

December 28, 2002

Dear Anne and Carl,

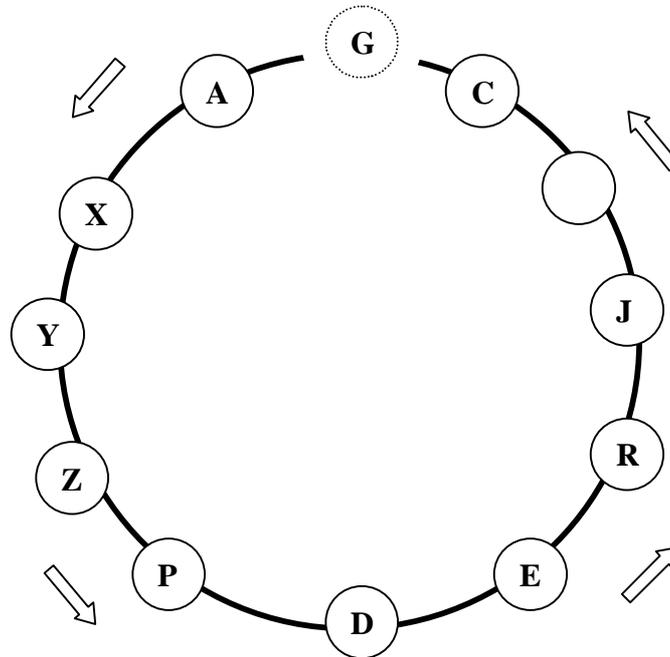
I'm sending this off to you jointly for obvious reasons and, since I still haven't figured how to navigate this machine skillfully enough to include a couple of diagrams of my own, I'm going to post rather than e-mail it. So please excuse the free-hand drawings. I'm certainly no Douglas in more ways than one.

Also, what with the holidays upon us and my proposed trip to Nacton early in the New Year, please take these notes as a preliminary sketch as to what I'm up to. If it comes out the way I hope, I'll be able to take this notion of 1st Person History as clarified by the circle-experiment and pursue it further at some future date.

That said, let's begin with a re-presentation of the experiment itself as we experience it when, linking arms, we gather in a circle and then go round to see what we can see. We might refer to this aspect of Headlessness as its Spatial Dimension, the "Where" of things, immediately accessible on present evidence to anyone with half an eye, if not a mind, open enough to see. Since we're all familiar enough with it there's no need to expound on the details: how the presence of all those faces with one notable exception - the exception that proves the rule - serves to re-mind us that in "completing" the circle, rather than come to a close in earthly time, our individual biographies, by opening into infinity, are revealed as ending where they began. But with this difference and, as it's turned out, it makes all the difference. Because for the first time ever we're not so much aware of it - after all, others have made similar claims - but because we have demonstrable proof of it and proof available to all. And as if that weren't enough yet quite in keeping with the alchemical formula "as above so below," it's my contention that, as we can see now and could only see now, now that, thanks to the experiments and particularly this experiment the circle can be experienced as at once complete yet at the same time open, this identical process is at work *everywhere* and certainly sheds light on the reflected glory of what, as distinct from the perspective of immediate revelation, we might call its conceptual counterpart, its mediated *alter ego*, its *everywhen*. And if one of these regions - history - is of particular concern to us it's only because, home to the snake in the Garden and knowledge of the Tree of Good and its necessary Evil, without it we would not and could not have had the experiments in the last place. And as was once proclaimed and for a while even believed by some but is now absolutely confirmed, the last shall be first.

I should also point out, if only in passing, that our experience of the circle as both complete and yet open, exactly corresponds with the notion of relativity - popularly presumed to be the great discovery of our time - *as far as it goes*. But as I've pointed out previously and as Einstein, in his fruitless search for a unified theory, found to his dismay, it doesn't go far enough. Though the word derives from "to see," theory, more allied to "concept," is not actual vision. It may have been a stroke of genius to *observe* the universe of phenomena as at once finite yet boundless, but a loving and generous God could hardly be said to be loving if we ordinary mortals were not Subject to that same rule, nor generous if the simple expedient of looking two ways to *uncover* the Source that makes all things one and not-other, had not been thrown in for Good

Measure and so reveal to an age in need - and it's the first age in history that, by general consensus, can be characterized by its almost total loss of "spiritual" literacy - that this time it's for keeps: that what was formerly thought to have been written in stone can now be seen to have been inscribed in the bone all along.



