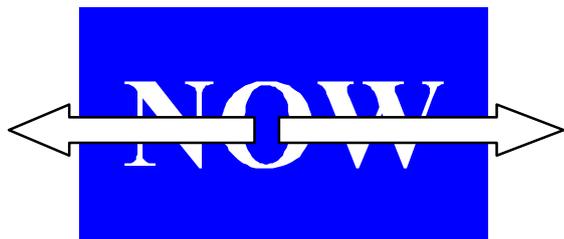


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CONTENTS

Titles in the table are linked to the corresponding article.

The Essential Duality—Correspondence

Letter 1

Joanna Malinowska

Letter 2

Alex Reichel

I'm Nobody

Emily Dickinson

A Belated Thanksgiving Poem

Greg Campbell

Alan Rowlands

Janice Hamer

It is All About Me

Trisha English

Premonition

George Santayana

Capacitie and Facebook

Wayne Ferguson

Emotions and Awareness,

Colin Drake

I'm a Believer (But not in the right things)

Rabbi Rami

Wei-Hsin and Douglas Harding

Alan Mann

Editors note

The sad news of Alan Rowlands death is recorded here in a tribute from Janice Hamer which she sent to the LookforYourself conference. I mentioned in the last NOWletter that I'd used Richard Lang's interview of Alan to good effect at the November Krishnamurti gathering.

My defence of dualism in the last issue led me into a thicket where I am besieged by advocates of both views and now find myself defending dualism (multiplicitism) against monism and monism against multiplicitism. Something of my dilemma is revealed in this NOWletter and I've even wrestled with the mountains are mountains, waters are waters business in an attempt to communicate what sort of dualism I'm on about. Nisargadatta's 'Wisdom tells me I am nothing, Love tells me I am everything' comes as close as words allow.

Thanks to this month's contributors and please write whenever inspiration strikes.

Correspondence arising from The Essential Duality article in NOWletter 158

Letter from Joanna Malinowska

Hi Alan, Thank you for the Nowletter. I always read it, usually not word by word, but just "scanning" through. I read your article on duality. I got lost again with your intellectual approach. You are talking differently in the Dialogue.

I am not sure how to say what I would like to say. This not intellectual and this does not have words. The duality view collapses, perhaps the same way when you see the three dimensional picture through 3D glasses. You look with one eye, you see one picture. You look with another, you see another picture. Then you look with both eyes, and yes, you do not see one or two pictures, you see something new, it merges and it is different.

There is something very new and astonishing when the duality collapses, it feels empty, because there is nothing which can be referred to as "me" or "I". The person does not disappear, the diversity does not disappear, it is like a big expansion, and it is difficult to adjust because the personal view is lost, it is difficult to talk at first, because there is no "I" and "you", it does not make sense.

It did happen to the person called Joanna twice, and as I say, I was absolutely astonished, I would never expect anything like that. I had many insights before, with bliss and the feeling of one consciousness, and I've experienced swapping consciousness with other people, or accessing the common consciousness, or Knowing Field as it is called in Family Constellations language, in very explicit ways. The elevated feelings, the bliss, the love which follows is like explosion after these insights. This is what made me write the notes on Enlightenment a few years ago. But this is different, it is not an insight, not a view, it feels like reality, and knowing, and it is so surprising and simple.

And yes, it is easy to be dragged back to duality, because there is a body and the body has its needs, and there is physical pain, and other people asking questions which need to be answered the conventional way, so "I" comes back, it is needed for communication at least. However, it feels different, because it is difficult or impossible to identify with this "I" without identifying with others.

I am not sure if it makes sense to you. I hope it does a bit when you switch off your thinking for a while, because it is very simple. It was you who showed me that, or pointed to that some time ago. Everything is, only there is no "I" or "me", and there is Joanna, body and voice talking, but nothing can be called "I" or mine. Somehow, the duality seems strange, because why would you look through the glasses with one eye? Why would you look at the reality through one point; why would you be this one point, one person, if you are all? Only, there is no "I", "I" is needed for staying in one point, using one eye. With Lots of Love, Joanna

Reply to Joanna, Hello Joanna, thanks for your feedback. I wondered if that note about duality might cause a few problems. All I'm saying is that seeing our nothingness does not destroy the somethingness. It embraces it. There is, again in your words, an expansion. It is not a reduction. As you say, words don't really work. We'll have to talk about it when we meet. I think we are saying much the same thing but there is a life-denying aspect to much of what passes for non-duality. The headless view is not one, not two, but both. And that is how I find it myself. Perhaps we can put your response in the next NOWletter? Margot and I are off to Glen Davis for a few days. Love from us, Alan

Joanna's second message. I am not sure if we are saying the same thing. Perhaps we do, only words differ. What I am trying to say is that no duality means that everything is, but nothing can

be referred to as "me" or "I", or "we". It is astonishingly empty of the sense of "me", and perhaps it is reduction, because it is when all the stories drop, as they are not needed.

