But Tipler (who goes well beyond PhD level in Computer Complexity Theory) gives ground for thinking that well before the end of the next century, we shall have been able to transfer our whole minds *with the full sensuous enjoyment-capacity and feeling-capacity of our biological inheritance* inside self-replicating nanotechnological computers weighing no more than 100 grams each - and since they need experience no time-lapse while travelling, colonising the entire galaxy with (or rather *as*) them will be a piece of cake. With that much ecological space to play with (to say nothing of the fact that the energy requirements of individual personal existence in that form

are minimal), there is no question of scarcity, which Tipler argues (again drawing on some pretty formidable authorities) is the root of all so-called evil impulses. So those sci-fi fantasies about technologically advanced civilisations breeding inhuman Daleks, or of Dallas-style soap-operas being carried on interstellarly, are just that - fantasies based on our as-yet-limited experience of finite consciousness.

Colonizing the rest of the universe will take a little longer - several million million years, in fact - but Tipler argues that because the most basic of all life-drives at the root of consciousness is survival, colonization will surely happen, well before the point where the expansion of the universe goes into reverse towards the "big crunch." And at that stage, the vastly expanded collective intelligence of the colonised universe - the Omega-consciousness - will have at its disposal the unimaginable energy of gravity-shear, which will give It the power to stop the contraction and create a stable cosmic paradise of truly eternal finite life. I was reminded at this point of a science-fiction story I once read about a day in some undefined future when a vast number of planetary supercomputers are linked up across the galaxy; when the resultant super-supercomputer is asked humanity's age-old question, "Is there a God?", the reply comes back, "Yes there is - now!"

In the story this answer was clearly meant to have highly ambiguous, indeed quite sinister, overtones, but Tipler argues that these too reflect only our present very limited view of consciousness. He establishes, by appeal to game-theory, that Omega-consciousness must of its very nature be utterly generous towards every sentient life-form that has contributed to its own vast evolutionary struggle - so It will have both the power *and the imperative* to resurrect all who have ever lived, good and bad alike, into its own blissful time-transcendence. And in that condition, there will be absolutely no problems of overcrowding or denial of space for individuality, nor any pressure on time for doing whatever each one wants to do - and therefore neither unfreedom nor boredom.

Moreover if any readers feel this is all too far off (squillions of millennia) to be real, he argues that this too is simply lack of imagination based on our present limited experience, for we shan't have been "hanging around" in any limbo during the interim. When Tipler talks of resurrection, he *means* resurrection, not immortality - which once again jibes completely with my own mystical experience. When I experienced "time-stop" in Thailand in 1983, I most emphatically had no experience of an immaterial soul existing apart from my body, but rather of a literal rebirth or resurrection - that is, of "Omega's" John Wren-Lewis starting up entirely afresh, with all its former memories, when the body was resuscitated before brain-decay set in.

For the ultimate resurrection, Tipler argues in great detail that personal identity can be exactly reconstructed by progressive "unpacking" of memory - data back through history, using advanced versions of techniques already known in computer theory for "fleshing out" imperfectly - recalled data - a deliberate employment of the processes that already happen when genes produce bodies and brains produce the memories that make up "experience."

In the book's concluding chapters, Tipler actually shows how his theory might be compatible with mysticism, though I don't think that was his intention. At several points he remarks how in modern physical cosmology, the Omega-state can validly be said to "reach back through time" to influence events leading up to its own evolution, and though he doesn't use the term, I was reminded of the "strange attractor" idea in Chaos Theory. This could indeed be one way of understanding the "beyond that is within" or *everpresent* Omega experienced by mystics. (As a gesture to Christians, Tipler suggests there's no logical reason why Omega shouldn't have resurrected Jesus from the dead, but he also can't see why, if It did, It stopped there - so he prefers to explain the Easter appearances as just Visions.)

At first sight, it's something of a puzzle that this book hasn't gone off like a bomb in spiritual and religious circles, considering the popularity of other books linking modern science with spiritual issues, like Capra's *The Tao of Physics*. True, there are many points where Tipler overestimates the

general reader's capacity for grasping even simple ideas in relativistic cosmology; even I, who did the subject for my degree, am still quite unable to say whether his assertions about the Bekenstein Bound or the Higgs Boson make sense or not. But that kind of difficulty applied equally to Capra's book, and even more to Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, which had a far more negative conclusion than Tipler's, yet became a bestseller. So why is Tipler's book still only trickling off the shelves?

