

Issue 97 –April 2004

Meetings (10.30am - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of every month)

81 Greville Street , Chatswood

Next Meeting – 16 May 2004

(02) 9419 7394 or <[amann@bigpond.net.au](mailto:amann@bigpond.net.au)>  
[www.capacitie.org](http://www.capacitie.org)

		Page
'Meeting' Douglas E Harding	<i>Elsa Harting</i>	2
The Cloverleaf Junction	<i>D.E. Harding</i>	2
This Is It	<i>Jan Kersschot</i>	9
A Perfect Sky	<i>Riche duPlessis</i>	10
Communion	<i>Andrew Hilton</i>	10
East Africa & Time	<i>Michael Whiteman</i>	11
Post script to Fear of Death (extract)	<i>Jack Engler</i>	12
Look-for-Yourself Workshop Programme	<i>Chris McLean</i>	13
<b>Dialogue &amp; other Meetings</b>		<b>14</b>

#### Editor's Note

From time to time some of my friends express puzzlement at my continued interest in and advocacy of the work of Douglas Harding. The reason is simply that I find it to be the most direct approach to matters covered in the Nowletter as well as an unfailing test of all the spiritual paths and claims I come across. It is not unusual to find enormous resistance to the simplicity of the experiments and the obviousness of what they reveal. I recently talked to a long-time reader and contributor to this publication, Elsa Harting, who confessed her original alienation on the occasion when I introduced her and her husband Erik to the experiments many years ago. She told me about her recent realization of what Douglas is on about when she read Jan Kerschott's interview with Douglas in Jan's book *Coming Home*. In that interview Douglas mentions his essay dealing with the various paths. Prompted by Elsa's response to the article I decided to give it another run here.

So, thanks to Elsa and to all contributors to this month's issue.

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

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

### 'Meeting' Douglas E Harding from Elsa Harting

The first time was many years ago – Douglas Harding was talking on a tape. It appeared at first that here was someone who was on to something, only the 'something' appeared to be nothing. This I could not grasp. His repeated "See who you really, really, really are", became an irritant – I turned off. Later, the second time he crossed my way, was in an introduction to the headlessness exercises – now the whole scenario became a problem – the exercises were thought to be worthwhile by some very worthwhile people. So I really tried, but could not get IT- the finger pointing, the mirror gazing; and the term headlessness was a turn-off, this quick-fix wasn't helping me on my Way. Forget it.

No so! For a third time he cropped up. This time unexpectedly in a book by Jan Keresschot called '*Coming Home*'. In an interview with the author, Douglas Harding said "For me Christianity has something very special at its root and heart. It says behind the world is self giving love and that to me is the ultimate Revelation and that is exactly what we have discovered in the experiments – when you are in a paper tube, you are disappearing in favour of your friend who is sitting in front of you. Seeing that you are built this way, built wide open to love one another, that is what it is all about!" (pp343 *Coming Home*)

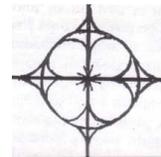
Here was a connection: something about my spiritual beginnings, Christianity. One evening, after losing my lifelong partner Erik, feeling I had nothing to lose or to prove (things seem to happen when one is in surrender mode) I pointed at the window, then the chair in front of it, the table in front of me – to my body – to the space above my eyes ... and got IT! Losing IT almost immediately because of the surprise of it, the immediacy I mean, the Nowhereness I had experienced in meditation. The 'trick' which had seemed to me almost an insult to the mystics, their disciplines and practices, now proved to be a simple trigger to glimpse the space where I disappear into what IS, on demand.

But what follows? Obviously it is only a starting point. As Douglas says (pp26 *Coming Home*) "One glimpse of the Source will not make much difference. He says that when we keep waking up to who we really are, the recognition of IT becomes natural, and we finally discover we are at home in our true nature anyway." I believe this to be true but I haven't discovered that to such a degree. After the starting points, I wish for signposts, encouragements and warnings to keep me going. I like the direction of wise and compassionate people. Happy to say, I found all this in Douglas Harding, after the fourth meeting with him, when I read his article '*The Cloverleaf Junction*'. For me it was all there: his psychological insight, how one can so easily fool oneself, as well as others, various attempts to get Home and his clear explanations of the for and against of each route for the different personality types. His delight in assuring the reader that convincing answers to problems they can experience on the journey do exist. I have a feeling Douglas Harding is travelling with me and it isn't so much that he is guiding (although he does that too) but more in a way of opening up the plan for the journey, so you really see where you are at. And hopefully get to Home, the place you never left.

*Elsa Harting*

### The Cloverleaf Junction by D.E. Harding

*Reprinted from The Headless Way Journal No 17 – August 1997*



The editors of that invaluable publication *WHICH?* are unlikely, in the foreseeable future, to bring out a number on how to choose, not this time your car, or your camcorder, or your career, but your spiritual career or Way Home. So it's up to us to tackle the job, however sketchily and briefly. And about time too, let me add!

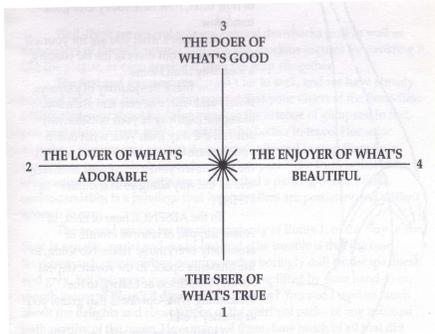
For consider the facts. Intelligent and responsible young people devote some time and care to considering what 'worldly' career to take up, before committing themselves for life. They weigh the pros against the cons of different callings. They take advice. They may even try out some of the options, testing the temperature of the vocational bath-water before jumping in. Few stumble by accident or absent-mindedness into the thick of a life-long career. How different if and when those same intelligent and responsible young people come to what's immeasurably more important, to choosing their spiritual careers. Choosing my left foot! Why not admit that you were pitchforked into it, by what had all the marks of blind chance? A friend had a friend who had a spare ticket for that fascinating lecture. You were bullied and cajoled into reading that bombshell of a book. There was that charmer you picked up on the train: in fact, she picked you up, and bagged another disciple for her beloved guru. You were bored and at a loose end, and that flaming circular fluttered onto your doormat, almost setting the thing alight. And so on. Whatever it happened to be that

launched you on your journey Home, I'll bet it wasn't in your case a careful study of the spiritual terrain, together with the roads traversing it and their respective traffic conditions, any more than it was in my case.

