

### Letter 1 – February 20, 2004

Dear Carl, As agreed an attempt to get some of the material we've been talking about down on paper if only for the record. Speaking for myself (and, it goes without saying, for my Self as well) I'm delighted we've finally achieved a position - literally *the* position - to confirm what's oft been sought and thought and sometimes even taught, but was ne'er so well expressed till now, at least in language - certainly not in a word, even the Word. I refer, of course, to the claims of Seeing: how, no longer under house-arrest in heaven, God or a reasonable facsimile thereof has actually been spotted going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it in the company of, of all people, the devil ( i.e. *deus* diminutive, *devilus*, the little one), a joint undertaking designed to blow both their covers to hell and so reveal via the saving grace of two-way looking exactly who they, that is, we are.

That being the case, I suggest we cut right to the chase and, by-passing the party of the first part, the experience, as being at once no-thing if not Self-evident and at the same time no-thing *and* Self-evident, head straight for the party of the second, the meaning of it all which in our so-called peoplehood is, like the proof of the pudding that lies only in the eating, not so simply and immediately recognizable. As Douglas puts it so succinctly on page 224 of the Hierarchy, "To realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, *taking no thought for to-morrow* or yesterday must be my first concern. And my second must be to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays." If, as in the first instance, the experiments are, properly speaking, beyond discussion, then, on the principle that nature hates a vacuum but adores a void, mightn't it follow that the second will attempt to fill the gap if only by default? And so we have the spectacle of the exact Science of the 1st Person, the mode of our deliverance, extending its sheltering arms to its kissing cousin, 1st Person History, the mode of its delivery, and by this act of all-encompassing inclusion reconciling the proof that pre-eminently goes without saying to the truth whose very life depends on it. But isn't that altogether the story of Headlessness, this marriage of opposites, of silence and speech, space and time, perception and conception, certainty and opinion, sacred and profane, providence and predestination, making in all One. And if all this seems a little too abstruse at the moment and too compressed for instant digestion, rest assured that like the patient British on their weather - "If you don't like it, wait a minute" - all will come clear, I dare say not only in time but in eternity too.

An example. You may have noticed I've taken the liberty of italicizing, in the Douglas quote above, the no thought in "*taking no thought for tomorrow*" and the find in "*my second must be to find in this Now,*" the one, *pace* squirrels and beavers, in seeming contradiction to the other yet each, when you think of it - and being who we are how can we not?- doing what, in its own way, comes naturally. For if, in our fear of self-flattery, we didn't know better, which is too bad, we might almost be convinced it's the not-yet in hot pursuit of the Given, the already-here, that catches up with itSelf instead of the other way round, that in reality it's the hound of heaven who, its tongue hanging out, finally hits bottom and, rolling over, plays dead for the sake of its opposite number. That's assuming a zero can be said to have an opposite number. At any rate, like the proverbial flea-bitten mutt running around in circles only to end up its own you-know-what, thereby hangs a tale which, variously described as a Decline and Fall or the Death of God or the End of an Era if not an Age or even an Aeon or, God help us, even a World - all true incidentally - we're now equipped, thanks to the experiments, to classify quite simply as the end of history, this last, though a "consummation devoutly to be wished," not to be confused with its termination.

Concerning which, little did I dream over sixty years ago, long before I was entitled to dream, no less recognize, that dreams come true - that, indeed, that's what they're there for - when, along with *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, I discovered in Joyce's correspondence what, in effect, was to become his motto and mine if only by right of association: "History is a nightmare from which I'm trying to awaken" - little did I dream it was precisely *the* nightmare, the hell and chaos of modernity and all it entailed that was to provide the necessary catalyst to shock us into recognition, to wake us up and force us or at least me, when all else failed, to turn and look the other way. So let that be our watchword, the guiding light to what we do see revealed when we finally wake from sleep.

## Letter 2 – March 15, 2004

Dear Carl, Though I began this follow-up to my first letter about a week ago I was almost immediately forced to put it aside in deference to another stay in the hospital - a "repair" job, as they euphemistically referred to it, from which I've just been, if not spared, at least released. No picnic but not as bad as the first go-round. "The worst is not/ So long as we can say, 'This is the worst.' "

At any rate, picking up where we left off (significantly enough on this the Ides of March), it might not be a bad idea before we move on to examine the relation between 1st Person Science and 1st Person History, especially with emphasis on the latter which is our particular concern, the first having been definitively, indeed exhaustively, explored by Douglas once and for all. And, like the songs say, I do mean once and for all. Because if - again, following his scheme as outlined on page 224 of THE HIERARCHY and which I referred to in my first letter - if our thesis is correct, then the experiments both present as 1st Person Science, and re-present as 1st Person History, not merely variations on a theme but the theme itself, the Open Sesame we've been looking for since the beginning of time and which, because everything under heaven and earth necessarily conforms to it, everything under heaven and earth necessarily confirms it. In this regard, it should come as no surprise that, as with all original *perception* whether animal or infant, the visibly articulate if silent science offered up instantly on contact to every sentient being takes precedence over *conception*, the consciousness and commentary that, passing for "human," literally takes time, at the very least the time it takes to talk and so make history. Which is no doubt why, coming too soon, even an Aristotle, one of the first to consider the question (as distinct from its answer, which, due to the unholy and child-like babble it stirred up, has had to await its turn to be seen and not merely heard), understandably missed the boat on this one when he awarded poetry the palm over what he judged simple narrative, however exact. And this on the ground that the possible, provided it was probable, was more "philosophical and elevated" and so, presumably, more highfalutin and symbolic than what actually and factually "is." What he could not know, of course, because, among other things, time takes time, was that over and beyond or, if you prefer, under and beneath all phenomena lay not only the possible because probable, but the philosophic cum universal, what, thanks to the experiments, we can now ascribe with absolute assurance to the certain and necessary and this without in any way falling into the trap of the progressivist, the so-called historicist fallacy. Because we all know where invoking the present rather than Presence as the last rather than merely the latest word has gotten us "now" people - as if the Omega were no more than a repetition, an echo of the Alpha rather than comprised and inclusive of it and then some.

As I never tire of pointing out, Nishitani frames it as well as anybody: "The task of the 'ought' is already determined by the other-directedness of the 'is.' " Since a concrete demonstration of this and how we arrived at it represents the heart of what we're up to we can go into it in more detail as we go along. Enough for the moment to state categorically that it's no more (nor less) than to join, along with so many others, in that universal chorus that proclaims that it's love, love, love that makes the world go round - the only difference being that for the first time ever we're finally in a position, *the* position, to prove it.

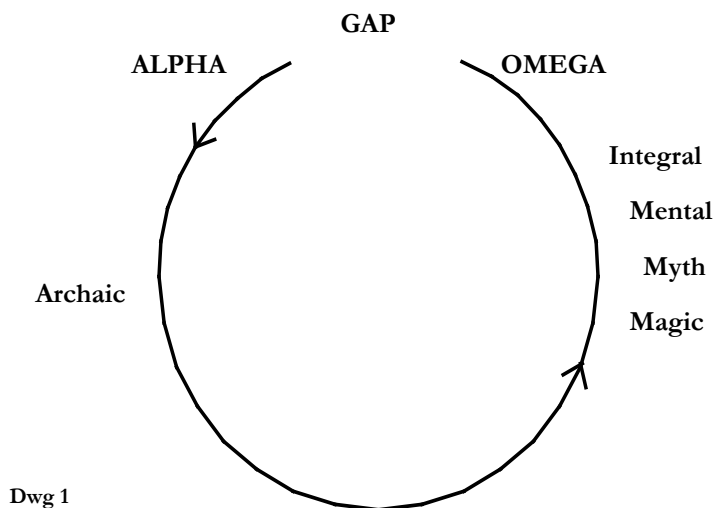
**Letter 3 – March 18, 2004**

Dear Carl, So little to say and so much time to say it in. We should never have worse problems than to take this God's-eye view of things.

I want to explore a little further this business of the Alpha and Omega but as you've no doubt already realized I'm going to have to do it by regular mail, simply because I want to include a few figures and I still haven't "figured out" (sic!) how to get this infernal machine to draw them. So please forgive the hit-or-miss hand-me-down appearance.

You'll also note, I'm sure, that for simplicity's sake and simply because they're right on, I've made use of Gebser's structural designations: archaic, magic, mythical, mental and integral. I know we've talked about them before and, as I recall, I actually used them in a modified form in previous letters but they bear repeating. It's amazing to me how close he comes to playing a John the Baptist crying in the wilderness for our You-Know-Who to show his no-face. And, of course, what's so marvelous about Headlessness and the experiments and the reason we can talk with such assurance without blushing is that we know the "Who" in You-Know-Who is just as much a What and Where and has nothing, but absolutely nothing, to do with Douglas. Or, at least, no more (nor less) than It has to do with you, me or any or everyone else.