It is kind of expansion, but expansion without "me". It is not me merging or becoming one with everything. I am not sure if this is something to talk about. You see, when nothing is me, then nothing is others. Just this me/not-me collapses; I do not have any idea how it can be talked about, because there is no point of reference.

Perhaps the closest to understanding this is by love. In real love me/not-me also collapses, there is no difference. It gives and takes everything, it is death and life simultaneously, and it puts everything together.

It is funny, because it is also all we are afraid of; it is like death, the real death of "me". Little Joanna was stopped many times by sudden terror before she let herself go.

Joanna Malinowska

I'm Nobody!

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
 Are you—Nobody—too?
 Then there's a pair of us!
 Don't tell! they'd advertise—you know!
 How dreary—to be—Somebody!
 How public—like a Frog—
 To tell one's name—the livelong June—
 To an admiring Bog!

Emily Dickinson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from Alex Reichel

Dear Alan,

I was reminded of you when I came across a Traherne quote used by one of my favourite evangelists: "Your enjoyment of this world is never at its fullest till every morning you awake in heaven, in your Father's palace, and clouds, sky and earth are celestial joys".

I liked your piece on Essential Duality where you found it incomprehensible to close the eyes to creation. The solipsists, the dreamers, always remind me of the famous story of the "Poo Bah Bird", who, through habitually standing on the mountainside, grew one leg longer than the other. On coming down to the plane beneath, it ran around in ever decreasing concentric spirals until it ultimately disappeared into its own fundamental orifice. From this vantage point it cried out "Poo Bah".

Monadism, like all idealisms, are ultimately a denial of our interdividualism (Girard) and give us a culture of false security cut off from the real world and one another. Maybe this is what recent Popes mean by the term 'culture of death'. Kind regards to both yourself and Margot.

Alex Reichel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Belated Thanksgiving Poem

So it is not that we or Humanity
will be destroyed by nuclear weaponry
if our Political Ignorance continues as it is.

What is coming to us is this:
Humanity will be destroyed
by our own Spiritual Ignorance
if it continues as it is.

I am not alluding to the more and more discussed possible

"End of The World".

Not at all.

I am speaking of the possibility of

The End of Humanity.

The Single Absolute Law

which confronts all of us without exception

is very simple:

Spiritually Transform

into

Bliss Eternal

or

Tragically Terminate

into

Unspeakable Agony.

Greg Campbell



Woodcut by Jan Masareel

Alan Rowlands from Jan Hamer

Greetings to you all from England, where I've come for two weeks. I was hoping to make it over in time to see my dear old Seeing friend Alan Rowlands, who was suffering—in every sense of the word—from cancer. But that wasn't in the plan—he died last night, before I was able to see him today. He had been surrounded by loving and capable friends and died peacefully in a cancer hospice.



Some of you knew Alan, and would want to hear the news, and others of you didn't, and might like to hear a little bit about him. Alan was in his early eighties, though such a boyish, sprightly person that you would have thought him much younger. He was born in Wales, grew up in Swansea; father was a choral director, and Alan's musical gift was strong from the beginning. However, he thought he should pursue a more "serious" and lucrative career, so he studied chemistry at Oxford, was heading towards a Ph.D. when music got the better of him. He entered the Royal College of Music as a pianist, never looked back. He ended up teaching on the faculty there until his retirement. Those of you who came to the Summer Gatherings will have known him and enjoyed his piano recitals, which he loved to give. He felt keenly the sense of "headlessness" when the listeners, the music and the performers seemed one, and there was a special silence in the room.

Alan had a curious mixture of personality--he was warm, funny, genial and personable, but had also been incredibly shy, embarrassed, moody. His earlier life had been somewhat agonizing--he felt really alone in the world, being an only child with no big family around, and being gay when it wasn't considered all right to be. He longed desperately for relationship and connection, tended to fall inappropriately in love with people not in a position to reciprocate. His distress pushed him toward spiritual seeking, as did his scientific curiosity about the ultimate nature of things. He had discovered Krishnamurti, and became a faculty member at the K school in England. At some point, someone there told him about Douglas Harding. He went to see Douglas, and something Happened, which he recounts charmingly in an interview with Richard that you can see on Richard's series of recent interviews with "old-time" seers who knew Douglas.