As I've indicated, if (G) answers to "God" or George depending on who's asking the question, let A stand for Anne on my right where from "my" standpoint the circle begins and C for Carl on my left where it ends, though, of course, these distinctions - the direction as well as the choice of people (or things for that matter) - are purely arbitrary. It could be anybody, which is no more than to say, every *body*. Most important of all for our purposes - and this will come clearer when we come to interpreting its temporal significance and meaning - let's assume that we plus the others I've included (X, Y, Z etc.) are performing this experiment for the first time. Which, of course, as an historical phenomenon, we actually are. How long has it taken - thirteen, fifteen billion years by latest count - to get from here to here, to make explicit by means of this simple instrument what, for all the hints and more than hints we've been offered by this or that sage or seer or savior, was up to now only implicit, a valid inference rather than an absolute certainty? How came it that the awareness of Grace, of a built-in given Presence with its possibility of conscious deliverance, has now been made available to each and every individual by means of its mode of delivery, a Providence operating in and through the collective process we designate as history, the world "we" make however unconsciously?

It's a good question and if I've somewhat begged it by describing it elsewhere as the story of how, though all goes wrong, it still comes right, I'd like to try to zero in on it now, always recognizing that what follows is merely a preliminary sketch and so open

to modifications. In fact, since we seem to be exploring uncharted territory - this reconciliation of the Alpha and Omega, of Grace and Providence in a union of what the Zen people might call Self and Other Power - any and all suggestions will be welcome.

With this caveat in mind, let's approach a diagram of the same experiment from its Temporal Perspective, the When of things. As you can see, I've drawn an identical figure but rather than abbreviate the various stations on the way as Anne, Carl and so forth, for simplicity's sake (and brevity's, too, since I want to get this off before I leave) I've substituted numbers - 1, 2, 3 and so on - accompanied by a list that indicates the various prehistorical, protohistorical and historical equivalents they're intended to represent as they approach the possibility of what we can only call a post-history which, no longer just a record of objective events, is finally capable of revealing its total meaning within the parameters of a boundless consciousness achieved. And if I've omitted the broad categories of *homo sapiens* and *homo faber* and even more egregiously the emergence of articulate speech, it's merely because our concern here is with the historical aspect of the temporal region as it becomes manifest in this particular experiment. I should also point out, in case it looks like I'm pulling a rabbit out of the hat and introducing an illegitimate and extraneous factor after the Fact, that this Whole process - from the instant I innocently turn towards Anne to see what I can see on present evidence until, following Carl, I arrive at the realization of Who I really really am -*takes time*, one of whose surrogates, along with creation and evolution and devolution and the rest, is precisely what constitutes history. Because however swiftly we may run through the exercise, it's not until beginning with Anne and ending with Carl that I become incontrovertibly aware that before Anne, like Abraham, was, I AM but, though I may have suspected it, it's only after Carl that, having taken the long way round to the realization of my own emptiness and capacity, I'm absolutely in a position to confirm it absolutely. I know I've been accused of complicating matters; nevertheless, at the risk of now sounding overly simplistic, it's my contention that, without having to utter so much as a Word, this revelation not only represents the meaning of all our biographies but the meaning of that universal, because unique, Autobiography we call history as well, and which, by its very nature, is necessarily the last to arrive in time at its absolute point of departure.

Again, I can't help repeating that what follows is just an attempt at preliminary interpretation and, as such, is subject to clarification and revision, but as we've learned to our unending gratitude (or at least should have and hopefully will) we have to begin somewhere if only in the middle. I should also point out that though I've obviously drawn on many sources, my greatest debt is to the scheme Jean Gebser worked out in his *The Ever-present Origin*, a seminal study, and which I've adopted with some modifications. If you're interested, I strongly recommend it.