I start off with Figure 1 mainly for its "human" interest and to set the stage to indicate how temporally asymmetrical our experience here on earth has been. For convenience' sake I'll smooth all this out in Figure 2.

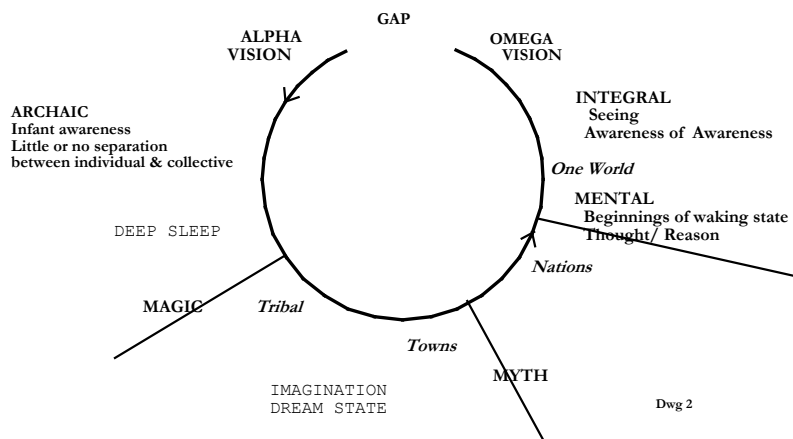


Nothing all that unusual to note here other than how huddled up any display of humanoid existence seems when measured against the All or at least the relative humanoid all. If you figure the Archaic for a million or two years and the Magical for maybe fifty thousand or so before Myth melds into Mental about six or seven thousand years ago, where does that leave us, clutching at one another on the border of the Integral? At about a minute and a half to midnight on the great scale-pan if that, as speeding up we approach the "end" at the Omega point? (My God, I'm beginning to sound like Teilhard and I don't mean to. I certainly don't want to). How fast can we go? How high can we grow? How long can we live when time, both macro – and microcosmically, gives every indication of exploding into the space out of which it was born, a movement more or less being played out before our eyes in the "real" world even as it replicates itSelf every minute of the day courtesy of every experiment? The old alchemical formula - "as above, so below; as without, so within" - also applies to bombs and anyway you look at it the experiments, too, are nothing if not bombs, are, if the truth be told, no-thing *and* bombs. Like everything else, the acceleration is all of apiece. Not necessarily a great virtue (after all, it's we who have the experiments, though at a price, not they) - nevertheless, the early Egyptian dynasties endured for thousands of years. We consider it an accomplishment that as the oldest-living republic we've lasted a little over two hundred. To be continued.

#### Letter 4 – March 19, 2004

Dear Carl, True to our agreement, I've decided to limit myself to one or, at the most, two pages a throw. Hence, the rather abrupt halt to my previous remarks.

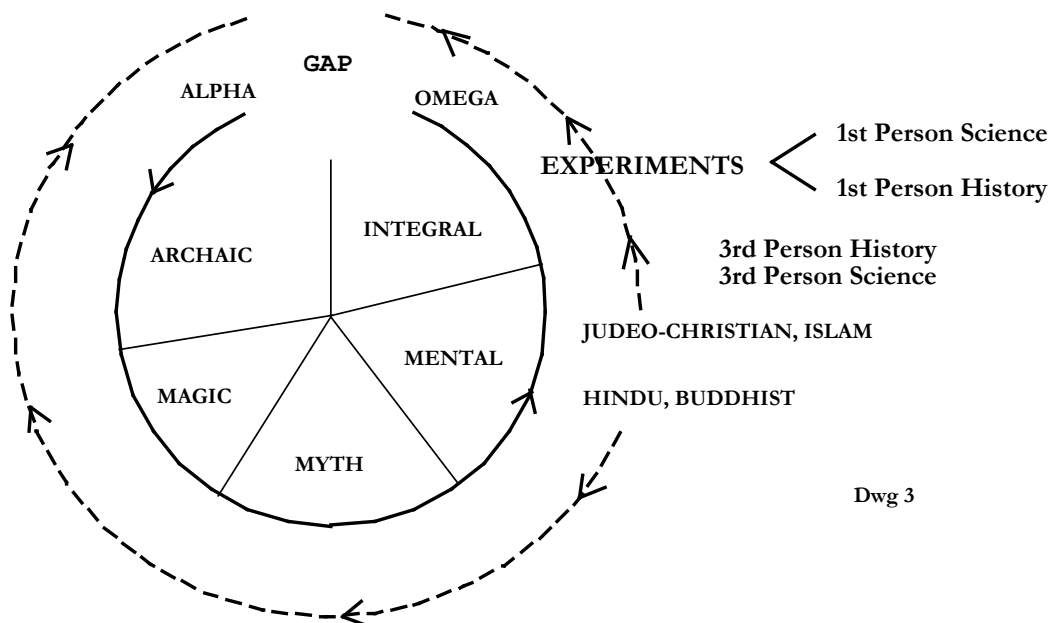
Picking up from where we left off, below a more detailed if somewhat abstract and stylized depiction of the course we've managed to trace out for ourselves these past few hundred thousand years or so. Please note this is in no way meant to be an accurate or proportioned blow by blow description time-wise; merely a few broad strokes to indicate the general direction in which we've been "heading" - indeed, where a fortunate few have already arrived, at least in *theoria*, that is to say in "Seeing," an activity not necessarily to be confused with conscious behavior, that is to say with Being.



I trust the designations, rudimentary as they may be, are comprehensible: infant vision, for instance, at ALPHA, indicated in small case to distinguish it from conscious child-like VISION at OMEGA, awareness of awareness - and so on. Frankly, I'm not too thrilled with this oversimplified kind of presentation other than as points for future reference, to be invoked only when needed.

**Letter 5 – March 25, 2004**

Dear Carl, One last graphic, thank God, and a simple one at that.



If we take the same "circle" (and it's important to note it's never a closed circle, all closed circles being imaginary, i.e. abstractions solely dependent on observation at the cost, the vital cost of Self-participation) - if we take the same circle and use the same designations only this time *zero* in on Gebser's MENTAL, that age from which, presumably, we're just now emerging as, hopefully, we "head" for the INTEGRAL, we come up with a rather curious phenomenon. On the one hand, we see Buddhism, specifically Zen, resign in protest from a mother Hinduism with its spelled-out and assertive emphasis on a positive Self - "Thou art that" - in favor of an indeterminate, amorphous No-Self - "Not this, not this" - just as, on the other, we see Christianity almost immediately differentiate itself from its parent Judaism on the grounds that, the good news already arrived, all we have to do is await its Second Coming. I include Islam as a reversion, though this time on a universal rather than a parochial scale, to the this-worldly Jewish roots from which it arose in contrast to a so-called other-worldly, "life-denying" (in Schweitzer's words) Christianity.

In any case, if, coming round the bend from the myth to the mental, we extend Jaspers' Axial period from say, 1000 B.C. to 1000 A.D., we can see how both these seminal movements - Mahayana Buddhism in its ultimate refined version, Zen, and Christianity - seemingly converging at opposite ends of the earth, suddenly diverge. The one, in the absence of any history to speak of (considering it at best an illusion) reverses direction and hies it back to point Alpha as fast as it can which, despite its call for sudden enlightenment, isn't very fast at all, not if you have to spend a life-time sitting cross-legged on your tale before you can end up negating the duality of speech altogether. The other, Christianity or, if you prefer, Christendom (betokening its all too imperialist detours), takes the opposite, the alternate route. Confronted with the horrors, the self-induced madness and nightmare of history, not least its own, yet literally sticking to its guns to the bitter end even in the shadow of the atom-bomb its collapse helped create, it nevertheless succeeds in coaxing the affirmation of silence out of "the Death of God" and so, miracle of miracles, achieves the better part if only by the skin of its teeth or, at least, the skin of ours. And, as I claim and the experiments verify, it is the better part if for no other reason than that the proof of the pudding lies in the eating and, as we see now seated before our very eyes, at Omega time all are invited to the feast. The affirmation of silence does take precedence over the negation of speech if only because it includes it, just as, paradoxically - and it's the meaning of modernity - when it comes to saving time, the sense of an ending takes precedence over the babble of beginnings that got us there.