Alan became an intrepid sharer of Seeing. There was nobody—student, colleague, friend, stranger—with whom he hesitated to share the Point! He did it so unthreateningly, and in his later years did workshops with absolutely no sense of self-consciousness. His seldom encountered any resistance, since he was so unthreatening in his sharing. One of his most amazing efforts was with Krishnamurti, who certainly got close to the point in his remarks like "the observer is the observed" but didn't actually want to look at what the finger was pointing at, in a literal, visual, physical way. Alan wrote down their interchange, which I'm sure can be found in the LFY archives.

A series of life circumstances pushed Alan into a braver, happier condition in his later years than he had experienced previously. He inherited a grand piano from his teacher, and had to find a flat that could house it, thereby leaving the little bed-sitting room where he'd lived like a student for decades; his last decade or so was spent as a happy flat-owner, entertaining many friends old and new, in his lovely sitting room where he gave a concert as recently as November to friends. He became an avid gardener. One of the things he discovered through Seeing was the magic of the visual world; he looked upon the colors and shapes of his garden with great delight. His flat was orderly, with a quiet beauty—there were little natural objects like stones and shells in which he found as much delight as in the paintings and photos he had.

Douglas had somehow heard about the est training in the late '70's, a personal growth course that was in vogue. Its head, Werner Erhard, got interested in Douglas's work, and although the training was a pop course for which one paid money, and which to some degree emphasized transformation of one's life, rather than Seeing what's given, there were points of overlap. Douglas enthusiastically did the training, and many of his friends also, including Alan. If Headlessness had given Alan a clear vision of one's true nature, the est training empowered him to live better in the world. Previously timid, he became a fearless traveller, taking on India, other parts of Asia, America and Europe.

At some point in Alan's longing for relationship, I volunteered to write an ad to put into a gay newspaper, though he was sure it couldn't work. Many replies came from the ad, including a connection that eventually led him to a week at the Edward Carpenter Center, a retreat for gay men with a spiritual penchant. Carpenter had been a writer and philosopher with a strong mystical streak, sort of a Whitmanesque character, and Alan found an additional spiritual home there—not, as it turned out, a romantic life partner, but many close friends, whose comradeship sustained him especially in these last difficult weeks.

He was diagnosed with cancer almost two years ago; it had already spread to the bones. He sought both regular and alternative treatments, and had a wonderful few years despite it, leading Seeing workshops in Switzerland and Belgium, visiting favorite places, playing piano recitals. He said the Seeing Gathering last July was the best ever, and some of you—Jos, I think? —got to enjoy him and his playing there. He wrote a chapter for a book on the composer John Ireland whose music he especially championed, and he recently recorded a CD of a two-piano version of Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony, which obtained lovely reviews. (He used to wave the reviews at the oncologists, saying "You see, I'm very busy, not just an old fellow who's ready to die; you have to keep me going.")

He gave a piano recital in November in his flat for a family of old friends of his who had been estranged from each other. At the end of the evening, they all left hugging each other and telling Alan he had brought them back together; he phoned the next day to tell me,

weeping, that it was the best thing he'd ever done. Shortly after that, a terrible lower back pain began to nag at him, getting worse and worse, and unfortunately not adequately controlled by medications from the doctors. He decided he couldn't cope with it, and that if debilitated, he'd be a burden to others, so he attempted to take his life. He failed, causing weeks of bad hospitalization, depression and the wish to die. However, by failing, he did get to experience during the extra weeks until his natural passing last night the great amassing of support amongst his friends that he may have previously not realized was there.

I had wanted to add my loving support to the group of visitors, but couldn't get over here until yesterday (coming also for other purposes), and he died before I got to see him; perhaps just as well for me to remember him as he was in his heyday. To him I owe the introduction to what has been most meaningful to me; we met through a mutual friend's hearing that I was interested in Krishnamurti, and Alan enabled my teaching at the K school for a few years. At our second meeting, Alan brought along a mysterious object that he unfolded and brought up close to my face—a paper bag with the end cut off. I started laughing even as he guided it into position, and have been laughing ever since. He gave me *On Having No Head*, and eventually urged me to go to Nacton and meet Douglas. He also introduced me to his Alexander teacher (the Alexander technique being a sort of physical equivalent to Seeing--a letting go into the unknown, letting go of old held patterns). I also did the est training, after seeing that Alan got such value from it, and also found it helpful in living This in the world. And of course we had music to enjoy together; there were certain pieces that he'd play for me that would cause us both to go into ecstasies over some extraordinary harmonic progression. So many points of common interest. I feel his presence and absence. It would be lovely to hear from those of you who knew him.