Well, it's late but not too late to mend our ways. Never mind how seasoned or unseasoned the traveller along any highway, or where he has or hasn't got to, the more he learns about road conditions ahead the better. Visibility, weather, traffic flow, speed limits, accidents, road-works, and in particular likely diversions - it's neither safe nor sensible to turn a blind eye and deaf ear to any roadside or radio warnings or instructions that are forthcoming. This is specially important if it's the spiritual road, the Homeward path that you are travelling. Hence this article.

At this point you may tell me that your commitment to a particular spiritual path was not, in fact, determined by chance. It was determined by your temperament. Some of us are naturally drawn to the pursuit of Truth, others to the pursuit of Goodness, yet others to the pursuit of Beauty. Or maybe, if you are drawing on another tradition, you'll point out how widely our spiritual endowment or karmic heritage varies with the result that a few of us gravitate to the way of Knowledge, of the Sage or Seer, many more to the way of Devotion, of surrender to and worship of God or one of His special incarnations or representatives, and a certain number to the way of Good Works, of selfless service to a suffering world. "Let me be true to my calling," you add, "to my talents (such as they are) and they will eventually take me Home. I take my own road and mind my own business, recognising that the other roads are for other travellers, driving other makes of car that are probably running on other grades of fuel. Good luck to them!"

A plausible argument, but one I find unconvincing - for two reasons. First, I have to say that this appeal to my temperament or disposition or character means little to me. I don't know about you, but I just can't be sure whether I'm the intellectual type, or the sensory-sensual type, or the emotional type, or the active type, or the bone-lazy type, or a pavement artist manqué, or (by the grace of God) some kind of alert idiot. What's more, no outsider is in a position to tell me. My inside information is that, if I have a temperament at all, it's a witch's brew consisting of all the ingredients I have listed and more, and which of them happens to surface depends on who's stirring the cauldron. My second - and main - reason runs like this. Though it's certainly possible to get Home by one route alone one's stay there is very brief, one's visit at best a flying visit. In fact, I shall be maintaining, later on in this article, that to get Home and enjoy Home and settle down there one must arrive by a number of different routes. So that ultimately one's approach is lateral and not merely linear, a convergence from all sides instead of a one-directional drawing near. It follows that one's so-called temperament or disposition is an imagined restriction for growing out of instead of a real idiosyncrasy for cultivating.



Or perhaps (and surely with better reason) instead of invoking the phantom of temperament, you interpret the "chance happenings" which started you off on your spiritual path as not chance happenings at all, but as the wise dispensations of a kindly and all-seeing Providence. In that case I suggest that this same Providence, who is surely the All-rounder par excellence and the Prince of Broadmindedness and by no means choosy about ways Home to Himself, will heartily welcome your discovery of just how your special God-given way is so linked with the other God-given ways Home that together they constitute one indivisible traffic system, a single Influx or Homing. As we shall presently see.

These necessary preliminaries over, let's get down to our comparative survey of the following four ways Home.

**Route 1:** The Way of the Seer, the Seer of what's Given, of the True, whose journey Home to the Centre of all things is the same as his journey Home to his own centre and true Self.

**Route 2:** The Way of the Devotee, of self-forgetting Love, whose journey Home is to the Divine Other, who alone is for worshipping and surrendering to.

**Route 3:** The Way of the Servant, of the doer of Good, who makes for Home incidentally, so to say. by helping others to move in that direction.

**Route 4:** The Way of the Artist, of the enjoyer of the Beautiful. who is so taken with the loveliness of this scenic route that it draws him Homeward.

Each of these four ways Home has its advantages and disadvantages, its pros which are headed FOR and its cons which are headed AGAINST.

***Route 1: The Way of the Seer of what's TRUE***

## FOR

Of all routes Home this is by far the straightest and most direct, the fastest (there's no speed limit in either direction), and the traffic is very light indeed. For all who go this way it's the absolutely OBVIOUS way, and they are astonished it should be so unpopular. To see just how obvious it is, how direct and how fast, please make this journey of journeys right now. My sketch shows you what to do, but doesn't let you off doing it.

Hold out at arm's length a hand-mirror and take a fresh look, as if for the very first time, at what you see in there. Observe how small it is, how opaque, how complicated, how packed full of itself to the exclusion of all others - to say nothing of how brief, how here-today-and-gone tomorrow.

Well, that's what you are for yourself and for others out there in the far country, a long way from Home...

Now make this journey of journeys, slowly and with due care and attention, along the highway of your outstretched arm, all the way from your wrist down your forearm to your elbow joint, and all the way down your arm to your shoulder, and all the way along your shoulder - to WHAT?

To the ABSENCE here of neck, of Adam's apple, of chin, of mouth, of absolutely everything. To the No-thing, to the immense Space, to the Aware (repeat Aware) Emptiness or Clarity, to the Welcoming Wide-openness that greets you at journey's end.

Of all homes yours is by far the most stately. Note the total contrast between the Palace that you are now looking out of and the hovel (pretty, perhaps, and honeysuckled, but still a hovel awaiting demolition) that you are looking at, way over there at the far end of your arm. And check that here you are no longer small but large and at large, no longer opaque but transparent through and through, no longer closed in on yourself but burst wide open to all-comers and infinitely hospitable, no longer perishing but absolutely imperishable (there being nothing here to perish), ageless, timeless, deathless. Here at Home you are visibly no longer an insignificant something in the world, but the Unique No-thing the world is in, the Consciousness that contains it all, the Mystery it all arises from and returns to.

Yes, your way Home is that easy, that obvious, that fast. And let me assure you, cross my heart, that this arm-trip was no armchair excursion, no imitation or preview or inferior version of your journey Home. Provided you bothered to fish out your mirror and give yourself a head-start, and travelled with due care and attention and an open mind, this was the real thing and it took you all the way.

But in that case why is it so unpopular, so little travelled?