We'll have to go into this business of Alpha and Omega more thoroughly - because that, finally, is what we're talking about: the experiments as the absolute Omega experience.

### Letter 6 –April 13, 2004

Dear Carl, Since it's almost impossible, at least for me, to determine where to begin when talking about the relationship between history and Headlessness, I might as well declare myself by beginning at the only place from which everything becomes comprehensible anyway and so have done with it once and for all. I refer, of course, to the end. Because in my mind there's no doubt that thanks to the experiments we are, if not at the end certainly at an end to history, not in the currently fashionable sense of a massive self-destruct (though the I-told-you-so syndrome is always a possibility, especially when playing with fire) or even in the more palatable if distasteful potential of a new Dark Age, but in a quite different sense: the sense of finality, of beating the bomb or war of attrition to the draw so to speak by means of a goal achieved, a mission accomplished – *the* mission as it happens. "I was a treasure and I wanted to be known," one of the Sufi masters has it. And now, significantly enough (since there is a connection) the good news arrives just in time to be recognized by all even unto the "face" of the Unspeakable. From where, looking back (which is what history is all about or was until, again thanks to the experiments, it graced us with its Presence), everything falls into place, where in the twinkling of an eye even Mr. Eliot's "In my end is my beginning" is transformed from a paradox into a common-place, the only difference being that, though he said it and we read it, now we can prove it and he can't, or couldn't. If, that is, "proof" is the appropriate word for the silence that, though it admits of itSelf by way of the Word, lays no claim to either or even to the pro-visual certainty that, without exception, from Jesus and the Buddha on down to the latest avatar, to a Ramana Maharshi, for instance, has ruled the spiritual roost or at least what's passed for it up to now. "It's as plain as a gooseberry in the palm of your hand," Ramana used to say. Which indeed it is, once you've seen it. But how do you do that without almost killing yourself as he did straining for a vision or, going him one better, offering yourself up to be killed, which literal sacrifice when made once upon a time by you-know-who was, as it turned out, more than enough to satisfy local as well as universal requirements but, according to Kierkegaard at least, if committed twice in His Name would have been both superfluous and in bad taste, an indulgence? Well, for the first time in history and as easy as switching on one of Mr. Edison's lights (and, not by coincidence, since there is a connection), we've found a way, I make so bold as to say *the* way. No longer reduced to playing it by ear like the fumbling amateurs we are or were, we, too, can be the Life of the party. We, too, by learning, or rather re-learning, to sight-read, are now in a position to profess our birth-right and so come into our own, testament enough that the meaning of modernity - the despair occasioned by the breakdown and finally collapse of transcendence, the Death of God thrown in for good measure as it were - has served its purpose.

That said, and admittedly it's a mouthful, we can afford to move on to the things that count - us - always keeping in mind the caveat that, as I pointed out in my opening note and Douglas never tires of repeating, the experience of any experiment - now there's a tautology for you! - is prior to whatever meaning attaches itself to it. Which is no more than to say that, whatever conclusions we may draw regarding both, from a God's-eye perspective and its corresponding sense of vertical fulfillment (up, down, heaven, hell), space - the domain of 1st Person Science - takes precedence over time, over the horizontal, linear "completion" of 1st Person History, not in the order of value, of course, but in the order of cause. We can go even further and, respectfully acknowledging all previous symbolisms as stations on the way rather than mere shots in the dark, nevertheless insist that whether we know it or not or even like it or not here at dead center where the cross is made (and, because conscious, eminently by us) is palpably where all life lives.

And if I bring this up now before setting out in earnest, it's only because I think that, the better to make our case for the sake of some hypothetical reader looking over our shoulder (and - who knows? - as Father Abraham suspected, one or two may more than suffice), we really ought to establish a few Ground-rules, the most obvious being our total debt to and reliance on evidence provided by the experiments. And again for the benefit of our hypothetical reader, should also note the emphasis we place on "the experiments" rather than on Douglas, for all that we owe him for his unparalleled insight. It's my contention that one of the things that distinguishes generic Seeing from everything that's preceded it - and I can only insist on the "everything" - is its impersonality or, if you prefer (and I do), its anonymity. Because it's not what Douglas says or does or what you or I say or do but what the experiments say or, better yet, render in silence that differentiates them from everything that's gone before. And differentiates them to such a degree as to constitute at Omega what Alpha is only able to *foresee*: the ultimate reversal in kind, the world and everything in it turned upside down and so made right side up. Is it an accident that as with the interplay of lens, retina and light, the very mechanics of the act of seeing while mirroring its own reflection - the way of the world - also reveals the way of deity to those with a single eye trained to and on it? And is it possible that, in turn, this suggests a connection between the way of the world as brought to a head by 1st Person History and the way of deity as confirmed by 1st Person Science? Well, we shall see.

### Letter 7 – May 1, 2004

Dear Carl, Since, hopefully, we're going to be able to touch all bases before we're through, I might as well pick up where we left off last time and consider this notion of differentiation, a most fruitful idea I picked up from Eric Voegelin years ago but have never got around to examining in any depth though I've been meaning to. Because I think it contains an important key to what the experiments, not so much "re-present" but, present historically. And if I keep emphasizing in any way I can, whether by means of italics, quotation marks, underlinings etc., their essential difference from anything that's come before, it's only because in my view - and I trust it's *the* view - they *are* different from anything that's come before. Witness what we're doing right now: how, notwithstanding their tempting tendency to encourage public speaking with their unique method of delivering the message in person and in the 1st Person at that, they nevertheless insist on reaffirming the primacy of eye over ear by consigning their patented method of self-effacement to absolute silence which, by suiting the Word to the action instead of the other way around, enables them to head off the bugbear of all language (including this) and establish certainty in the midst of contradiction and duality.

Incidentally, although I know we've mentioned Voegelin in passing, I don't recall how familiar you are with his work, especially with the last volume of his brilliant *Order and History* entitled *The Ecumenic Age* which, aside from the influence it had on me, at least until I learned about Headlessness, can now serve, however unwittingly, as both a useful foil in exposing the subsequent divergences between us and, at the same time, help in delineating the newly-uncovered parameters established by the experiments. Briefly, where the evidence provided by both disciplines is in total agreement or, better yet, corroborates his hypothetical thesis with our living proof - namely, that the truth of reality is always and everywhere present and the same - what does vary is the degree of differentiation from its original compactness and our capacity to recognize it. Which as we or, at any rate, I learned in college is no more than to say that phylogeny, the development of the race, recapitulates ontogeny, the development of the individual. Or maybe, like the chicken and the egg, it's the other way round. Since they both go hand in hand and we're not biologists anyway, no matter. What we can say with certainty, however, since conscious or not we're always experiencing it, is that from first to last the development or, if you prefer, the circular "progress," whether individual or collective, from Alpha to Omega, from infant or primitive vision (small "v") as it evolves into imagination and its consequent symbolism in magic and myth, and then, having exhausted all avenues by way of adult reason and intellect and thought, finally ends, but not quite, where it started at the Gap but seen now from this side, from the near side - what we can say with certainty is that this Vision in all its fullness no longer has to pop up out of nowhere or, at best, the nearest blind alley, to pose in a glass darkly for the fortunate few but, in accordance with modern democratic principle - and, in this regard, the relationship between the two is no accident - is finally revealed as open and available to all and not just theoretically but at will.

That said - and so far so good - we can more than go along with Voegelin's acute analysis of the vehicle par excellence that determines this differentiation and that vehicle is history. And by history is meant, following Hegel, not just ordinary history - records, chronicles, journals and so forth - or even reflective history - what in the West, at least, has, since the Greeks, since Herodotus and Thucydides and Aristotle, passed for history, the appraisal of the coming-to-be and passing-away of all things - but what the Bible knows as sacred, Hegel himself as philosophic and we nameless or, better yet, name-free though hardly speechless types and only recently graduated from the school of Hard Nots with our majors in religion or theology or metaphysics or just plain what have you, can now proudly point to as our degree in no degree, our stake in absolutely no-thing. Quite simply, in contrast to so many but by no means all his colleagues, for Voegelin the essential meaning of history does not derive from a survey or assessment of a series of events, however significant, but rather from the revelation of the Presence to whom it belongs. And as we and we alone, that is to say, we as All One are now in a position to absolutely verify and verify absolutely, as far as he went he was quite right in his claim that, by myopically if not rudely overlooking the ME (more formally, if still somewhat familiarly, addressed as I AM), what usually passes for history does indeed only tell the half of it. Less, if we take into account what the experiments have to "say" about the reality of 3rd Person perception, of so-called observation pure and simple, presumably but mistakenly free from the encumbrance of an overriding participation. In any case - and again so far so good - Voegelin also comes, as we do, as we *must*, to the perfectly justifiable conclusion that any account of the stored and storied memory of human behavior in time must, by extension, include a reckoning of man's participation in the divine presence and that this movement has a final, an eschatological direction. And there in that word "direction" as distinct from, if not quite opposed to, such unqualified concepts as "goal" or "end" or "destination" and their teleological associations, is where we, or at least I, however reluctantly at first, have had and still have to part company with him. Just as, overstaying my leave and come to the end of the page, we two - you and I - must, by pre-agreement, part, though fittingly enough and happily in our case, only for the moment.