Jan Hamer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

It is All About Me from Trisha English

Most of us are aware that we are attracted to other people for a variety of reasons, not the least because of a similarity of life experiences and conditioning in general. Such things as shared background, mutual interests, and life-goals also play their relevant part in forging our friendships. But to what extent do these same factors also influence our allegiance to one spiritual guru over another? Or to one philosophical viewpoint over another? A fairly broad friendship base will quickly reveal that in society at large today, people have a myriad of beliefs and one is tempted to ask how deep is the connection between the beliefs held and the actions that surface in people's lives as interactive behaviour?

We all share a disconnect between what we say and what we do, though not everyone is aware of it. So, in one setting we may espouse the view that "Australia cannot take in any more boatpeople because we can't afford it" and in another setting declare that as good Australians we should give everyone a fair go. We pray in churches, sing carols, listen to "feel good Christmas programmes" firmly believing that we lead good lives full of love and kindness. But in the next breath we condemn the consumerism of Christmas, as if the whole ghastly business was someone else's fault. We listen to our national leaders spout the propaganda of family harmony, peace and goodwill as if it were an actual fact. Why? Because it makes us feel good, and feeling good is a prime necessity, the essential mantra of modern society. However, if what I want conflicts with what you want, then the message is entirely different. In brief, my view should prevail. Besides, my guru is better than yours,

my god is better than yours, and my lifestyle and standard of living is better than yours, so please don't irritate me by trying to suggest otherwise!

I saw a disciple of this view the other day. A young kid walked through the local mall wearing a tee shirt that was emblazoned with the words "IT IS ALL ABOUT ME". No one paid any attention at all, as if to say - we know that - how could anyone be in any doubt about it at all? If the same lad had been wearing a tee shirt with a different view emblazoned on it, such as "I CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU", it is very likely he would have attracted more attention and no doubt would have been considered "odd". Possibly he may have provoked the odd comment about whether he should be allowed out on his own! On the way home, I saw four youths in a car almost run down an entire family. They were speeding in a built-up area. As they passed the family they gestured and screamed abuse, punctuated by the foulest language imaginable and what seemed to me, at least, to be a bucket full of displaced anger.

But what could they possibly have been angry about? We all agree don't we, that "It is all about Me"? We should not repress free speech (unless it directly affects us, of course). We should not discipline or correct young people (unless of course they abuse and attack us, personally, and then we are a bit unhappy about things). Generally speaking, we have these outmoded (?) beliefs that people should be free, but in practice we give them licence. Freedom of course, has responsibilities attached to it, and licence is an open invitation to treat the world and other people as the inclination moves us. What I question, is whether there are any adults about, who still remember, that there is a significant difference between *freedom* and *licence*. If young people today are so highly educated, why do we hear them using the language of the gutter? Is it some specialised course that they are offering in Private Schools these days? Have they introduced it because they don't want Government Schools to feel isolated in their ignorance? Or is it a new common denominator that is aimed at some fancy notion of *social inclusion*?

I live close by to three very highly regarded private schools. Consequently, the young adults in the suburb where I live, attend these schools. On New Years Eve—the young folk were letting their hair down until well into the next morning. You could hear them making their way back to their vehicles in air that was blue with the language the colour of a sewer. Many of the guests were also from Government Schools, there is no doubt about that, and these students certainly weren't underprivileged in the use of contemporary peer group language either. The only difference was that one group paid more for the privilege - or do they call it a "right" these days? Then a strange thing happened. I began to listen to how modern adults communicate and to pay greater attention to the language of contemporary television programmes. There was hardly a noticeable difference. Of course, how could I have been so dumb? Children and young adults speak and behave like their parents. Television and cinema in the main, caters for this majority group. So one would expect manners and language to be roughly equivalent, which indeed they are.