I think he puts his finger on the answer in the very last sentence of his main text, when he asserts that "Religion is now a part of science." This is implied by his whole argument, and I think he just doesn't realise that the psychological effect is to leave the great majority of people feeling "left out," because it means there's no *significant* contribution they can make to humanity's "salvation". Since being born again as a mystic, I've come to recognise that the urge for personal significance is as fundamental to human consciousness as the urge for survival, and not to be dismissed as mere "ego". So I can quite see that it's not just clergy who might be less than wildly enthusiastic about Tipler's book because it could make them redundant; he may not intend his Omega Point to seem too distant from our lives to matter, but that's how it comes across if the evolution leading up to it from here on out is mainly a matter of high science and technology.

But do read it, all the same, for even if his peers eventually declare his conclusions doubtful or invalid, it's still very important indeed in showing how even the most reductionist science today implies the spiritual perspective. And it should force us all to think again about whether current "green" attempts to curb scientific/technological advances in the name of love for Planet Earth may not in fact be theologically shortsighted underestimates of humanity's spiritual destiny, which according to both St. Paul and Tipler may be the only means whereby our undeniably spectacular home planet, necessarily perishable in the long term on current world-views (and maybe the not-so-long term, if that wandering asteroid hits), could be resurrected to share God's eternity. Amidst the current timely outbreak of eco-prophecy, Tipler has given us an equally timely reminder of another (and surely more basic) aspect of the religious story, a statement which simple conservatives like the Pope or Billy Graham are just not equipped to make.

John Wren-Lewis

John Wren-Lewis's book The 9.15 to Nirvana will hopefully be published in 2001.

Extracts from a 1977 Interview - Richard Lang talks to Douglas Harding

(I lifted the following from a recent Headless Way newsletter. I thought the content was relevant to some of our recent lines of enquiry. Ed.)

Richard: Would you say, in general, See Who you are and do what you will - do as you like?

Douglas: Yes, but I would add that true seeing Who you are doesn't in practice ride roughshod over others. Quite the reverse. It does make a nonsense of conventional, rule-book morality. It substitutes another and higher morality, the morality of identity. Sometimes the consequences of that precept of identity can be quite shocking from the point of view of current social norms and standards. Seeing Who you are doesn't normally cause you to go wild, or flout convention, or misbehave. But it does set you free. The antinomianism of the Middle Ages and other times was deplorable, but surely it stemmed from the *idea* of Who we really are, not the *seeing* of it. The same might be said of some kinds of Tantrism, which make a point of doing everything which is forbidden. This is a very strange area. In one's own experience, seeing into one's Essence does suddenly free one from a great area of arbitrary social rules, and therefore has its dangers initially. They are overcome with practice.

Richard: Perhaps the outside story might look like a life without rules, flouting convention, but the inside story is not like that, not calculated in any way, but is lived spontaneously from moment to moment. You find yourself in situations that you don't understand, that you don't know the way out of, and you see what you are inspired to do.

Douglas: Yes, but I think that it is very necessary to realise that seeing Who you are is seeing that you *are* all beings, and the principle is established, whether consciously or semi-consciously, that your commitment to them is infinite. That you are One with every sentient being, whether it is a spider, or a visitor from a galaxy far away, or the people in your own house, or the people you find especially trying or stupid. Your involvement with them is basically total, for the simple reason that intrinsically you are that person, you are that strange being, you are that horrible monster, and there are in the last resort no horrible monsters. This means that in fact one's behaviour after *seeing* is more altruistic, more giving, though it may be more shocking than before.

Richard: These techniques are certainly very direct, very simple, unmistakably sharing Who one is. They seem to have an enormous advantage over traditional ways of stimulating that vision. Do you see any antagonism between those longer ways and this immediate way? any argument between them?

Douglas: The debate between the short path and the long path, the direct way and the long long climb, has been going on for hundreds, thousands of years. In the early Zen masters you have got it, the rivalry between the direct route and the indirect route. This was the division between the gradual Northern School and the sudden Southern School in Hui Neng's time. Throughout the history of mysticism you have these two tendencies. One says it is all available now. The other says work for it and one day you will see the point. It is quite obvious which side we are on. We are on the side of the sudden *seeing*, not building up to it by stages. But this does not preclude the existence of a path. There *is* a path we have to travel. It is a path to where we already are, I know, but it is a path all the same, a necessary development. So that one can say that seeing Who one is is a beginning. It is not the end, it is the beginning. It is here that your true spiritual life begins. The path is the practice of seeing that there is nowhere to go. It is hugely demanding, and takes all that one has got. What we are saying is that the easiest thing in the world is to see Who you are, and the most difficult thing in the world is to live from that knowledge and pursue with full mind and heart that knowledge without being diverted from it. So it would be a great mistake (and it is a mistake that some people make) to suppose that we say that it is in all senses easy, simple, and in the bag.