### Letter 8 – May 10, 2004

Dear Carl, Sorry to have had to cut off my previous note so abruptly, especially since, reflecting, however tangentially, the parlous nature of our current dilemma, it seems to bear all the earmarks of the cliff-hanger we're actually living through. For instance, will he -Voegelin - take the leap or won't he? And if he does will he make it and so, by extension, help us to, with what consequences for the destiny of humankind we no longer have to leave to the imagination, it, too, being quite worn out from overuse and, like the rest of us caught up in the process of succumbing to FACT, very much up for grabs? Am I being too dramatic? Given the potential for the first time in history of a universal rescue operation to go along with the co-responding disaster that occasioned it, I don't think so. As a former teacher of mine used to point out: ideas, especially at their extremes, have consequences.

Seriously, just for the fun of it let's divide up and choose sides. Let's take a look at a couple of those ideas just for the sake of orientation, the most obvious being the absence of any at all or so close to absence as to constitute virtually nothing. Events like being born, eating and sleeping, breathing and laboring and fighting, leaving descendants, aging, dying - broadly speaking, the way the world works and, except for a hypothetical interruption or two like Athens or Jerusalem, has worked for ninety-nine and forty-four hundredths of its animal, vegetable and mineral, not to mention its human, life since the beginning of time. And not such a bad procedure at that considering its common sense approach has managed to get us where we are, so almost irretrievably lost as may - who knows?- provoke yet another advance cadre ready, willing and presumably able this time for one more run at converting never-never to ever-ever land and all in the twinkling of an eye.

I say "may," even though it doesn't look bloody likely at the moment. All the more reason, if past is prologue, to expect, to hope without hope as it were, for a rabbit out of the hat (one of which, it so happens, I just happen to have here under mine. Not that I've been asked, mind you). Meanwhile, discretion being the better part of valor, sufficient unto the day to head, if not quite for the absolute bottom of things - only the magic of the experiments can do that - at least close enough to that consummation devoutly to be wished to enable us to sniff out our bearings that others may take theirs. And for that, in addition to Voegelin, we can call upon two other speed merchants of sorts, Nishitani and Altizer, making in all a promising trifecta on whom to place our bets. And, please note, this is in no way an attempt to set them up as sure winners (since there's only One anyway and It only wins for losing) or even to indulge in an exercise in name-dropping but simply to establish a quick and convenient method for defining positions by employing a kind of short-hand: by their readings, if you like, if not pictures; their soundings if not sightings. With Nishitani, for instance, and his younger colleague, also from the Kyoto School, Masao Abe (still with us, I understand, though, like Douglas, in his nineties), we get a perfect example of what I call the Alpha approach, the attempt to break the back of duality by a deliberate regression to the Gap as it is or, as we see now, was before the beginning. And I must admit that, until I discovered the experiments, Zen and its promise of sudden enlightenment seemed to me as to so many others, if not the only, certainly the quickest and surest way for us reputedly in-the-know moderns to get to heaven. (That is, if we can describe as "sudden" what takes a lifetime of sitting cross-legged to achieve. We've only to think of the original subtitle - since withdrawn - to On Having No Head). But, then, as I say, I discovered the experiments and all my notions of Buddhism's reputed superiority to Christianity, at least in this regard, went, if not straight to hell where it could go up in smoke, at least close enough to get itself singed. As I keep pointing out if only to remind me, I saw that though the one may very well have constituted the last word by going back to the beginning via the negation of speech, the other went it one better, if only by a hair's breadth, by pursuing history to the bitter end in order to announce as well as render, and in no uncertain terms, the affirmation of silence.

Now I realize there might be something distasteful, not to say odorous, in playing this comparison game - after all, who's keeping score? - but I do think it important, if only for the sake of defending the workings of Providence from the canard of being mysterious, as if mystery - from "mystes, closed lips" - pertained to that which cannot be known rather than to that which cannot be spoken, a dualist charge that, so far as I know, Hegel was the first to expose and we're now in a position to confirm. In any case, how else account for a Buddhism, one of the great religions of the world (assuming, that is, that it's a religion at all) and, as Douglas has consistently recognized by acknowledging its influence, arguably at the top of its game in Zen, coming in second best to an abysmally failed Christianity in the Person, the 1st Person of the experiments, if not to the ways of a Providence operating in its native habitat where "abysmal failures" like crucifixions, for instance, or "the cunning of reason" we know as history, take to it like mother's milk? And thereby hangs a tale.



### Letter 9 – May 14, 2004

Dear Carl, A tale, indeed. "There is one story and one story only..." (Robert Graves). Constant, unchanging and, because unchanging, roomy enough for the happy ending so beloved by children of all ages in all ages including ours. And as Ishmael, the narrator if not hero of Melville's *Moby Dick*, found to his horror as well as delight, the reward for living to tell the tale was....well, living to tell the tale. And now we're in a position to.

Which brings me to Altizer who tells it very well as far as he goes, in fact, probably tells it as well if not better than anyone else I've come across absent the experiments. At least from our angle which, set at zero, turns out to be the really really right angle. In any case, though I may have cited it before if only in passing, I think that, despite its length, the following paragraph from his *Genesis and Apocalypse* is worth quoting in full if only because, with one exception (which I've underlined), it just about encapsulates all that can be said. (The italics will also be mine):

"Now we can see that modernity is not simply a reversal of the medieval world; it is far rather a deepening or extension of that world, even as the medieval world was a deepening and extension of the ancient Christian world. And nowhere is the modern world more fully itself than in its discovery of history as an irreversible and forward movement, and even if that discovery is an extension of medieval visions of history, it is nonetheless revolutionary, and most revolutionary in apprehending *the totality of history as the embodiment of providence or God*, a providence or God which is now the total immanence of God, and a total immanence reversing the transcendence of God even as ancient Christian visions of the transcendence of transcendence reversed the incarnation of God. If incarnation only fully enters the mind and the imagination with the full advent of the modern world, that is a consequence of a profound historical transformation, a transformation that only gradually evolves in history, and one generating deep regressions and reversals, but nevertheless one proceeding by a forward-moving process of historical evolution, an evolution that is a reversal of the backward movement of return. But if that reversal is ultimately and finally real, it is a reversal grounded in Godhead, and grounded in a reversal occurring in Godhead itself. Nothing less than such a reversal can be evoked by the symbol of the incarnation, and if historical Christianity has ever attempted a reversal of that symbol, that is a reversal which itself has been reversed by the actuality of history, and most clearly so in Western Christian history, a history that has very nearly completed a movement from the transcendence of transcendence to the immanence of immanence."

Though I might wonder at "a reversal occurring in Godhead itself" which, unless "defined" as to where, exactly, Godhead is or isn't, seems to me somewhat moot, I find this passage so packed with suggestion and meaning we could parse it till kingdom come and still have grounds for discussion, and more than discussion, agreement, the first of which might very well be the very real presence of that kingdom itself. That said, what seems to me its most salient point for our purposes is the "very nearly completed" I've underlined and which, as far as I can see, constitutes the major difference between us and not only the difference between us but between everything and, I dare say, everyone that's come before us, even someone who's come as close as Altizer. And that difference is, quite simply, the difference, on the one hand, between speech and faith in whatever shape and form they take and, on the other, the sure if silent knowledge manifest in the absolute certainty provided by the experiments. And by "silent" I most certainly do not mean the deliberate withdrawal from communication of any kind so favored by ascetic practitioners but, on the contrary, the language that literally speaks louder than words, the conscious participation between someone and no one in the one medium capable of fully surpassing itself because capable of fully delivering itSelf and which we sentimental late-comers now only know more familiarly from every pop-tune ever written as the language of love. At any rate, are we entitled to claim on the strength of the experiments alone, that the "very nearly" is no longer operative but has been superseded by the "fully completed" and, as we're now equipped to demonstrate beyond all contention, the arena for this finishing touch is or, at least, was provided by history? I think we are. I think we must. But I'll reserve that for next time.