The disconnect, is with their grandparents who, bless them, were conditioned in a completely different way. And yes, the older generation—some of them—can actually have entire conversations without reverting to four letter words. Unfortunately, they are so backward—if not downright subversive—that they actually believe that the world would be a better place if it was gentle, humane, and more caring. And part of that caring, is that we take action to prevent our offspring from being absolute morons. I know, it assumes a level of responsibility which some may not want to accept. If we don't want to accept it, that's fine, but we will have to pay more taxes eventually, to pay for the gaols to keep them off the street. It shouldn't be difficult, but alas it seems to be increasingly impossible. There I was sitting in the open cafeteria area of a local mall drinking a cup of coffee. Two

siblings from a private school, wearing jumpers sporting the name of a religious school, were jostling together right next to me, invading my personal space. I asked them politely if they would move somewhere else, as I was trying to drink my coffee.

The two children, of about 12 and 13, looked positively stunned. They went and reported at once to their "about-40-year-old" mother. The next thing I knew the mother was at my elbow, hands on hips with strident voice shouting: "I didn't hear what you said".

Whereupon, I told her that I had not spoken to her at all. Furious now, she grabbed her bag—and the offending children—and virtually screamed at me that "If I didn't like children, I shouldn't sit anywhere near them". I politely informed her, that it was not children I disliked, but barbarians. She went on her way with such a displaced bucket of anger that I couldn't help but smile. That woman is making a pile of trouble for herself, I thought. The only thing she wasn't wearing, incidentally, was a tee shirt that said: IT IS ALL ABOUT ME. But really, she didn't have to wear one for the point to be made.

Actually, I'm thinking of getting one myself. I would simply hate it, if people labelled me as *reactionary*, or told me that I'd reached by used-by-date! (Only joking, but it would be the way to kill a fad. Imagine if all the oldies suddenly turned up to the supermarkets wearing tee shirts emblazoned: IT IS ALL ABOUT ME. The craze would die an instant death because the kids would be terrified of being irrelevant).

I've pondered a great deal on the behaviour I've written about in this article, and also wondered what Krishnamurti might say if asked about it. He would no doubt have pointed out that we are all violent—some people are violent in speech, some in behaviour, and some internally angry because of frustration and so on. He might also have pointed out, as he often did in his talks about education, that it is highly important that teachers (and parents) be rightly educated, meaning that they have insight into their own behaviour.

When there is right relationship between children and parents and so on, there will be sensitivity on the part of all concerned towards others regardless of age or background.

Maybe in the examples I gave, for whatever reason, I lacked sufficient affection. When there is affection, things usually smooth out without anyone's feathers getting ruffled. Which leads me to question the very foundation of relationships in the modern world. Is there really sufficient affection do you think? And what do we really mean by affection? How does affection arise and in what circumstances is it always right? And how does lack of affection manifest itself and what are the consequences?

Trisha English

Premonition

(From PoemHunter.com)

The muffled syllables that Nature speaks
 Fill us with deeper longing for her word;
 She hides a meaning that the spirit seeks,
 She makes a sweeter music than is heard.
 A hidden light illumines all our seeing,
 An unknown love enchants our solitude.
 We feel and know that from the depths of being
 Exhales an infinite, a perfect good.
 Though the heart wear the garment of its sorrow
 And be not happy like a naked star,
 Yet from the thought of peace some peace we borrow,
 Some rapture from the rapture felt afar.
 Our heart strings are too coarse for Nature's fingers
 Deftly to quicken as she pulses on,
 And the harsh tremor that among them lingers
 Will into sweeter silence die anon.
 We catch the broken prelude and suggestion
 Of things unuttered, needing to be sung;
 We know the burden of them, and their question
 Lies heavy on the heart, nor finds a tongue.
 Till haply, lightning through the storm of ages,
 Our sullen secret flash from sky to sky,
 Glowing in some diviner poet's pages
 And swelling into rapture from this sigh.

George Santayana

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Capacitie and Facebook

Hi Alan, I've been enjoying your website and the poetry of Thomas Traherne which you have introduced me to. If you don't mind another Facebook friend, I would be happy to see you around from time to time. Have a great day, in any event, and keep up the good work!
 Sincerely, Wayne

Alan Mann 29 November 16:28 Thanks for the message Wayne. We've been away for a few days. I ticked the Facebook connection and had a look at your Facebook page which is full of interesting material. I see you cater for all appetites and I'll definitely have to try

some of your recipes. I'm a Facebook novice, relying on my granddaughter for occasional tutorials, although I downloaded Facebook for Dummies so I'm hoping the process will become progressively less mysterious. I feel I should already know you from somewhere or other but where? Regards, Alan

Wayne Ferguson 30 November 03:38 Facebook is a bit strange at first, but give it a few months, it will all become second nature... Several years ago—in my pre-eckhart-tolle days and pre-facebook & non-duality days—I created a website called TheFourPrecepts.Com—it is possible that our paths might have crossed during that period.