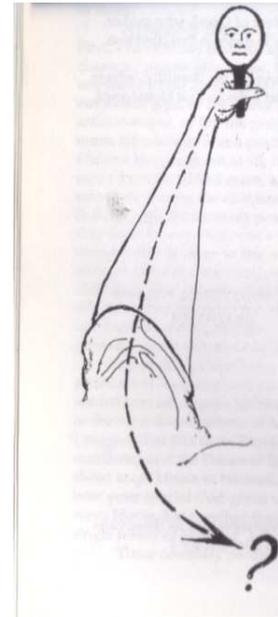
## AGAINST

Well, there are several reasons, several drawbacks (real as well as imaginary) of Route 1, several more-or-less specious excuses for avoiding it like the plague, or even erasing it from the map altogether.

The first and foremost reason isn't far to seek, and we have already touched on it. You have probably noticed that your vision of the Boundless Clarity that your shoulder fades into was the briefest of glimpses. In fact, you may already have asked yourself: why bother to travel Home (or anywhere else, for that matter) if you aren't allowed to stop there for a moment or two and look around, much less park? The truth is that only after many such flying visits are you granted a parking ticket. Which, understandably, is a privilege that few travellers are persistent and patient enough to earn.

The second reason for the unpopularity of Route 1, of the way of the Seer, is equally cogent and ready-to-hand. The trouble is that the road traverses such uninteresting country, such a boringly dull landscape, bleak and grey. Tell me, were you excited, thrilled, uplifted by your hand-to-no-mouth journey? Wasn't it down-hill all the way? You and I read so much about the delights and consolations of the spiritual path - of any spiritual path worthy of the name. How many of them, how much of all that did you begin to enjoy on that briefest and least spiritual of journeys? Or are likely to enjoy if you go on repeating it forever and a day, like some demented Euroshuttle enthusiast who's hooked on the view along the tunnel?

I should like at this point, for my part, to add a third snag to our list. Half a century observing travellers along this Seeing way including myself of course has persuaded me of one thing. Namely, how all-too easy it is to get Home quite frequently by this route and still fall disastrously short of the self-abandonment and humility and love and active



compassion - to say nothing of the enjoyment of the Beauty that's everywhere - which would surely be ours if only we were to stay there long enough to give them a chance. As it is, we Seers are certainly no saints. Indeed my impression is that, sooner or later, each one of us is going to be horrified to find himself or herself *worse* and not better than the average decent human! In that case, what price spirituality now? you may well ask.

That's bad enough, but the fourth disadvantage of Route I is worse, and by far the most off-putting of them all. The journey may well have left you fearful, or even frightened out of your wits, rather than fulfilled. And no wonder. Granted that the you that keeps popping up in your mirror and all over the place is (let's face it) a bad lot and defective in a thousand respects, and is in a sense a convicted criminal awaiting execution - granted all that, at least this you *exists*, however briefly. At least there's *something* to you, however puny. At least you are *somebody*, never mind how lonely and lost and unloved among the billions of other equally unfortunate somebodies. But even this spark and flicker of comfort goes up in smoke at the end of the road. I ask you and you ask me: what the blazes is the good of persistently and painstakingly making for Home only to find that, unfortunately, one has disappeared en route? What sort of welcome Home is it that finds nobody to welcome? Talk about the risks of travelling by road nowadays. Here's a highway that's *guaranteed* suicidal!

All told, a formidable indictment! However, I'm delighted to assure you that there exists a radical and convincing answer to this spate of objections. What's more, it happens to be built into and laid on by Route I itself, where it takes the form, familiar to drivers, of a cloverleaf - in this instance at least, a truly-lucky four-leaved clover.

Let me put the matter *picturesquely*. Major road-works and piled-up accidents and atrocious *weather conditions* not infrequently block the Home stretch of Route 1. Result: the traveller is diverted onto one or other of the *three remaining* ways to the Centre, to Home, via the cloverleaf. The truth, of course, is that these not unusual sorry-for-the-delay obstructions turn out to be a mercy and a blessing and no curse. They ensure that eventually my linear way Home develops into a multi-linear or lateral way, and my one-sided approach becomes a convergence from all sides. The persistent *Seer* isn't so much thrust as eased into devotion, into loving service, into loveliness. And in the end the words of the *Mundaka Upanishad* apply to him: "Having approached from everywhere That which is everywhere, whole, he passes into the Whole." No credit to him or to me. That's the set-up. Then and only then are we issued with parking tickets for unlimited use at the City Centre itself. And at last we are in a position to realise that here, and only here, is our Perfecting, our Incomparable Safety, .and how unfounded those fears of annihilation were.

In summary, then, whatever your chosen or unchosen way Home, do please give Route I a fair trial, for the following good reasons. It's direct and fast and easy, it fits in with and leads to the other routes, and in the end it can't be by-passed. (Yes, travellers by other routes must in the end come in by this one also.) But don't expect too much of it unless and until you have travelled it so frequently that the varying road conditions (by which I mean the hitches and hold-ups that life is always presenting) have themselves ensured that you have frequently travelled Home by the other routes also, notably by Route 2. And you will appreciate what God means when He says to you, as to Al Niffari, "Satisfy Me as to thine Eye, and I will satisfy thee as to thy Heart."

### ***Route 2: The Way of the Devotee, of love for the ADORABLE***

FOR

The Homeward journey by this route, which is the Way of the Heart, contrasts sharply in almost all respects with the journey by Route 1, which is the Way of the Eye. For example: That was cool, at times ice-cold: this is comfortably warm, at times red hot. That was the contemplation of a Void, a Vacuum, an Absence that's no more exciting, or adorable, or colourful, or beautiful, or fragrant than a hole in your sock: this is a Feeling that's not just rose-tinted and rose-scented but truly rose-beautiful, a Loving that's poured out upon an altogether lovable Being or Person or Super-person. That was a stern exercise in Self-reliance, the Taking-oneself-to-no-outside refuge which the Buddha strongly recommended: this is a relaxed Handing-over to, a Leaning-back-with-a-sigh-of-relief on One that you know will never let you down. That was a solitary and lonesome drive: this is a joy-ride with a bus-load of cheery fellow-devotees. And of course there's nothing so catching, so immediately barrier-demolishing, so matey as the communal adoration of the same divine Someone - whether that Someone happens to be the One Itself, or (more likely) some very special manifestation of or stand-in for that One.