### Letter 10 – May 19, 2004

Dear Carl, Your bringing up the distinction between "direction" and "end" has triggered so many ideas I hardly know where to begin which, I suppose, may be as good a way as any to get started - *in media res* as they say or used to. Of course, when your looking is restricted to "out there," to 3rd Person Science - observation absent participation - everywhere you look is in the middle. That's where the middle is. But, as the experiments instruct us, how about looking the other way and beginning at the beginning for a change, at the Alpha where Nishitani and Co. have ended up or, better yet, indeed best of all, at the end itSelf, at the Omega where, again courtesy of the experiments, time and space, the not-yet and the already-here, combine to give us the whole picture, the full Monty?

I'm reminded of a dubious quote from Lessing which bugged me for years and, although I suspected that something was out of sync, I could never quite figure out what or why. "The search for truth is more precious than its possession," which even when delivered in the watered-down version I grew up with - "It's not the getting but the going there that counts" - left me if not absolutely cold at least a little chilly and, as I'd learned from hard experience, for good reason. Try singing that version of the school-boy's lament some wintry Saturday afternoon to the cashier at your local movie-house after you've braved a mile or so of rain, hail, sleet and snow, only to discover you've left your quarter - the price of admission - at home. Or as, in a more serious vein, the well-known Jewish joke would have it: try telling it to the three diamond merchants who, discovering their office at the very top of the Empire State Building is virtually unreachable due to an elevator strike but pressed by the urgent nature of their business, decide to give it a try anyway and walk it, agreeing to stop for rest and recuperation at every thirty-fifth floor to tell themselves a sad story and so cheer themselves up. Which they do, only to arrive, after two fell swoops, at a hundred and five floors to heaven and, rarified air or not, the saddest story of them all. They've forgotten the key. Now there's a parable of transcendence for you and a moral, too, especially applicable to those who, easily winded, prefer to pay tribute to the chase rather than the quarry and so run out of breath sooner rather than later. "Better to find" or, as we might say paraphrasing Aristotle, "better to see than to seek." Best of all - and it's the moral of the story - to remember to remember.

Which brings us, presumably because of its simplicity, to what seems to be the most complex of all to explicate but is rendered in perfect silence by those vigilantes of the spirit, the experiments. I'm referring to Dogen's idea of practice as realization and realization as practice; of direction and end as, in reality, one and the same, only to be perceived as divided by various unresolved dualisms. So we have the *either/or* dichotomy of the three monotheisms where direction is direction and end is end and - no two ways about it - never the twain shall meet till they're united in the heavenly you-know-where, a dead give-away if there ever was one as to where that you-know-where really really is and always has been only we couldn't recognize it and wouldn't have known what to call it if we had. A Gap? A (w)hole in the head? Or, taking it a step further, to the *both/and* where we arrive at the "thou art that" of the Upanishads which, along with its exaltation of the Self had, also, in turn, as with Judaism vis-à-vis Christianity, to give way to the *neti, neti* of the Vedanta - not this, not this - or the ultimate, or almost ultimate, in reversals: the *neither/nor* of Zen Buddhism. Which, like so much else, is fine as far as it goes. But if, as most seem to agree, time must have a stop does even that negation of speech go far enough, at least as far as it can go? Apparently not, not if history has anything to say about it and it obviously does if only by virtue of the experiments, those johnnies-come-lately insuring absolution to a language not only condemned out of its own mouth but, come to the end of its rope and, like history itself, kicking and screaming all the way, finds itself sentenced to stand on its head in retribution for this "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Which no-thing, short of seeing it, was, for all its nihilistic flimflam, the very best we were able to come up with until only yesterday.

**Letter 11 – May 28, 2004**

Dear Carl, Once more into the breach with this follow-up to my last. For what it's worth, I'm still not completely satisfied with my analysis of direction and end and would like to explore more closely their essential relation to 1st Person History.

A quick review may be in order, if only to assure us that our own heads are screwed on tight (for which read, screwed off right). It seems to me, and the presence of the experiments would appear to corroborate, that, following Hegel, there are three kinds of history. There's what he calls original history - journals, diaries, but primarily records - which, with the invention of writing, first makes its appearance anywhere from Egypt to China. It's worth noting on this score that, as regards China and environs (India, Japan and so on), with one or two exceptions - the *Shih-chi* of Ssu-ma Ch'ien, for instance, which, incidentally, Voegelin addresses - it's where, for good and sufficient reasons (notably, a quasi-metaphysical bent and devaluation of time), an interest in all but the most rudimentary chronicles was virtually non-existent. Also worth noting, though very much *a propos* of nothing, is that this lack of concern with things historical may help explain an associated geographical anomaly: the mystery of why, in spite of the world being round, that region was and still is arbitrarily referred to as the Far East. Were it not for fear of roiling international waters even more than they're stirred up already, we might even take a step further and ask, as if we didn't know, exactly where this Far East is far east of? Or its neighboring Near or Middle East for that matter? However...

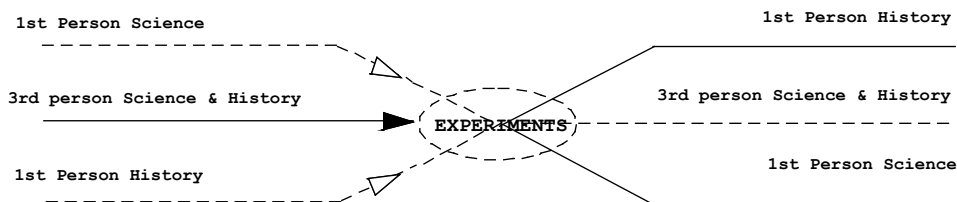
And then we have the only other two histories or interpretations thereof that really count, the opposing, even contradictory, dispensations conventionally characterized, for convenience' sake, as Western but both, along with 3rd Person Science, certainly at the very core of its unique contribution to what, in self-congratulatory mode, it refers to as the triumph of civilization but what we can now see encompasses something infinitely more inclusive. On the one hand, we have the gift from the Greeks, notably Herodotus and Thucydides, together with their notion of what Hegel calls reflective and what we now might characterize as horizontal, history, the type canonized by Aristotle and still very much with us "in the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind" (Gibbon), at its best a description of the coming-to-be and passing-away of all things. On the other, and, as we see now, its direct counterpart: the latently four and sometimes even five-dimensional tale hinted at and maybe more than hinted at by the prophets and later, theologians, saints, philosophers and what-have-you of the biblical and post-biblical tradition (Blake, Hegel, Nietzsche), these last, if not in so many words, direct forerunners of Headlessness, certainly precursors of a change in what, once viewed as a mere climate of opinion, is now recognizable as a sphere, the sphere of knowledge become more and more visible. And this is not even to question, no less answer, *the* significance of the central figure in what was perceived, at least historically, as the greatest scandal of them all - the vertical figure slumped on a cross.

All this, of course, is old hat, old history. What is not old, however, are the new, even original, connections that we're able to make in light of the experiments. And since he opened, though obviously didn't christen and certainly didn't end, the discussion, we might as well begin with Aristotle's well-known but now seen to be mistaken claim that poetry, because more philosophical, is therefore more elevated and universal than history and this by virtue of the fact that it deals not only with the probable - with what *may* happen as distinct from the merely actual and, as a result, presumably more limited what *did* happen - but with the possible, what *can* happen. And, of course, within his self-imposed (as distinct from Self-imposed) limits, he was quite justified, a conclusion with which, with the exception of a dozen or so aberrant Christian centuries - from the conversion of Constantine, say, to what's been referred to as "the waning of the Middle Ages" - world opinion or what passed for a world, gradually abandoning its pie-in-the-sky faith and returning to its senses (some might say with a vengeance), has largely agreed. Which, alone, should give us pause, as, indeed, it has, almost bringing us, if not to our knees, at least to a requisite temporary if not temporal impasse. What it could not know, however, what no-one and only no-one could possibly know or at least demonstrate with absolute certainty was that, as suspected, even prophesied and then attempted by the trial-run on the cross, the significance of this absolute and certain knowledge would not only be withheld until the end of history it would coincide with it. Outrageous as it may sound to ears jaded by two millennia of presumably unfulfilled promises that even now are still found wanting as measured against the All, it all comes down to this: that the recognition of the convergence of direction and end terminating in a point that neither *is* one nor *has* one constitutes the meaning of history. Which, contrary to received opinion (a.k.a. superstition), is in no way to suggest that, like life itself, more's not on offer. On the contrary, the realization that not only the already-here but the not-yet is behind us - a mark of the Great Liberation often attested to but never quite proven by assorted saints, saviors and mystics East and West - has now been certified: signed, sealed and delivered in the person, the 1st Person, of the experiments, Its very Presence.

