
DOUGLAS HARDING AND THE HEADLESS WAY

The Profound Experience of a Septuagenarian

by

Richard Lang

Douglas Harding, now in his late seventies, is a revolutionary figure, Author of the currently best-selling book on Having No Head (Arkana), he devotes his time to sharing what is both an extremely simple and extremely profound experience - oneself as one is to oneself. He claims that nowadays, as adults, we see ourselves almost solely as others see us. This is fine in its place, for we need to know ourselves as objects in the world, but it seems we have come to a point where we overlook the inside story - what it is really like to be first person singular present tense. Harding suggests that if we were to look in all simplicity and honesty, we would discover that we are the opposite of how we currently see ourselves.

The 'experience' that Harding is pointing to is deceptively obvious. You can 'have it' now as you read these words. It is noticing that whereas other people have heads on their shoulders, you the reader don't! There may be pink blurs (we call them a nose) and tickles and warmths, but these don't make up a solid head-shaped thing here on one's shoulders. Instead, isn't it more like limitless space or capacity in which all these things, and one's body, and the world, are happening? Harding

time and again stresses that you are the sole authority on what this Spot is like, this place you are looking out of, this place where you alone are. Are you looking out of two small holes (eyes) or out of one big edgeless opening, like a frameless window? When you close your eyes don't you experience yourself as boundless? Only you can say for yourself.

Now the outside story really is of two eyes and a head on top of shoulders. But it's obvious that the view from 30 inches away will look quite different from the view at 0 inches. My mirror shows me my face **out there**, what I look like at that distance from that angle. So does my camera when pointed in this direction. But here, at this end of my mirror-holding arm I find no second face, but capacity for the mirror and its content.

Science fully agrees with these findings, for as it approaches objects to see what they really are (including my head), it discovers they are less and less like anything and more and more like empty space - which is exactly what I find myself to be. Except that this space 'above' my shoulders is self-aware, and very full of what is in it: the world.

So what, you might say. Well, at the heart of all the major religions is a voice which says, in different ways, that within each one of us is a great treasure. Call it Buddha-nature, the Godhead, the Great Void, Atman-Brahman - call it what they will, they all indicate this Wonder. Essentially what are the characteristics of this treasure? Well, it is formless, colourless, timeless, motionless - in fact it has no characteristics whatsoever, except Awareness. And from it comes the world. Tremendous fact! Harding strongly suggests that we check out this possibility, for if it is true, somehow everything is changed. And how do we check this out? Look and see Who you really are - see what you're looking out of: a face or Space? It's as simple as that.

As Harding has shown, the implications of this simple experience are profound. Really the face to face model of relationships is only the outside view. The real inside experience is always face there to no face here. I am Capacity for you. This is a deep re-orientation in our relationship, from confrontation to identity. If I nurture this awareness, this honesty, this simply being awake to how things are, my attitude to others, to the world, changes - subtly but profoundly.

As babies we were born wide open, at large, inseparable from the world. Then we learned our human boundaries, learned our objectivity, took on a face to face the world with until, as adults, we forgot our native spaciousness and identified wholly with this one object, this person, this

outside view of ourselves. Harding suggests a third stage, for we cannot go back to the innocence of the child and the primitive. The third stage is, whilst accepting our objectivity in the world, to remain aware of our true Subjectivity. In other words, noticing that as first person singular present tense I am not in the world: the world is in me. Then the world is me; in this capacity that I am.

Lastly, Harding makes some bold claims for this approach. First, the experience is so obvious that anyone can see it **now**, and then anytime they wish. One's headlessness is always available. (Point a finger at your face and notice what it is pointing at!). And there are no conditions for 'seeing your true face, your Original Nature'. No preparation or qualification is necessary, not years of meditation or anything - you have it now just as you are, for it is you, now, just as you are.

Secondly, you can't see it wrongly, or differently from the way others see it. The Void is void is void, and not brighter or duller in you or me. You also see the whole of your headlessness, your true nature - or in religious terms, you are the whole of God, undivided - not just a spark of the divine flame, but the whole Fire. It is almost too good to be true! The point is, is it true?

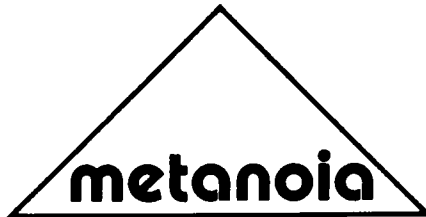
But to bring this 'experience' into your life so that you naturally and consciously live from your 'Space', you must keep noticing it. To be refreshed by the living waters you must drink from the eternal Spring, from the mouth of God - and drink,

and drink. And then, in time, the water begins to flow of its own.

Harding has developed experiments which test out this incredible hypothesis - the hypothesis which claims that you are really the One.

These experiments are simple, direct, science-based in spirit (meaning there is nothing to believe; you go solely on your own personal experience). They make this momentous discovery (enlightenment) available to anyone, now!

*N.B. Information on Headless Way workshops can be obtained from:
Richard Lang: 01-624 2552.*



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