All in all, then, it's no surprise that Route 2 is so much more popular than Route 1. And it's not only busy, but in the end obligatory. To some degree en route, and to the nth degree on arrival Home from whatever direction, your personal and superficial will has to be subordinated to and submerged in the will of the One you really, really are. Only if you have no will of your own to declare, only if you have NOTHING to declare at Heaven's customs barrier, are you let in for good.

## AGAINST

This self-abandonment is the toughest and most exacting requirement imaginable. It's so demanding that, out of the huge numbers that set out on Route 2, and the considerable numbers who get a fair distance along it, few arrive at journey's end and stay there. And so it happens that the final stretches of this road are no more popular or more travelled than those of Route 1. Rather less so, perhaps.

Moreover there lurk two formidable hazards along the way. The first is the risk that the adored Master may be exposed as quite unworthy of adoration, to say nothing of respect. After all, in claiming or failing to disclaim such a title as Sat-guru (Sanskrit for "Divinely inspired Teacher") or Maharaj (Sanskrit for Great King), or Bhagwan (Sanskrit for "God"), or one or other of our less high-flying Western equivalents, he is indeed setting a high standard, if not asking for trouble. And if it should transpire that his whole life is exposed as a denial and contradiction of all the values he has insisted on, then to the dismay of his disciples is added the public scandal, and the resulting denigration of spirituality in general. I'm not saying that this normally happens, but that it happens too often. Devotees beware!

The second hazard is that, even if the spiritual Master disclaims that title and is no power-seeker, there's still a high risk that the disciple's devotion to him personally will prove so addictive that it stops at that. One might almost say the less personable the Master the better, because the less likely to hold up the disciple half way to God. (I'm thinking of St John of the Cross and St Vincent de Paul, neither of whom radiated saintliness.) It's all very well for the Master to insist (one hopes with perfect sincerity), "If you aren't ready or aren't willing to surrender to God, at least surrender to me, as a first step towards that true end of all devotion." Too often it proves to be the *last* step in that direction, and the poor disciple's stuck on the roadside indefinitely, a long, long way from Home. Probably stuck, if he's a Christian, in an idolatrous worship of the man Jesus - heedless of his warning "Only God is good", addressed to the character who was rash enough to call him "Good master". Which title, please note, falls far short of Maharaj or Great King", to say nothing of Bhagwan or "God". Heedless, too, of Saint Paul's description of himself as "The chief of sinners". Incidentally, where does that leave you and me, who are certainly not saints?

But I hasten to repeat that, in spite of these dicey road-conditions and travel risks, this is a route we must all travel in the end, to the End. And, conversely, the ultimate surrender is ours for taking on, for merging in, for surrendering to and emphatically not for achieving. In Christian language, it is none other than participation in the Father's adoration of Himself *as other than Himself*, as the Son who is the universal Christ. And, conversely, participation in the Son's adoration of Himself *as other than Himself*, as the Father of all. Yes, indeed! Self-worship is no more sweet-smelling in God than in man. In truth, only God has no whiff about Him of that sickly odour. Only in Him who is Love itself is our love unmixed with self-love.

***Route 3: The Way of the Servant, of the Doer of the GOOD***

## FOR

This would seem to be a comparatively safe and uncontroversial way Home. In fact, the majority of well-informed and well-behaved citizens come near to claiming it's the only way, the other ways (insofar as they appear at all on the map) tending to morbid self-centredness and self-preoccupation. To feed the hungry, clothe and house and educate the poor, heal the sick - this (they infer, if they don't say so outright) is the whole life of the Spirit, which is to overlook yourself and your private welfare in loving service. And of course they have a point. The so-called spirituality which consists in contemplating the navel of one's navel, and is unmoved by compassion, is a fake and a fraud. In Christian terms again, the leprous beggar is Christ travelling incognito, and anything you can do for him is done for Christ in Christ's own spirit, which cares more for him than for all the spirituality in Christendom.

## AGAINST

But again, if this is your only route, you are pretty sure to run into trouble and get held up far from Home. While it's true that none of us can afford to by-pass this road, none of us can afford to blind ourselves to its difficulties and dangers. Here are three of them:

To be a dedicated but unselfconscious do-gooder out of pure compassion, without any congratulatory casting of yourself in that saintly role, is mighty difficult. No: it's humanly impossible! Was even St Vincent that holy, to say nothing of Mother Teresa? The shot's not on the board. I can't see you getting Home on this ticket. You'll have to combine it with other tickets, with other ways. With Route 1 for instance, where the safeguard against the traveller's self-congratulation is the disappearance of anyone to congratulate. Not that the done-good-to gives a tinker's cuss about your precious motivation, of course. And yes of course, better a charity that pats itself on the back a little, or even a lot, than no charity at all.

More troublesome than the problem of mixed motives is the problem of mixed consequences. 'What about the unkind results of your kindest acts, the unforeseen side-effects of your most effective remedies. Notoriously, short-term help has a nasty way of degenerating into long-term hindrance. To help the helpless to cease needing your help - this is help indeed, but it's neither easy nor common.

Finally and most importantly there remains the question of what grade or level of help is truly helpful. Material and psychological service, without due regard to its spiritual consequences, can amount to the gravest disservice. I'm thinking of those "rice-Christians" whose conversion by well-meaning missionaries was worse than worthless. And of the coma-inducing pain-killers so compassionately administered to the dying, with the result that the Homecoming that could have been the brilliant and crowning adventure of the patient's life is shrouded and obliterated in dense fog. In short, to give your patient or your pauper what he wants, regardless, is no safer than to give your child what he wants, regardless.

What to do? How to discover what he *needs*? The problems you run into along Route 3 are beginning to look so insoluble that you may well wonder whether it's a huge side-track and no way Home at all.