### Letter 12 – June 6, 2004

Dear Carl, Despite your kind words of encouragement, I can't help recalling a classic routine in an old Marx Bros. movie, *A Day at the Races* (and I recommend it if you haven't seen it; they re-run it every so often), where Chico, spotting Groucho for a sucker, assures him that if he wants to play the horses successfully, he has to have the Breeder's Guide, copies of which he just happens to have on hand. The only catch, as Groucho discovers to his cost, is that his initial purchase - and it's about the size and weight of a Manhattan phone book and doesn't come cheap - turns out to be only the beginning. Because no sooner has he paid for the original than he's informed that he needs a guide to the Guide and then, as if that isn't enough - and it isn't - a guide to the guide to the Guide and so on. I trust you get the picture. I certainly did and still do as I watch Groucho, on overload and almost smothered by the scam, fade into the metaphorical sunset, poorer if not wiser.

All this by way of apologizing for, if not excusing, these guides to The Guide and my own tendency to get - shall we say a little complicated, certainly when compared to the experiments. But what can I do if, on the one hand, the material demands it and yet, on the other, I still want to avoid succumbing to what Yvor Winters, an old "new critic" and, indirectly, a mentor of mine (and a damn good one), brilliantly called - and it's the besetting sin of modernism - *the fallacy of imitative form*: the use and abuse of chaos come again to describe it, a mimic homeopathy which, if taken in small doses - like curing like - may just possibly heal (cf. Joyce's *Ulysses*) but overdone will certainly provide overkill. (Compare a good deal of what passes for modern poetry. Or am I showing my age?). Well, I'll tell you what I can do. I can do penance and try to mend my ways. To that end, and again presumptuously taking a leaf from Douglas' book, I offer this little drawing in the hope that if I can't quite reach the blessed self-defeating point of no-point with words, I can at least try to indicate it with images.



Dwg 4

Though I trust this is reasonably self-explanatory, a few clarifications, at least of my intentions, may be in order. So here I go again.

The broken lines prior to the uncovering of the experiments at dead center are meant to indicate that, though operative and very much present as the outer parameters of all experience whether individual or collective, neither 1st Person Science nor 1st Person History are as yet consciously visible. This, of course, though quite in accordance with the Sufi hadith, "I was a mystery and wanted to be known" (and now is), is at the same time in direct contrast to the unbroken line marked 3rd Person Science and 3rd Person History which, if it isn't quite sure as to who or where it is or even what to call itself, obviously "knows" or at the very least senses where it's headed. As indicated by the arrow it's well (or maybe not so well) on its way to the Never-Never Land of Heart's Desire (may it rest in peace), the great joy-ride variously designated in this or that tradition as Heaven, Paradise, Nirvana - you name it. Unfortunately, or so it seems, like so many of us who start out life as Joan of Arc but, waylaid by fortune if not worse, end up resembling Minnie the Moocher, more often than not we wind up in a place that either smacks of milady's lap or, depending on our persuasion, Daddy Warbucks' pocket. That is, before finally tumbling into the dreaded bottomless pit however you slice it. Enter the experiments, those marvelous instruments for revealing the concealed *deus in machina* - amalgams of heaven and hell designed for a life on earth where, thank God, nothing and only no-thing stays the same even as everything changes. No words, no excuses, no explanations, no pretensions, above all - unlike what we're doing now - no speechifying. As a result, no possibility for misunderstandings. Only the facts. Or better yet, the FACT : that what once appeared a dotted, that is to say a crooked, line, has now been made straight, vice versa'd so to speak as prophesied and all in the twinkling of an eye.

Also worth noting is that in addition to the reverse spin effecting our view of objects as well as of the Subject itSelf - righting the retina's wrong and turning the inside out and the upside down - the schema is depicted as wide open at both ends and, like a babe in its mother's arms, in the middle, too, comparable, you may recall, to our earlier diagram where Omega is joined to Alpha courtesy of the Gap. What is it

Catholic theologians used to say and maybe still do? "It takes three to get married." Interestingly enough, while enjoying (enjoying?) a short stint in a Zen monastery in Japan over forty years ago and obviously long before I ever heard of the experiments, as a required exercise I tried my hand at a haiku - as I suspect you're aware, a poem of strictly seventeen syllables - which, unless I'm mistaken, seems to describe, even transcribe precisely what we're consciously talking about now and which, interestingly enough, though for some reason I've since forgotten, I entitled "Where?"

A riddle -

end at the beginning,

the beginning in the middle.

Out of the mouth of a middling-aged babe flying high on a wing and a prayer. As to "Where?", it turns out my concern at the time - the seventeen syllables (and you can count 'em, God knows I sweated over them long enough) - was the least of it. What strikes me now is how dopily prescient I must have been and I suspect, ready or not and know it or not, we all are or else we wouldn't get it even in the last place. And I've tried to indicate this process of transformation by showing in the drawing how, beginning precisely in the middle, vision can be processed and so, filtered through the experiments and turned on its head, the world, life itSelf, can come up smelling of roses. Now it's 1st Person History and 1st Person Science that are seen and recognized for the straight arrows they are while the 3rd Person bunch - relativity theory, quantum theory, wave and particle theory and now even string theory - unable to make up their minds, no less their heads, have been politely conducted to the back of the bus where, still looking in the wrong direction, still dinging and donging away as Douglas would have it, is just where they belong. All of which, incidentally, ties in rather nicely with the latest news, specifically this dispatch just in from the home front. It appears that due to Alaric's wholly unexpected arrival in Rome, our special correspondent, Augustine, has been called back to Carthage to complete work on his latest, tentatively entitled the City of God. For Christ's sake, will it never end? And, by the way, did I say Carthage? Are they still in the league? My apologies for having exceeded our agreed-upon boundaries.

### Letter 13 – June 13, 2004

Dear Carl, Considering their seductive nature and how easy it is to look rather than see and even easier to overlook, I'd like to spend a few minutes talking about the effect of history on the development of the experiments as it regards my own. And though I know I've touched on it, albeit not in any great detail, it might be helpful to review and briefly examine the various positions held by certainly four of the most formative influences on what I can only offer as my definitive conclusions regarding these extraordinary instruments that are, simply, what they point to. And if this seems a personal indulgence I can only plead it's not tendered out of any biographical concern as to where I come from, which is not the issue, but to illustrate what each represents by way of four different approaches to what one of them, Voegelin, has finally described as the perennial Question but which, on the contrary, as weighed in the balance and, for the first time in history, not found wanting, we can now characterize as the Answer.

I'll take the four of them - Altizer, Voegelin, Nishitani and Douglas - in their order of appearance, at least in their relationship to me. And if, as we go along, I seem to be adopting a kind of short-hand and, in good racing fashion, handicapping them - well, I suppose I am. Since it goes with the territory I don't see how we can avoid it as long as we remember not only who we are but what we're up to: that as 1st Person historians it's our job not only to post the signs but secure the posts.

I'll begin with Altizer not only because he's chronologically closer to me than the others (I believe he was a graduate student in divinity at the University of Chicago not long after I left it as an undergraduate) but he was the first of the four I came across - my God, it's almost sixty years now. Presciently enough, it was an early book of his called *Oriental Mysticism and Biblical Eschatology* that first drew my attention to what we're up to right now, to the historical factor or, if you will, the absence of it in the so-called differences between the two great traditions of East and West, factors which have finally come to fruition in the definitive distinction we're now in a position to make between what we might call the Alpha (as exemplified by Nishitani) and the Omega approach of the experiments. In any case, though I was more or less aware of what Altizer was about - his involvement as the titular leader of the Death of God movement, for instance, which belief, taking its cue from Nietzsche, was certainly engaging and God knows radical enough - even so, given my own bias, he seemed far too Christian for my taste. This despite or maybe because as a recently lapsed Catholic - a conversion that, under the undue influence of Tom Merton, had lasted all of a year or so - I already suspected, rather uneasily to say the least, that my bread was to be buttered elsewhere. Little did I dream that following a relatively brief time-out in India and Japan which I rather pretentiously described as a pilgrimage that same bread was to end up, not as a piece of cake (that had to await the experiments) but burnt to a crisp in a seemingly endless toast to the properties of wine. Still, though I didn't follow him all that closely I was more or less aware of his work and never more so than when, some twenty years after I'd first discovered him, he entered into a short but, for me at least, telling exchange with Voegelin, an exchange in which, as a confirmed Voegelinian by then, I was very much surprised to see he more than held his own. I'll go into that presently.