Traherne's "capacity" seems similar to the sanskrit "akasha" or "accomodation" : akasha - Sanskrit ākāśa: free or open space, openness; sky, atmosphere. Esoterically referred to as 'accommodation' or 'capacity' (a place for something to exist), and the word 'scope' is often used to describe the vast opportunity provided by the akasha. (mw126)

"To make a place is to make an Akasha ... When you make yourself an Akasha for God to be enshrined in, that is the only purpose for which this body was made. It was made that God might take charge of it, might be awakened in this body. By doing this one fulfills that purpose, one opens this place for God, one makes it the places for God, and says, 'Now You be enshrined in this place; it belongs to You, You made it.' " from Sangatha II, by Hazrat Inayat Khan (unpublished)

"The word capacity refers to the unconfined basis for experience, as in the moment just before something takes place. ... The analogy for this is a bright mirror, a readiness for experience to unfold without any preconception whatsoever." from Samten Gyatso, as recalled by Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, Buddhadharma Fall 2005

The above is from a glossary at Wahiduddin.Net. See also this link -- scroll down to paragraph 6:

http://www.facebook.com/l/HAQG_03KcAQFIaFy_0LEZhgbTK1H1zK-GEjGCOPEGE2wUyg/wahiduddin.net/mv2/IV/IV_32.htm

Thanks for touching base -- I look forward to seeing you on Facebook!

Wayne Ferguson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Emotions and Awareness from Colin Drake

Below follows an e-mail exchange on this subject between myself and one of my readers, whose name has been withheld to protect her privacy. My comments, in bold and italics are inserted, into the body of her e-mail.

Dear Colin, thanks for your book, A Light Unto Your Self. I am reading it with great pleasure. I 'get' much more of the book than I thought I would, which IS confirming and reassuring and encouraging. I don't know if you are deluged with mail—so feel free not to answer if you prefer to pass on this one. I will understand. Here goes—the longer I meditate the more facility I seem to have conducting my thoughts and emotions (like an orchestra leader). It can appear to me that I can end them like flipping a light switch—if I so choose.

This is very useful but not necessary, as just watching them from pure awareness allows them to run their course without following them, identifying with them or buying into them.

This sense that I am not beholden to my mind or emotions is a relief but I feel kind of wooden with very muted emotions. Just wondering if you have ever taken up a question like this—what is the role of emotion in living aware of awareness?

The more you become identified with (aware of) pure awareness the less negative emotions will occur (as there is no 'one' separate home any more). The positive emotions will tend to transmute from individual love (eros) to universal love (agape) and from pleasure gratification (from getting what 'you' want) to enjoyment of 'what is'. This latter occurs when 'awake', so that the world is encountered directly and not through the filter of the separate self with all of its petty judgements and preferences.

I recently had a big life disappointment. On the one hand I believe that—"to heal it, you need to feel it". On the other hand, if painful feelings are a misidentification, is it best to bypass the turmoil and of a complex emotional happening?

I don't say that painful feelings are a misidentification as pain (both mental and physical) is endemic to life in a human body. When these feelings are bought into, or followed, by telling yourself a story about how they have affected, or how you wish something had been different, then these cause unnecessary mental suffering by misidentifying yourself as a separate being that has been affected. Whereas Awareness itself just witnesses this mental pain without being disturbed by it. So when these painful memories flow, just watch them as they come and they go, with no story then without a doubt, their recurrence will 'peter out'.

I can see it both ways. I am attached to living with heart but then it comes to me that maybe in Awareness emotion is of little importance. Thank you for listening. XXXX

Emotions are all part of the smorgasbord of experience to be enjoyed, or witnessed as ephemeral states, depending on how you feel about them. Life is to be enjoyed and the positive emotions can be very helpful in achieving this, whilst the negative ones can be witnessed as they arise and then just watched from pure awareness when they soon subside as they have not been fed, or followed. Thus you can live fully with 'heart' tempered with the light of awareness.

To complete this article here is her reply: Thank you- you made my day. My gratitude is big; thanks for the attention and care and love you offer in answering me in this way. This helped me ALOT (in particular the poem but all of it helped). I'll be very happy to get any of your writing- they are the right thing for me. I look forward to reading more in your book on my night job tonight at a group home for mentally ill folks.