FOR

But not to worry, kindly souls! There is a safeguard against all the unforeseen bad consequences of your good works, as well as against the other drawbacks of this way Home. And it does not consist of nice calculations of probable results, or in any other kind of cleverness and taking thought. You'll not be surprised to hear that it is to supplement and combine this journey Home by Route 3 with journeying Home by other routes also, and in particular by Route 1. And this is how you go about it:

*While looking in to see Who you really, really are, look out to see what you naturally get up to.* Don't ask why you are behaving as you are, or try to figure it out in any way. Cease turning a blind eye to your single Eye. Cease overlooking the Central Stillness that moves everything, not least your alms-giving hands and gospel-bearing feet. And cease turning a deaf ear to the Central Silence that speaks with your comfort-bringing and inspiring voice. Do that, and the rest shall be added. Do that, and remain assured that you are doing and saying the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, to the right people - notwithstanding your doubts and all appearances to the contrary. You may give that beggar all your loose change and then some - or you may not. You may respond generously to that begging letter from that newly-set-up charity, - or you may not. Wait and see, see and wait. You won't be kept waiting long. Life at Home doesn't run by rules. It's a bus, not a tram: a free-as-the-air helicopter, not a road-bound bus. It is that only true and truly caring Spontaneity which is determined neither by habit nor by principle, but proceeds directly from the Origin of all things to the Solution of the problems they continually present. The know-what-to-do and the know-how-to-do-it arising from your Divine Centre are infinitely wise and wonderful, while their analogues purporting to arise from your all-too-human periphery are illusory and in fact non-existent.

Don't believe me. Try trusting the former, and distrusting the latter, from this day forth and for evermore.

#### ***Route 4: The Way of the Enjoyer of the BEAUTIFUL***

FOR

This way Home is so little recognised in what might be called spiritual circles that you are probably surprised that I have included it here. Well, I'll best begin my explanation by telling you a true story.

The Curé d'Ars, canonised as St. Jean-Baptiste Vianney, is among the most appealing and supernaturally gifted of modern saints. Yet when one of his flock brought him a beautiful and deliciously scented red rose he turned his back on it sharply, fearing that it might divert him from his enjoyment of the Everlasting Beauty. For the Curé, "the lust of the eyes", like "the lust of the flesh", constituted a devilish set-back on the way Home and by no means a divine push in that direction. I suspect that this unhappy one-sidedness was linked with the twin facts that, like Padre Pio, he engaged in many horrific bouts with the Devil in Person, and also found it necessary to flagellate himself at regular intervals. Two uglinesses that might have been avoided if only he had seen that all beauty - and not least that of the flesh - witnesses to and stems from the Beauty of the One he passionately adored. It's a pity that, lacking a liberal education, he probably never read Plato's Symposium, in which Socrates, with matchless charm and eloquence, shows how the enjoyment of beautiful Earthly forms can and should raise one by stages to the enjoyment of Beauty Itself, laid up in Heaven.

But here you may start siding with the Curé rather than with the Greek philosopher, in denying that - or at least doubting whether - the pursuit of Beauty necessarily leads one Homewards. After all, those successful pursuers Toulouse Lautrec, Paul Gauguin, and Pablo Picasso (to mention just a few Modern Masters), along with the great majority of Old Masters, were neither saints nor sages. Nor, for that matter, do Dante or Shakespeare or Mozart run any

risk of canonisation. Point taken. Nevertheless I must insist that the star-studded company of genius in the fine arts provides a priceless and indispensable service to us all, and moreover does so with utmost dedication and indifference to the high personal cost. In our terms, though innocent of any such intention, they combine travelling by their own Route 4 with travelling by Routes 2 and 3. And I believe that the most gifted of them all (to say nothing of those outstanding spiritual masters Eckhart and Rumi and St John of the Cross who were also outstanding literary masters) travelled by Route 1 also, by the Seeing way. Shakespeare, at least, did so with full consciousness of the fact: witness his solemn warning in *Measure for Measure* that we are in danger of behaving like angry apes just so long as we persist in overlooking our "glassy essence", alias our Central Transparency.

Of course few of us are masters of any art, let alone great masters. True, but this doesn't mean that Route 4 is closed to us ordinary mortals. Not at all. Here's another true story that illustrates my point.

Way back in 1964 I conducted what (for want of a better label) I call "a headless workshop" at a week-long Buddhist Summer School near London. Among those present who "lost their heads" was a gentleman who introduced himself as Lt.-Col. Roger Gunter Jones. Walking with me next day in the garden, he was astounded at the brilliance of certain roses, and wondered what country the bushes had been imported from. But as we moved on to look at other kinds of flowers he discovered that they too were just as startlingly beautiful. It was as though all the colours of Roger's world had suddenly burst into song. And there's a pleasing sequel to this tale. Down the road from the Summer School there festered a corporation rubbish tip, ill-concealed and ill-smelling. And here, later on in the week, I chanced on Roger staring intently into the dump of old cans, and broken furniture and crockery and crumpled and filthy newspapers, entranced by the visible rightness and inevitability everywhere on show. Not at all the sort of sentiment or behaviour you would expect from a not atypical retired regular army officer and embassy attaché.

The truth is that when, as growing children and teenagers, we make the monstrous but mandatory mistake of superimposing that head-in-our mirror upon our own shoulders here, instead of leaving it out there where it fits nicely upon other shoulders, it obscures and distorts and dulls all we see. And the only way to rediscover the bright and shining world we lost when we grew up is to turn our attention around to what's in receipt of the world, and see that here is not so much as a dust-grain - let alone a blockhead - in its way. I grant you, of course, that this revived enjoyment of the world is very different from celebrating it in great and inspiring compositions of paint or words or music. But it is great after its own fashion. and yes! – profoundly creative, and by no means the passive affair you might – mistake it for. And in the end it's a must, if you would take up residence in the Palace of Beauty itself.

So I say: if you happen to be a dedicated practitioner of one or other fine arts - a traveller, that is, by Route 4 - allow yourself to be directed onto the other routes and specially onto Route 1, as often as may be. You will then become a still better artist, and one who Sees. Or if – as is more probable – you think you are no artist, I say to you: include Route 1 in your itinerary, and you will find that you are an artist, even a great artist, who sees that from the world's Centre Who you really are is creating an incredibly beautiful world, rubbish dumps and all.