As for Voegelin, he well warrants a chapter, even a book, all to himself (as a matter of fact there've already been a few and no doubt more to follow), but since that's a luxury which, thanks to the experiments, we can now easily afford, I'll limit myself to a few remarks concerning his final hypothesis that I've come to think of as his doctrine of Equivalence. And an extremely useful one it is, too. Quite simply, it proposes and backs up with examples, the notion that, from first to next-to-last - and if there's no last it's simply because we can't know it or it wouldn't be the last - from first to the penultimate - and I'll let him complete the thought - "changes...come only through noetic advances which let more compact symbols appear inadequate in the light of more differentiated experiences of reality and their symbolization." And the key word here is obviously "differentiated," the so-called noetic advance that distinguishes yet joins the new Omega truth to the old Alpha truth, a connection that at once differentiates yet links my childish "now I lay me down to sleep..." or, for that matter, an early Egyptian or Sumerian wish-list, to the consciously child-like performance of any experiment; if the truth be told and now it can be, to what we're doing right now: from first to last -and I do mean last - what our life on earth has, finally, been all about. To be continued...

**Letter 14 – June 18, 2004**

Dear Carl, In case you've forgotten or even if you haven't, let me pick up where I left off by repeating the last sentence of my previous letter, not that I particularly enjoy hearing the sound of my own voice (which, despite modest disclaimers to the contrary, like all of us I most certainly do), but to emphasize, to repeat and repeat over and over again the absolute centrality to our argument (if it is an argument; it's my claim that by now we've gone way beyond that) of this question of the increasing differentiation in spiritual perception, as far as I know a notion quite original with Voegelin, at least in so specific a form, and quite accurate, too, in its description of the process or, if you will, the "progress" from Alpha to Omega. That is, if, in contrast to naïve cyclical theory, going in a circle and an open one at that can be described as making anything but a progress of sorts.

At any rate, here it is: "And the key word here is obviously 'differentiated,' the so-called noetic advance that distinguishes yet joins the new Omega truth to the old Alpha truth, a connection that at once differentiates yet links my childish 'now I lay me down to sleep...' or, for that matter, an early Egyptian or Sumerian wish-list, to the consciously child-like performance of any experiment, to what, if the truth be told and now it can be, we're doing right now: from first to last - and I do mean last - what our life on earth has, finally, been all about."

I bring this up in connection with Voegelin not merely because I'd hinted at his importance for me earlier or even to single him out when, if the truth be told and now it can be, as regards this question of ultimate differentiation (which, thanks to the experiments, is no longer a question) his name is, if not quite legion, nevertheless not unknown in academic or philosophic circles, but merely to point out and point up the enormous resistance encountered by even the best will in the world (and a mind to match) when, failing the *sensible*, the actual physical assurance provided by the experiments, it attempts to come "face to face" not with any so-called symbolic eucharistic substance but with the very real presence itSelf. Because in the climactic and seminal chapter of the long-awaited last volume of his *Order and History*, where it comes down to a choice between a Plato, holding in precarious balance the disparate claims between what we would call his 1st and 3rd Persons, and an over-the-wall Paul, all caution and boundaries thrown to the wind in his asymmetrical abandon, though far too sophisticated to suggest as someone has - it may have been Walter Pater but I'm not sure - that Christianity is merely Platonism for the masses when its historical component suggests just the opposite, much to the consternation and disappointment and, in a couple of cases, downright dismay registered by his more ardent Christian fans, Voegelin opts for the primacy of the Platonic approach. And this on the grounds - and again, absent the visible experiments, I would claim on the very legitimate grounds - that as regards Christian, or, as we might say, Judeo-Christian exceptionalism - the insistence that rather than annul, faith transfigures history - it may be so but I don't know. Which, beginning with Doubting Thomas has been the argument against the essential Christian message all along but, given the very real Presence of present evidence (as witness the experiments), obviously is so no longer.

Incidentally, since it's bound to come up sooner or later anyway and should, this all ties in with a point I've also made before: the capacity of Headlessness by its very nature and all-inclusiveness to reconcile all views and position them hierarchically in what, once referred to as the Great Chain of Being, we can now acknowledge as the Great Chain of Non-Being and so put an end to yet another bone of contention between East and West. Thus, if we can now legitimately say that Paul, in his unearned certainty (unearned because solely dependent on faith), is right to have gone off the deep-end but for the wrong reasons, we can equally say that Plato, and by extension Voegelin, with their earned uncertainty (the Socratic notion of *philo-sophia* as the love but not necessarily the possession of wisdom) are wrong for the right ones. As the experiments demonstrate and in no uncertain terms, no matter how you slice it one times one still equals One, though even here I can't help remarking, in light of their ultimate simplicity, how quaint, not to say funny all this dithering and blathering, including my own, seems to me now. And I must say to Voegelin's everlasting credit that, unlike so many of his colleagues, at the end he leaves more than enough room for his "earned uncertainty" to resolve itSelf, makes justifiable pro-vision, so to speak, for some future development which, of course, was already in the works anyway, was already congealing under his very nose, though what he might have made of it we can only guess. Given the nature of the beast I don't hold out too much faith or hope on that score, though I do try, from time to time, to exercise some charity. As they say - you never know. Could anyone have predicted, even dreamed, that the end of time (and its beginning) would make itSelf known via these common, garden-variety instruments fresh as Eden on the day it was born and this, not only because but despite all the prophesying? Go figure. A cheerful note on which to leave you until next time.

**Letter 15 – June 20, 2004**

Dear Carl,        Again, to pick up where I left off with Voegelin's justifiable unwillingness to exercise absolute closure where he saw none, either in the name of Plato or of Paul. Whereas almost simultaneously, as I was to discover, precisely the opposite was happening with Douglas, the experiments foreclosing on an infinite opening, on the infinite opening, though who but the fortunate few could have been aware of it at the time? Nevertheless - and it's a tribute to Voegelin's integrity - he did leave available the possibility, however remote, of some further, if not ultimate differentiation, this last in his view being an utter impossibility, since, inhabiting as we do the Metaxy as he called it, the In-Between where, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea or, as we would say, between the prospect provided by the third and/or the first person, he could only conclude that, contrary to what we know now, better yet, to what we *see* now, there was no Where in sight from which we could possibly extract a safe and secure purchase other than on the faith that it was there. Which, despite some earlier, "mystical" episodes of my own and the consequent conviction that the tension between the historical and the trans- or a-historical I (as I then called it) could not be resolved except a man be unborn again, I more or less bought into, whether out of distrust of my own visual capacity - I simply didn't believe my own eyes - or just plain stupidity disguised as weariness I'm still not sure.

In any case, in the rather sharp, if respectful, exchange between Voegelin and Altizer that followed the publication of the last volume of *Order and History*, though I was impressed with some of the enthusiastic points Altizer made as certainly being closer to my own way of thinking - namely, his strenuous objection that so little consideration had been given to the significance of the modernity that from Blake through Hegel and Nietzsche right through to Joyce had been mother's milk to me - and though it took the experiments to show me that, for all his almost aboriginal Christian orientation, in fact because of it, he was on the right track, still playing it cautious, snug (and smug) in my virtuous neutrality, I continued to find myself favoring Voegelin and this despite his severe strictures, to say the least, towards my own particular favorites, namely Hegel and Nietzsche with their thrust to advance beyond philosophy, beyond the mere love of wisdom, towards absolute knowledge. Who knows? Whatever it was for him (hence his unusual harshness), it may well have been Oedipal on my part. Fortunately, as far as I was concerned the discussion, such as it was and in which, though no party to it, I was to appear as a not so innocent witness, proved academic to say the most because, though hardly qualifying as a jesting Pilate, in my search for truth I, too, would not stay for an answer. Instead, it was just about this time - and remember I hadn't yet come upon Headlessness though that wasn't too far in the future either - that I stumbled on or, more exactly, rediscovered the Kyoto School, only on this occasion it was to be in earnest. What is it they say? "When the pupil is ready..." I can remember saying to myself, "A plague on both your houses." (Meaning Voegelin and Altizer). "My troubles are over." (As you may have gathered by now, for better or worse I took this stuff seriously). And, of course, in a sense, in its very real Alpha sense, my troubles *were* over. Nishida, Tanabe, Nishitani, Abe - enough had been translated even then to make for a feast and a real living for a loner like me.