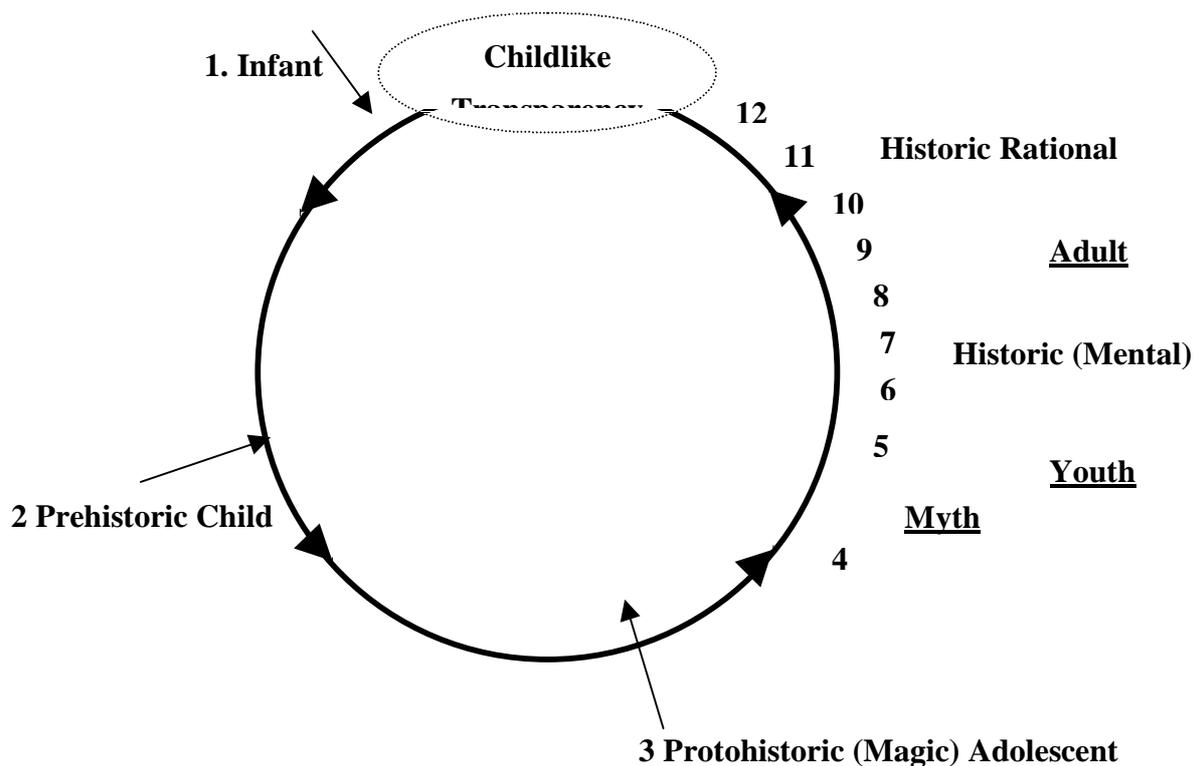


Figure 2 – Temporal

In any case, the first three categories I've numbered in the pre-historic period (what Gebser calls the archaic) would include such developments as the discovery of the uses of fire, the art of tool-making from bone and stone and the burial of the dead, this last, as with fire, a distinctly human concern which alone should give those of us involved with Headlessness pause as regards the evolution of the notion (and hope) of rebirth. These, in turn, lead to the wonders of proto-history (4-5) that is to say, of an almost-history: the turn from exclusively hunting-gathering to the domestication of animals, the conversion to agriculture and the sedentary play of star-gazing. Gebser characterizes this epoch as the age of Magic dominated by that new phenomenon, the priest-king whom, as I was taught to believe, Frazer had so exhaustingly investigated. But as we're now in a position to see, there's both more to Frazer's thesis and less than meets the eye. (I know you'll forgive me but, though I'm pressed, I do want to get it down. I just can't help noting, even though this may not be the place for it, the almost exact correspondence between beginnings and their ends, between the child-ish and the child-like, when, through the good offices of history as seen by the light of this experiment, they're revealed at their appropriate levels of consciousness. I'm referring to the presence, then as now, of magic and the priest-king. Aren't we all priest-kings now (and priest-queens, too, Anne, and this not just by right of universal

suffrage) with our magic wands that, pointing a finger at who we really really are, can *-presto!*, instantly on contact - transform ugly ducklings - present company excepted, of course - into magnificent swans? Am I reaching too far in suggesting that, having come full circle, this is *essentially* what all the commotion's been about?)