You will have noticed that I haven't managed, so far, to find any built-in snags comparable with those that afflict all three of the other ways Home. My account of Route 4 has consisted pretty much of pros rather cons. This is both surprising and significant, and one of the best reasons for giving it an honourable place in our roundabout, our lucky cloverleaf junction. The worst thing I can think of to say about Route 4 is that its users are apt to give themselves and sometimes everyone else a hard time. Like Mozart, for instance. So what? His music tells me something essential about God, and myself, and the Universe that can be told in no other way, in no other language by no other human being.

### *Conclusion*

FOR

In a phrase our job our *raison d'être* is to box the compass, to allow ourselves to ripen into all-rounders, each in his or her own fashion. God forbid that we should seek to imitate the famous Indian Sage Ramakrishna (1836-1886), but he does provide a fascinating and revealing instance of all-rounding. At six (six!) he was so overcome by the beauty of white birds flying against a storm-dark sky that he passed out for hours, and till the end of his life a musical phrase or a patterning of objects was liable to have a similar effect. At twenty he became the priest of a temple dedicated to Kali, the Mother who creates the universe with one hand and destroys it with the other. Ramakrishna's devotion to God in this striking form was absolute. But at length there arrived at the temple a naked sadhu called Tota Puri. To accomplish the difficult task of weaning Ramakrishna from Kali to the Formless God, he took a sliver of glass and stuck it in Ramakrishna's forehead between the eyes, and told him to concentrate on that. This time he passed out for days, and emerged as the devotee of Kali no longer, but of the nameless, Ineffable Source of all. So much, in our terminology, for Routes 4, and 2, and 1, in that order. What of Route 3, the Way of Works? Well, the distinctive feature of the

community of monks, the Ramakrishna Order which he founded, is none other than loving service, in all sorts of practical ways, to the world. So the compass is boxed, the wheel turns full circle, and the moving spokes converge on the still Hub.

As for you and me, whose lives are so different from Ramakrishna's, let me sum up my recommendations. Make for Home, for the Place you never left, by whatever route appeals to you. But allow the inevitable obstructions on the way - the difficulties, worries, frustrations that daily life comes up with - to divert you onto the other routes Home also. In particular, onto Route 1, the Seeing Way as it is now unfolding for us here in the West, at the commencement of the Third Millennium.

At its briefest, then, the answer to WHICH WAY? is always ALL WAYS.

*Douglas Harding*

**“This Is It” by Jan Kersschot**

*(Publication: summer 2004, copyright Watkins Publishing London – A preview of Jan's new book This Is It by way of the following extract which Jan has kindly provided.)*

Most books about spirituality and enlightenment are in some way or another dealing with personal growth. They suggest that there is a higher goal to be reached. Something the sages have attained, and you haven't attained (yet). All these stories only confirm your sense of separation. A lot of these books are about your “me” who is supposed to do things in order to become better. They respond to your belief that something is wrong with you, and that you have to work on yourself. These teachings confirm your belief that you have to be more spiritual in order to be more open to enlightenment.

That is of course very attractive for the mind because these teachings give you hope. Maybe you felt a glimpse of enlightenment and now you want to feel that all the time. Maybe you can become like your spiritual heroes by imitating them or by doing what they tell you to do. Or your mind can do the opposite: you get disappointed because you realize you will never become as perfect as they seem to be. You realize that you will never “get it.” Whether you desperately want it or whether you fear you will never make it, both options confirm you are a separate identity. What if the person you think you are is only a concept in the mind?

This book questions the common belief that there is a person reading these words right now. That you are an individual who is standing or sitting here reading this book. That you are a person who is holding this book in his or her hands. The identification with body and mind is very practical for everyday life, but when it comes to liberation, it is interesting to discover that your personality only exists as a phantom – an idea appearing in the mind. And I don't expect you to believe me in this matter. Don't take my words for granted. Just consider the possibility of what I am saying and see what happens.

The enlightenment this book is trying to point at has nothing to do with your spiritual materialism. Forget about all your ambitions in this matter. If there is no “you” then where should you go? What is the use of turning a concept into a more holy concept? Even saying “accept what is” or “do nothing” is still a subtle way of addressing the individual you think you are. What is the point of suggesting all this if the “you” isn't even there? If the person is but a concept in the mind, what use is it trying to make it more spiritual? What use is it to become a better phantom? Can an illusion become enlightened?

The liberation I refer to is quite different from the old idea about spiritual enlightenment that is still around: some higher state someone special received because he was chosen by the gods or because he worked so hard on it (for decades or even lives) that he was finally rewarded with the highest price a human being can ever get. Once attained, this enlightenment is suggested to reflect perfection, peace, goodness and permanent bliss. To me, enlightenment has nothing to do with perfection. It has nothing to do with sitting on a throne. It is not about Jan looking down on other people. It is not about Jan leading his readers to a higher state. The concept of being Jan is just another image appearing in awareness. It has nothing to do with “me” and still I can say, “What I really am is life happening. And since nothing can be excluded, everything that appears is what I am. There are no more borders, although there are still concepts about borders appearing in the mind.”

The paradox in this book is of course that it seems to be about me and the people I have met during the interviews (see part 3). Don't pay too much attention to my story, or to their stories. Such stories usually focus on the personal aspects and the temporary elements of life, while this book tries to point at that which is impersonal and timeless.

Furthermore, if you focus on the meaning of the words, you may not sense what the words are pointing at. Words are dualistic in nature, and will always fail in describing nondualism. But I have to use words: there is no other way when writing a book. That is why obviously this book is full of inconsistencies and contradictions. All it attempts to do is pointing at nondualism – knowing that nondualism can never be pointed at. So it is doomed to fail anyway.

Reading this book will not give you anything, but it may take away your spiritual ambitions. Not because you have to get rid of them, not because then you can reach something still higher, but simply because there is no “you” in the first place.

*Jan Kersschot*

### **A Perfect Sky**

Strange,  
But it seems the harder that we try  
To reach perfection's distant shore -  
So, mirage like, it slips away  
And we are left - once more  
With shadows  
Moving on the outer rim of time.

The words we use,  
The actions that we take,  
Thoughts that are formed  
Without the crowded mind,  
Should serve to make us realize  
That only a pool  
Whose surface has been stilled  
Could possibly reflect  
A perfect sky.