(The bag reference is a pun on the bag or tube experiment – Ed)

Richard: Is seeing Who you are mystical?

Douglas: Well, the word mysticism is a trick word isn't it? If by it you mean the essence, the secret heart of the great religions, the most fundamental experience, yes, seeing Who you are is mystical. But if by mystical you mean an experience with content, with thought, ecstatic, euphoric, special, coming and going, no: it has nothing to do with that *seeing*. The true *seeing* is very very plain. But I must add that although the essential *seeing* is very plain intrinsically, it can be and occasionally is accompanied by euphoria. Some people see Who they are in a great blaze of light and glory and thereafter are rather apt to confuse the *seeing* which is essentially plain with the accompanying fireworks which are anything but plain.

Richard: Your message is very simple and clear but some would say that you are like a record player that has become stuck. What do you say to that? You just go on and on about the same thing!

Douglas: Certainly the needle has got stuck, but in this case it has got stuck in the centre of the record! Yes, I have only one thing to say and one thing to show and am stuck with it. What is that thing? It is No-thing at all, it is completely without qualities. Ultimately nothing can truly be said of it. One is pointing to something that is so stuck with itself that it is so inexpressibly itself, it doesn't rely on anything else, it is self-validating. So simple that anything else is a dilution of it or a diversion from it. How could one fail to adhere to this? All is in the service of this Simplicity. I would say however that, resting in this Simplicity, arising from it, adhering to it, I do find in my friends, and in Douglas too, just extraordinary variety, creativity, energy. Paradoxically, this Central Simplicity ensures infinite peripheral richness.

Richard: Don't you get tired of going on about it?

Douglas: The extraordinary fact is that the only thing which doesn't in the end tire and bore and get one down is the No-thing everything comes from. Everything in the long run proves boring except This. In fact, it is so fascinating that all things seen in its Light become fascinating, too.

Richard: Why is this?

Douglas: Well I think the reason is that it is the only thing that really is. The products are never so fascinating as What they come from. The very nature of a product is to be secondary and partial. The product comes and goes and has limited characteristics. It doesn't cover the whole map. You are bored with a thing because the thing has proved inadequate, insufficient, incomplete, and this must be true of everything except the Mystery of its Origin. No wonder it's both fascinating in itself and fascinating also as the Source of every particular thing. Everything seen in the light of the Source takes on some of the glamour of its Origin.

DIALOGUE MEETINGS SYDNEY AREA				
LOCATION	DAY OF MONTH	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
City	Third Saturday	Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Clontarf	Fourth Sunday	49 Peronne Avenue Clontarf	11am Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127

Group Meetings

Sydney

Academy of the Word Seminar Programme - Under St Peter's, Devonshire St., Surry Hills

Second Tuesdays 6.15pm - Healing & Well-being

Fourth Tuesdays 6.15pm - State of the World

Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504

Satsang with johndavid. Tuesday & Friday - ongoing - From 7.15 -9.15pm.

Theosophy House, 484 Kent Street, City - Near Town Hall Station

Call Open Sky (02) 9388 8344 for details.

Nowra

Dialogue Group meets the first Saturday of the month from 4-6pm
The Tea Club, Berry Street, Nowra - Opposite Roxy Cinema - Call Riche 4421 5947

KRISHNAMURTI WEEKEND GATHERING, NOVEMBER 2000

THEME: What are You Doing? What am I Doing?

There will be talks, dialogues, workshops, light discussions, video screenings, Ch' i Kung and free time for recreation and bush walking.

VENUE:

The Theosophical Education & Retreat Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road Springbrook, 4213, in Southeast Queensland.

DATE & TIME: Saturday November 4th & Sunday November 5th, 2000.

Participants may arrive Friday evening (3rd) in time for a light meal if more convenient for them, otherwise Saturday 9am in time for Registration.

COST:

Friday evening to Sunday - \$125

Saturday to Sunday - \$100

Day Visits only - \$25

Enrolment forms from Krishnamurti Australia,
C/- P.O. Box 458, Burleigh Heads, Q.4220.

Information – Ring 1800 633 727