Colin Drake

I'm A Believer (But Not in the Right Things) Rabbi Rami

(I'm indebted to Andrew Hilton for introducing me to Rabbi Rami and his blog at <http://rabbirami.blogspot.com/> from where I lifted this contribution. Ed).

During a wonderful conversation I had this morning it struck me (once again) why I have such trouble fitting in even with interfaith groups: I am not a believer.

I don't believe religions are of divine origin; I don't believe theologies tell us anything about God (though they may tell us a lot about the humans who invent and adhere to them); I don't believe scriptures are written or revealed by God; and I don't believe the claims a religion makes about itself are anything more than self-serving marketing slogans.

I do believe all beings are manifestation of a singular Reality I call God; I do believe that we can realize this Reality in, with, and as ourselves through a variety of contemplative practices found in all of the world's religions; I do believe that when we realize the Divine this way we move beyond religion to a state of open-hearted compassion and hard-headed justice and reason; and I do believe each of the world's religions and all of their sacred texts contain timeless truths, but that these truths have to be culled out from a lot of time-bound bias and religious propaganda.

My beliefs make it impossible for me to hold "the Jewish line" on anything. Certainly I can challenge misinformation about Jews and Judaism, but I cannot personally assert that the Jews are the Chosen People or that the Torah is the one true revelation, or that Israel is the Promised Land (though I can explain why many Jews do believe these things). As the only rabbi in an entire county, however, I am expected to believe things I have long since abandoned. And when I don't it is very confusing to people.

I love Judaism as a civilization of argument and doubt; I love its iconoclasm; I love its capacity to hold multiple and conflicting meanings on issues of doctrine, practice, text, and life; I love that Judaism is at home with paradox; but what I love about my people and our civilization is so very hard to get across to those who expect all faiths to be fundamentally creedal: We Jews believe "X;" I'm a Jew therefore I must believe "X" as well, and if I don't I am no longer a Jew.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for a Christian or a Muslim to deny the divinity of Christ or the authenticity of the Qur'an and still be a Christian or a Muslim. But Jews have been denying the truth claims of Judaism for centuries and still cling to being Jews. I refuse to abandon my people or our civilization, but I wish it were easier to explain the nature of the Jewish mindset.

Posted by Rabbi Rami

http://rabbirami.blogspot.com/2011_11_01_archive.html

Wei-Hsin and Douglas Harding from Alan Mann

This contribution is my attempt to come to grips with Masao Abe's analysis of Wei-Hsin's discourse as detailed in Chapter 1 of his book *Zen and Western Thought*.

Thirty years ago, before I began the study of Zen, I said, 'Mountains are mountains, waters are waters'. After I got an insight into the truth of Zen through the instruction of a good master, I said, 'Mountains are not mountains, waters are not waters.' But now, having attained the abode of final rest that is, Awakening, I say, 'Mountains are really mountains, waters are really waters.'

I am not a student of Zen but I have read a number of Zen inspired books and found Zen to be the most intriguing of the trails I followed over the past forty years. It is down to earth and, at the same time, it combines what I find the most compelling about Western and Eastern philosophies. It is not surprising to me that my most influential teacher, Douglas Harding, sub-titled his first popular book *Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious*. For many years I have been perplexed by the *Mountains and Waters* discourse attributed to Wei-hsin and particularly as far it can be interpreted in the light of the Harding experiments.

So this is an attempt to present how the comparison turns out for me. It is helpful to bear in mind that it is conducted at the level of the virtual self (Stage 1—see below) and is yet another shot at expressing the inexpressible. Also, that Buddhism often uses the words Empty, Real and Non-duality in a highly specialized way and one which does not always conform to everyday usage of such terms.

Stage 1—Thirty years ago, before I began the study of Zen, I said, 'Mountains are mountains, waters are waters.'

My interpretation of Stage 1

I AM A SEPARATE ENTITY OBSERVING AN EXTERNAL REALITY SUCH AS MOUNTAINS AND WATERS.

I, as observer, relate to all things as the objects of my subjective observation and differentiate between my self as subject and all things other than myself as objects and I assume a similar differentiation between the objects themselves. (Conceptual)

Stage 2—After I got an insight into the truth of Zen through the instruction of a good master, I said, 'Mountains are not mountains, waters are not waters.'

My interpretation of Stage 2

I AM NOW EMPTY, A 'SCREEN' ON WHICH WHAT WAS WAS FORMERLY APPREHENDED AS THINGS (MOUNTAINS AND WATERS) ARISE AND FALL AWAY.