And I must say that in the twenty years or so since I first discovered them in the *Eastern Buddhist Quarterly* and later in their books, at least those available in English, I've never deviated, not for one minute, from an awareness of my, of our, infinite debt to them. They built the bridge that was to prepare me, intellectually at least, for that vision of the near side which is Headlessness. But I don't have to tell you. You mentioned only a few weeks ago that you were deep into Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness*, whether for the first time I don't recall. But I do know that, aside from dipping into it more than occasionally, often referring to it almost like an encyclopedia or dictionary, I've actually read it cover to cover at least two or three times (my copy was so dog-eared and marked-up I recently had to order a new one). It's an absolutely seminal book, one that along with Freud, Einstein, Wittgenstein....But I don't want to get into that game even if, like some of my best friends, it means your preference might happen to run to that rotten bastard, Heidegger, coward that he was. (And if you don't believe me, read what Voegelin, who could decipher his gobbledygook in the original, has to say about him). Nevertheless, at the risk of becoming combative and playing favorites I would certainly put Douglas at the "head" of any list, though, coming from me, some might see that elevation as an *al Dante* form of retribution, he getting no more than he deserves.

More to follow when the spirit moves.



**Letter 16 – June 26, 2004**

Dear Carl, To Nishitani at last, for clarity and depth unsurpassed except for you-know-who. And altogether fitting that as an exemplar par excellence of the Alpha perspective, the primordial absence of time, he should be paired with Douglas, our man in Omega, waving from across the way, from that street of dreams once known for its fullness as heaven but now re-christened the Gap. Not for nothing or, more precisely, for no-thing was *On Having No Head* originally sub-titled, "*Zen and the Re-Discovery of the Obvious*," though, if I'm not mistaken, it's been deleted from subsequent printings. And rightly so if on no other grounds than as marking the retreat to Alpha - and make no mistake about it, it is a retreat - Zen, by jumping the gun and negating speech, merely betokens an end, whereas, flitting through the afterlife, those affirmations of silence, the experiments, not only bespeak a difference in degree from anything that's gone before but a difference in kind, as different as death from resurrection where, not incidentally, Omega begins.

I know comparisons are odorous but they sure as hell put us on the scent and the scent here is so distinctive as to be unmistakable. Quite simply, contrary to prevailing opinion, the current popularity of Zen in its pioneer attack on speech - the *neti, neti*, not-this, not-this, it appropriated from the Vedanta - rather than initiate a new beginning as the consensus would have it, it marks the end of the period we're about to exit anyway though, not to put too fine a point on it, whether we arrive head-first or feet-first is still very much up for grabs. One thing, however, is for sure: following the million or so years it's taken us to get there, or rather, here - and this with little to speak for us except a hand and tongue aided and abetted by an upright posture, "the better to see you with, my dear" - "unaccommodated man" has finally succeeded in that precarious quest that's delivered him from the precincts of sound and smell to within sight of absolute headquarters. The rest, as they say, is history. And thereby hangs a tale, the fudging of which via the escape from nature to eternity without it has, despite the very real benefit of clergy, made bastards of us all if only by telling half the story, a story that's had to await the belated blessing and retroactive legitimacy bestowed by Headlessness for its completion. Hear, O Israel? How about the whole of it? How about hearing it for "See, O Israel" for a change, for *the* change?

What it all means, of course, what the experiments and only the experiments are capable of revealing in no uncertain terms is that, as Douglas has outlined so succinctly on pages 224-225 of the abridged *Hierarchy* and I noted in an earlier letter: if our first concern must be "to realize this instantaneous Now, to live in the present moment, taking no thought for tomorrow or yesterday," then our second must be "to find in this Now all my to-morrows and yesterdays." Which is no more than to say that if, like all things under the sun along with those that go bump in the night, we live and breathe and have our being primarily by grace (and we do), then failing that - and God knows we do fail it and have failed it though it has never failed us - like Bogart and Bergman in *Casablanca* who, if they didn't have each other at the end, "always had Paris," so too, we now have providence to look back on with its dual realization that history's progressive revelation of God as rendered in the experiments and God's progressive revelation of history as rendered in the experiments are one and the same. What is it the Sufis say in anticipation of the last great day when, with grace blind-sided, we'll be forced to find our way by hook or by crook? "In the latter days, one-tenth of what was required in the beginning will be sufficient." I'd say a trip to our city of light is worth a wink or a blink any day - or night, too, for that matter. Where else will two get you One and all *pro-videre*, for the sake of Seeing?

**Letter 17 – July 6, 2004**

Dear Carl, Vertical grace masquerading as space, horizontal providence as time: the one, representing 1st Person Science and spelling out fulfillment and freedom, the infinite potential necessarily operative in everything that is; the other, 1st Person History, the manifest completion of the world we make as measured against the experiments or, if you prefer an equally immediate and accurate gauge, against the upright human body, there where the cross is inscribed - some would say written in blood - in the perfect conjunction of space and time. That ought to hold us for a while while we round up the usual suspects.

Though I've already touched on a few of them and actually named names, in all fairness we really ought to begin with your or my or our "*l'homme moyen sensuel*," to use Baudelaire's convenient phrase. Because, despite protestations that when the saints go marching in - even before - I want to be of their number, like virtually all of us I can give you no guarantee as to how I'll behave when the chips are down. And since they always are, we can get right to the serious business of a possible alternative to this multitude of sins, a few of which I've already referred to, and a fewer of which, as I've also indicated, others have even acted on.

I mentioned Voegelin, for instance, a perfect proponent of the loving skepticism first suggested by his master, Plato. And certainly he adopted an honorable and more than legitimate posture that, absent Zen and later the experiments, I might have taken for my own and, as a matter of fact, did for years. Which, when we get down to the nitty-gritty, is, I suppose, a little like saying "If I'd had the ham I'd have had some ham and eggs if I'd had the eggs." What can one possibly say that hasn't been said about a towering figure like Plato or even a lesser one like Voegelin without seeming to appear both arrogant and ignorant and combative in the bargain? Unless, of course, the appeal is made to principle rather than personality. In which case we can say anything we like as long as it jibes with the truth. And the truth is, when weighed in the balance, when (if you'll forgive the pun) the scales are removed from our eyes by the experiments, they're both found wanting to some degree. As is everyone else who has come before and I do mean everyone - saints, saviors, founders, avatars. Because make no mistake about it, short of the experiments - Godspoke rendered in kind - the very fact we're forced to discuss these matters in language together with all that that entails of duality is to measure in degrees, however Mantalk stands up as doubtless the best in class when set alongside the meows and moo's and woofs and tweets and bleats and oinks and neighs of this world. And the same goes for Nishitani, beautifully on target when it comes to Alpha in all its silence if not its absolute certainty - that's reserved for Omega - and even more so for Altizer, in a way the most interesting of the lot, who, though still stuck in speech and belief, nevertheless "knows", as he puts it, or at least "has faith" that in the end, in the new dispensation and hope, the transcendence of transcendence will be superseded by the immanence of that immanence which is beyond hope and faith though never beyond the charity that constitutes it. And so it's come to pass even though, like John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, absent the imprimatur of the experiments he's unaware of it.

Most instructive of all, of course, when we come to talk about these things, is the presence or, as we might equally and even more justifiably claim, the absence of Douglas, his 1st Person impersonality so to speak. To suggest, for instance, that there are no observable facts of history or anything else which can't be interpreted, and properly interpreted, in light of the experiments is no longer a question of his opinion or even mine or yours for that matter, but a matter, the provable and observable matter of FACT for all to see. It's what, among other things, not only distinguishes him but the experiments from everything and everyone that's come before. Can it be an accident, for instance, that it took the total collapse of received, traditional doctrine for the first time in history to give Providence, relieved of the accumulated overlay and detritus of millennia, its first opportunity ever to peep up and reveal itSelf as unquestionably the true center, source and end of all that is, the very existence of these simple home-and-hand-made instruments at once the testimony to and proof of it? Not what this one said or that one. Not even what this one did or that one. But simply that, having hit bottom if only by de-fault (and what greater fault than de-fault?), no-thing else would do.

Not surprisingly since he's so very close, in fact, except for Douglas, far closer than anyone else I've been able to discover as regards what we might call the historical dimension of Headlessness, Altizer, is on to this. At least in one of his more recent essays he argues for the prospect of an anonymity no longer confined to the name-less-ness of Alpha, but open, as we might say, to some once and future name-free-ness at Omega. Well, to paraphrase Peanuts, now that we've seen the future and it is us why shouldn't the not-yet already here reveal itSelf as it always has, is and will be world without end if not in the person, the 1st Person of the experiments?