*Riche duPlessis*

### **Communion**

real, real gone  
watching self  
its propensities  
to manifest  
agenda, busy  
deconstructing  
leading to  
alternately  
no thing or  
a kind of  
engagement  
with originality  
NOWNESS  
LIGHT to LIGHT

source of mercy  
(these hearts in hell)  
you know the meaning  
of our lives, reveal  
thyself, oh! queen of  
heaven, promote  
the turning...

THERE IS LIGHT  
IT IS COMMUNION  
NOT UNION THAT  
IS SOUGHT

the creativity  
of constant  
giving in community;  
every gesture,  
and response, a  
fresh opportunity  
for kindness

*Andrew Hilton*

### **East Africa & Time – A letter from Michael Whiteman**

Dear Riche, As you know, I have recently returned from both Kenya and Tanzania and whilst 'Whiteman' speak with some perceived bias I am thoroughly traveled! During the late 40's and 50's, growing-up in East Africa, when but a baby to a teenager, I had already traversed much of this globe and that when it was considered far more risky than the somewhat homogenized travel product on offer these days. Too many places have forsaken their own identity to cater for mass tourists from fat and greedy countries like Britain and the USA.

I am proud to say that has not happened in East Africa where it is still possible to experience 'Africa' in all its original color and excitement. Where you can run the full gamut of emotions and experiences, raw energy, raw smells, roaring lions and roaring rivers, fresh fruits, fresh meats and fish, fresh air, fear, happiness, patience, love and harmony to a cacophony of incredible sounds; and not a MacDonald's in sight.

In fact it is impossible for MacDonald's to even open an outlet in Kenya as an old colonial, I am informed, has the patent on the name! He could probably be one of the wealthiest men in the world if he wanted to release it but thankfully that does not appear to be his intention.

Yes, it has its problems, disease, hunger, lack of opportunity, few air-conditioned golf buggies, no M25, hardly a motorway until you get down to South Africa by which time you can begin to experience all those things you miss from home, sanitized from all real perception of life worth living. For whilst much of Africa lacks what we in the west believe to be best for humanity and living, in reality it is us that have forgotten where we placed it.

Children today are brought up on a diet of video violence and GAMECUBES. They grow bigger and fatter by the minute and are quite hopeless at looking after themselves without a fridge, microwave and a warm loo seat! Britain, Europe and The USA have succeeded in weaning-off the little ones from any conception of fear, hunger, and uncertainty and yet, are they happy? We have become greedy, selfish and little in thought and deeds.

There is though a fear. We fear time! That is the only thing the west really does fear! How to conquer/control time. a European idea. In Africa there is little conception of time and it is the one thing no African has any fear of? Why? Simply that according to Newton, time is absolute: "Absolute, true, mathematical time of itself." The European feels himself to be time's slave, dependent on it, subject to it. He must heed deadlines, dates, days, and hours. He moves within the rigors of time. Time ultimately annihilates him.

Africans apprehend time differently. It is quite a loose concept, more open, elastic. It is man that influences time, its course and rhythm. Time only exists through events, and whether an event takes place or not depends, after all, on man alone. The absolute opposite of time as it is understood in the European worldview. A practical example is one that frequently happens in Africa and annoys, frustrates, Europeans. If you go somewhere to a meeting scheduled for the afternoon but find no one at the appointed place, asking, "When will the meeting take place?" makes no sense. You know the answer: "It will take place when people come." That is why you find Africans have so much patience. A fantastic talent for waiting. They can sit and relax for hours, thinking, dreaming, reminiscing, making plans, meditating, traveling in a world beyond? Who knows? Certainly few Europeans.

When cars were first brought to Africa they didn't really have anywhere to go. A paved road is still today something new in much of Africa and at most only a few decades old. Instead of roads, there were trails, usually shared by people and cattle alike. This explains why people are still in the habit of walking single file, even if they are traveling along one of today's roads! It also explains why walking groups are often silent - it is difficult to conduct a conversation single file!! So come to Africa, experience this huge, diverse immensity of space and the defenseless, barefoot, wretched man who inhabits it. You may be pleasantly surprised.

When Stanley dared traverse the continent from east to west, the feat was widely celebrated because of all its obstacles, its vastness, its deserts, jungles, rainforests, wide savannahs. And these still today protect much of African culture and tradition from erosion by the new world and for that I salute you Africa and yearn for your survival from those distant, dark lands from the north! I applaud the dearth of navigable rivers and your lack of quality roads. But come to Africa, not to try and change it as you once tried with catastrophic affects on communities across Africa, but to experience your ancestors, your roots, your ancient cultures, enchantments by the bucket and a broadening of your own identity. No other place on earth rewards the true traveler; no other experience can reawaken your yearning to live again, to experience humility and real love! The oldest known piece of graffiti is found on the pyramid of Kufu (Cheops) it wisely predicted nearly 5000 years ago ' man fears time but time will fear the pyramids' The same is true of the lands to the south of Egypt! Forget about those travel advisories, for your sake come to Africa. No hurry, no worry...it will still be there long after Bush and Blair are quite forgotten and MacDonald's have turned into giant oxygen tents for Michael Jackson look-a-likes!

*Michael Whiteman*

### **Postscript to Fear of Death, etc**

*(I think this extract from Being Somebody and being Nobody, an essay by Jack Engler which is published in a collection of essays as Psychoanalysis and Buddhism – an Unfolding Dialogue edited by Jeffrey D. Saffran, adds a relevant postscript to our recent discussion on the question of the fear of death, what dies? etc. Ed.)*

p78. ....The "danger situation" against which this sense of self is erected is the most fundamental anxiety of all: that we do not exist in the way we think we do. This is not the fear of death or mortality, both of which are second-order anxieties and only arise as a result of identification with the separate self. Death and mortality only elicit fear when "I" identify with the activities of mind and body as "me," as someone separate from their arising and passing away. The root fear is the fear of emptiness or *no-self*. *No-self or emptiness can only appear empty and void when experience is organized around the representation of a singular, separate, ongoing core "self"*. Then selflessness can only be experienced as a "null dimension" of horror (Eigen 1993) and "catastrophe" (Bion 1970) instead of freedom. One falls into emptiness as the negation of an existent self instead of embracing it as liberation from the illusion of a separate self.