I discover that what I thought of as my self is a construct of thought and enjoys a virtual rather than an actual existence. In this realization the virtual self collapses revealing a fundamental emptiness at centre. As the self centre loses its former imagined solidity so do all things, and all is now seen as 'empty'. (Not quite. This is the most questionable aspect of the discourse. Rather than 'empty' I think it is more helpful to consider that what was regarded as objective reality in Stage 1 is now apprehended in Stage 2 as phenomenal actuality. A perspective in which the independent existence of objects is neither affirmed nor denied). In this stage, stage 2, Identification with the virtual, illusory self is transcended. However, it can be replaced with a more subtle identification with what appears to lie behind the virtual self. I say 'I am now the emptiness in which everything arises'. I have re-identified this time with 'emptiness. (I am the screen, etc.) There is still separation. The implication that the true self lies somehow 'outside' remains. This is the no-self notion. (Conceptual)

(My question 1. To what extent does the headless revelation get stuck at this level?)

(My question 2. Can it be claimed that headlessness obviates the need for this level?)

Stage 3—But now, having attained the abode of final rest that is, Awakening, I say, 'Mountains are really mountains, waters are really waters.'

My interpretation of Stage 3:

I SEE AT LAST THAT I AM NOT EMPTY BUT EMPTINESS IS WHAT I AM. (Perceptual)

In stage 3. Observation of wholeness (Stage 2) is replaced by Participation as wholeness. The identification with one of the 'components', the 'me' ceases. Wholeness nevertheless continues to unfold as what it is in itself and free from labeling as mountains, waters, etc. The I evaporates, identification ends, separation ends, observation is replaced by participatory involvement as what is. (Actual)

And then Wei-Hsin asks, 'Do you think these three understandings are the same or different?' This question is crucial to his whole discourse.

My interpretation and answer:

From the point of view of the relative, stages 1 and 2 they are different. From the point of view of stage 3, the Absolute they are the same in the sense that they are aspects of the whole. There are, in reality, no 'stages', no time, only Now.

(My question 3. Is the familiar wail about not seeing this 'all the time', the concern about the lack of continuity of the realization, a sign that I am stuck at level 2.)

(My question 4. Is the attempt to sustain the realization in time evidence of the persistence of stage 2.)

Masao Abe offers this four-line formulation which expresses the basic character of Zen:

...Not relying on words or letters, / An independent self-transmitting apart from the doctrinal teaching, / Directly pointing to one's mind, / Awakening to one's original nature, thereby actualizing his buddhahood.

It certainly doesn't lend itself to the sort of analysis I am involved in here but it does seem to match the revelation of the pointing finger. The traditional Indian version of this perspective also seems to by-pass or evade the second stage;

The world is an illusion / Brahman alone is real / Brahman is the world.

I think it better to look at the issue as a matter of life *and* death rather than life *or* death? The latter view seems to be the 'no-self' position and the extreme neo-advaitist explanation.

My answer to the questions about the relationship of headlessness to Wei-Hsin's discourse is that headlessness, by way of the perspective or understanding disclosed by the experiments can leapfrog the Stage 2 understanding but it can also get stuck at stage 2. This is shown by the persistence of concerns such as those expressed by questions 3 and 4, questions which have plagued me on and off for years. Using the perspectival tool provided by Gebser (see NOWletter 84 <http://www.capacitie.org/now/Now84.pdf>) as an alternative explanation I could say that both stages 1 and 2 represent two points of view whereas in stage 3 the view is understood not as a viewpoint but to be what I really am, or perhaps better, what is. There is no separation of viewpoint and view. However, to call this non-duality is, in my opinion, highly misleading for it turns me away from the fullness of manifestation made plain in the aperspectival view.

I'm hoping that readers, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, will add comment, corrections and their particular take on this question so we can continue the dialogue in future issues.

Postscript

Traherne's version of this view is that God is 'all Act' and '...his name is Now, his nature is for ever, none can his creatures from their Maker sever' thus pointing to both eternity and time in the same breath and to which we can add the words of George Schloss "...unfolding time in the service of enfolding space'.

Alan Mann

Letters to Carl—George Schloss

The letters to Carl are serialized, one in every issue, the complete series is available in a self-published book [The Language of Silence, Volume 2](#) available from :

http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/alan4mann?cid=cms_email_author_spotlight_confirmation

I have put this month's letter aside due to the large volume of current material.

TABLE OF CONTENTS