Be that as it may, by the time of the establishment of towns and cities (already reflected in the story of Cain's murder of the nomadic herdsman, Abel) we were already deep in the realm of Myth and all that that entailed, and not only of gods and goddesses. Along with the invention of writing and record-keeping with its inklings of a history to come, we get the production of metals and from metals, tools which, at first no better than toys for boys - instruments of play in the service of art and a rudimentary commerce - are gradually but logically enough conscripted by adolescents for use as weapons of war. (Cf. the airplane, that youthful dream of flight). From war we get geographical expansion and from expansion the first stirrings of the institution of empire with its intimation of one world and instauration of those with the power to administer it, the movers and shakers who are still with us and, for all we know, like the poor always will be. But as if to demonstrate that, then as now, God does not close one door without opening another, running parallel to the breakdown of what we can broadly refer to as the archaic perspective even as it absorbs it, there appears the breakthrough to the great world-and/or -universal religions and the first signs - notably in the Judeo-Christian tradition - that by offering ourselves as hostages to fortune in the name of history (which, now that, thanks to the experiments, we've become better acquainted we can more familiarly address as Providence), we were already blindly groping our way to what Douglas has designated the "adult" mentality. And, as I outlined in a recent letter, we all know, if only from the card-experiment, the unintended consequence of that fly in the holy ointment: how with the sacrifice of vision on the altar of rationality, a disappointed Christian expectation, emboldened by the doctrine of the separation of Church and State embarked for the first time ever on that profane adventure we call modernity and which, now that, again having come full circle and arrived at safe harbor despite the attendant hazards of despair and nihilism that go with the territory - indeed, because of them - we can more discerningly characterize as a pilgrimage.

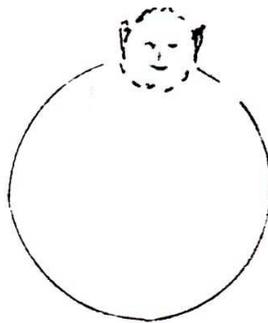
I don't think there's any need to elaborate much further other than to point out that if you're wondering about the disparity in the distances between the various stages I've indicated (and isn't it curious that in designating time we're forced to call upon the Ground, on an image from space - "distance" - to get our bearings?) there's a method in my madness. What I hoped to suggest, at least, was that even here in the temporal region there's a residue, a hangover reflecting an asymmetry at work. In any case, if I've bunched up these last categories (8-12) - the centuries of Discovery and Exploration and Expansion which, abetted by the growth of 3rd Person Science, in turn made possible, first the Industrial Revolution with its concomitant population explosion and then the Technological Revolution (this last, wiser than it knows, blithely referring to itself as the Space Age) - it's merely to illustrate as graphically as possible how the needy and greedy and speedy acceleration of time as we test and head for its limits, rather than diminish space in its attempt to conquer it (cf. the "Death of God") is *immediately* met, even welcomed no less, by its opposite number which is no number at all (cf. two-way looking). From *whence*, swallowed up at point

Zero in the ever-after ever the same (the Gap), it implodes into its original jumping-off place, the abyss *where* the continuum, the circle, released into absolute freedom through the instruments of time and history - in effect, through a technology converted to techknowledge (the experiments) - all becomes one again and well again.

Which is no more than to say that, no longer limited to the vision of One World that, though not to be sneezed at, is merely the image of its shadow going before it, universal history in the true sense of the Word is revealed as having a subject of its own. And that subject is *the* Subject, not only because it contains the record of time past, of objective events whose content can be analyzed and interpreted objectively on its horizontal plane, but because its vertical plane reveals, there where the cross is made at time present, the Container that contains it as its centerpiece and centerpeace: the Presence itSelf in all the glory of its regional guise as 1st Person history. And who knows? Though the experiments are certainly not the only way in which Consciousness can become aware of itSelf, it would appear that for the likes of us, given who as well as where we are, sufficient unto the day is a Providence in the service of Grace that together - completion and fulfillment, guide and goal making in all one - can insure the uses of stone and bone as They await our good pleasure.

Love to you both.

P.S. And just to confirm that, suiting the Word to the action, there is a life after the “Death of God” and the “End of History” or at least after its meaning is revealed, let me add this post-script. While I was fiddling with the possibility of a two-way, quasi Cubist self-and-Self portrait (sic!) - and that’s how symbols are born - I came up with the following: an open circle crowned with a head of sorts but drawn in dotted lines to indicate you-know-Who, no longer concealed in the wings but visible in all his Invisibility.



At any rate, since it seemed to resemble a snow-man it immediately reminded me of an *absolutely* wonderful little poem of the same name by Wallace Stevens, a poem which, though I’ve known it for years but didn’t quite get, I see now deserves top billing in any Headless hymnal or anthology. So here it is.

THE SNOW MAN

One must have a mind of winter

To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;
And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter
Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,
Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

I would only point out that the coldness expressed and encouraged in the first stanzas exactly corresponds to Douglas' suggestion that, if possible, we approach the experiments without feelings or emotion. As for the last two lines which *say* it all - how can we top that? Only the experiments can - the very Ground of the Word in Its soundfreeness beyond words.