It is this identification with a separate self that makes the confrontation with selflessness or "emptiness" in the higher stages of meditative practice so terrifying, in direct proportion to the tenacity of the identification. It will then be experienced as a "great doubt (Zen), a "dark night of the soul" (Christian contemplation), a "knowledge of terror, misery, and revulsion" (Theravada Buddhist vipassana). We attempt to bind this anxiety by organizing ourselves around a sense of continuity and singularity, by creating the illusion that "I" exist, will continue to exist, and have a privileged position in existence. Constructing and continually reconstructing this "I" defends against the unwanted awareness of no-self and the dependent and interdependent nature of all individual constructions of self.

But this way of representing myself to myself cannot help but reveal what it tries to conceal. It is painfully evident in the anxious insistence on "me" and mine" whenever this 'I' is threatened. In states of "injured innocence," when I feel that I have been wronged unjustly and am owed reparation for my injury – and in my anxious insistence on my innocence and what is owed me – that particular I-sense can be captured in full cry.

It is important not to confuse this with clinical narcissism. Organizing experience around a separate, ongoing self has nothing to do with attempts at grandiose autonomy or mystical fusion as forms of self-repair for narcissistic injury. These are desperate attempts to repair the damaged, undervalued, under-mirrored psychological self. The identification with a separate self is an altogether different type or level of narcissism, which may not even be the right term here, because it is a way of organizing all experience, normal as well as pathological, around a construct of self as separate, constant, singular, self-identical.

Odd as it may sound to psychodynamic thinking, we do not need the illusion of continuity and sameness to be fully awake, alive, aware, loving, and effective human beings, or for experience to have structure and coherence. In fact, to the extent that we cling to and operate out of this illusion, it will inhibit and constrict all these ways of being, as compromise formations always do. We do not need this illusion to smooth over our multiple organizations of experience, or to prioritize our goals and motives. We need it, or so we think, to ward off intimations of emptiness and freedom, of who we really are.

Calling this representation an "Illusion," as psychoanalytic writers are forced to, or a "delusion" (moha), as Buddhist psychology does, overlooks the fact that this is not a simple case of not knowing. As in all compromise formations, this is a dynamically charged and culpable ignorance: an anxiety based, determined, and willful ignoring, an unconscious effort not to know because I do not want to know. As always, psychic suffering is the unintended outcome. The attempt not to know is never fully successful: I still do not feel myself to be quite who I am. "I" am never "myself" today, or any other day. This too marks the separate self as a compromise formation that can be submitted, along with the motives behind it, to scrutiny and investigation. This is the path of practice.

*(I don't see any real difference between what he calls the root fear, the fear of emptiness or no-self, and what I understand as death or mortality which he describes as second order fear. They all seem to be based on the prospect of me not being around any longer. However, I think his explanations of why the problem is to do with what I think is going to end, and why the realization of selflessness can be experienced a source of horror rather than liberation are very helpful. The whole book of essays is about psychoanalytic and Buddhist approaches to the question of self and so far I've found it very illuminating, at this stage I'm only into the third essay. Alan Mann)*

### Sydney Look for Yourself Meetings

We have now had our second meeting of the current programme. These get-togethers are turning out to be small group gatherings with a lot of interaction. The next meeting, on Saturday 1 May, will be led by Chris McLean

Saturday 1 May..... Chris McLean workshop (see below)  
 Saturday 5 June.....Richard Lang interviews Douglas - Video 1  
 Saturday 3 July.....Richard Lang interviews Douglas - Video 2  
 Saturday 7 August.....Bob Hughes workshop  
 Saturday 4 September..... Frequently asked questions - DEH Video and Dialogue

#### **Saturday 1 May – Meeting 10am - 81 Greville Street, Chatswood. 2067**

##### **Openness Mind**

Chris McLean will provide a brief introduction to a process that he has been exploring in day-long workshops recently - a process of using Voice Dialogue to disengage from our habitual blocks to Spirit and to then introduce transpersonal states.

This approach was developed by Genpo Merzel Roshi, in the USA. Merzel says that people who engage in his 'Big Mind' process move through stages of spiritual development more quickly than people who only do meditation. See [www.bigmind.org](http://www.bigmind.org)

In a discussion (which can be downloaded from *Integral Naked* on the web) Ken Wilber pointed out to Merzel that by addressing various 'sub-personalities' of the psyche before addressing Big Mind, a fundamental tenet of western psychotherapy is applied, that is: "analysing the resistance before the content." Doing this accelerates the path of meditative development and evolution.

Chris, given his background (blown away in 1975 by Douglas' little book, *On Having No Head*), usually introduces 'headlessness' into the process, as well. He will highlight that aspect on this occasion.

When all things are reduced to naught in you, then you shall see God. To one who knows naught It is clearly revealed.

*Meister Eckhart*

**Academy of the Word Seminar Programme**

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

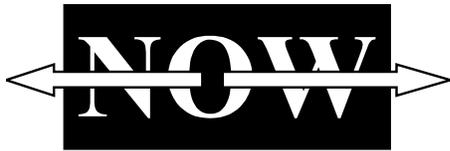
**Blavatsky Lodge of The Theosophical Society**

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

**Melbourne – Evening Satsang/Dialogue with Penny Fenner**

23a Britten Street Glen Iris - Monday evenings 7.30-9.30pm - To confirm attendance and for further information please call 03 - 9885 0119 T: + 61 3 9885 0119// 0411 554 007

E: [penny@fenner.org](mailto:penny@fenner.org) - [www.skilfulaction.org](http://www.skilfulaction.org)



**If unable to deliver please return to:**  
**81 Greville Street, Chatswood 2067**  
[amann@bigpond.net.au](mailto:amann@bigpond.net.au)

<b>Regular Dialogue Meetings</b>				
<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>DAY</i>	<i>MEETING PLACE</i>	<i>TIME &amp; CONTACT</i>	Phone Nos.
Dialogue Sydney City	Third Saturday	Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379
Dialogue Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Dialogue	Fourth Sunday	New venue - To be advised	Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379
Dialogue Nowra	First Saturday	The Tea Club, Berry Street, Opposite Roxy Cinema	4-6pm –Riche Riche du Plessis	4423 4774
Dialogue Nowra	Third Sunday	3/117 Berry Street Nowra	10.30 am Riche du Plessis	4423 4774