

1st Person instinctive science: pointers to reality (a tribute to the lifework of Douglas Harding, 1909-2007)

In Article 9 of this website we looked at differentiating “Modern-Branch-science within Ancient-Root-Science”. Here we tried to distinguish between the different ways ancient and modern science understands the world. We looked at this from the onlooker’s perspective, viewing both methods and attempting to see them for what they are and why there is a difference. However this article did not consider an inside view of what I called Ancient-root science or the pure-science of observation, which is vital if we are to contrast the two forms of science.

In his work “The science of the 1st Person” Douglas Harding very clearly describes the nature of science from what is the ancient context of pure observation as distinct from the modern science approach. He describes the difference as science of the 3rd person and science of the 1st Person. He then describes thirty-seven different ways in which distinctions are made, thereby deeply and astoundingly clarifying the nature of science of the 1st person. I will try to explain what this adds to our understanding.

The science of the 1st Person simply means that it is recognizing the observer, i.e. the 1st Person, who is looking at the so-called object. This is in contrast to the modern ideology which focuses only on the object and negates the observer.

This “180 degree shift”, as Harding calls it, is vitally important because it is a recognition of what **is looking as well as** what is being **looked at**. This is profoundly significant and tells us a great deal about the nature of modern science as it is today.

The whole nature of modern or 3rd person science is that it focuses “out there” in the world to find the answer, it is completely bound to the exterior in order to find what is sought, essentially a science that is based in seeking. There is a forward and top-heavy stance associated with this kind of science, it is essentially missing its root or foundation and context. The instruments it uses either allow the eye to see further or to look more deeply into things than is naturally possible but essentially this is the same thing, it is always a process of seeking, of going outward and into, penetrating deep Space or deep interior at the atomic level in order to find the secret of life. Seldom is the observer considered, be they seeker or scientist, he/she is really of no consequence in the process. In fact they are often regarded as an obstacle to the process because of the bias of seeing through a particular framework rather than viewing the actual nature of reality in an abstract ideal of a seeking-objectivity, a total contradiction in terms. However this is inherently the problem. The scientist who is seeking will inevitably compromise the nature of any experiment due to the tunnel-vision of the need to discover something. However as the universe is so vast and contains all things, eventually what is sought will inevitably be found, but will then be recognised to be far more labyrinthine than expected, so in fact not “found” but made more complex!

The point is that this is a *seeker* looking for something. The seeker is not really a clear-minded expression but someone bound in dis-ease, his/her vision will inherently be

biased to subjective experience. He may be worrying about Christmas presents when he is observing Andromeda, or she may be worrying about wedding plans while looking into the DNA of a cell. These processes all contain mental-emotional contractions which distort what is looked at and so science tries to take precautions to eradicate “biased” results. Real science occurs when there is a total clear-minded observational sense that what is looked at is purely viewed from the singularity of where one stands. Anything else is not really pure-science but science with an add-on of “self”. So instead of the impossibility of scientific objectivity from the stand point of the “perfect seeker”, which is impossible, it is the realization of who or what the observer actually is that forms the complete picture.

From the pure-science of the 1st person perspective, Harding makes the point that when really and truly observed without judgment, the observer is realised to be the same in each case (which he calls the 1st Person *Singular*) - the fact is that the observer, whose experiments usually have a visual content, is actually observing from a totally empty-space, literally the place where the eyes are looking from is realized to be a purely open and empty visual plain. If we examine this more closely we realize that the Observer, whoever they are, including you dear reader, is looking and reading these lines from a totally empty space or visual field. This Harding describes as the *Headless state*. This is not a mind trick or play on words but a simple reality, known to those who are involved with the Eastern traditions as the “third eye” or simply in Zen the “original face”. This empty space from whence we all look and from where we speak and listen to the sounds of the world, is always in the background of our lives yet constantly unseen. It is therefore not acknowledged by modern science either which ironically only looks outwards while searching for what already is. The 180-degree shift towards recognition of both object-looking and subject-looking (2-way seeing in Harding’s way of expression), means they cannot in fact be differentiated, they begin to merge to one thing, or no-thing “watching” or “observing”, yet all the phenomena of the world occur in this space.

Why is this important for science? The key reason is that science is about truth, about recognising and understanding it. If modern science is to investigate the truth scientists ought to be very sure of their first premise, i.e. the nature of what they are looking *from*, rather than only the nature of what they are looking *at*. If you look from the perspective of a seeker who is distorting reality then your results will reflect this same distortion. However if there is awareness of the constant observer who is not only “me” but also “you”, and that in fact everyone is looking though this same “gap” of space just from different views or angles, through different windows of the same house so to speak, then this transforms everything.

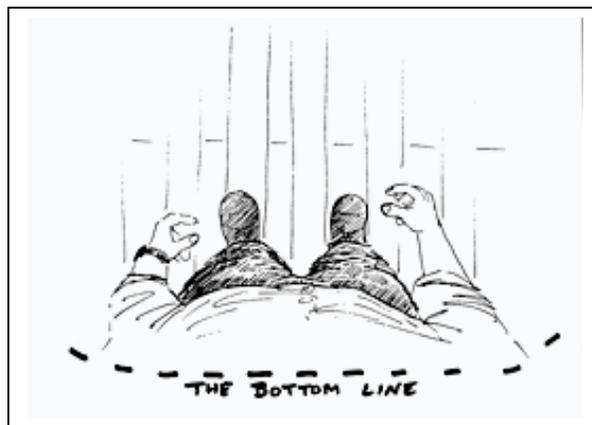
It brings us back to question of what we are looking for and why we are looking for it outwards, rather than seeing what there is, and so adding seeing-inwards to seeing-outwards completing the whole picture. The philosophical nature of the expression is obvious, posing many difficult problems for modern science, none of which is of particular interest, since this is really a process modern science needs to go through in order to be true to its own ideas, to get to the bottom of things and reveal the truth about

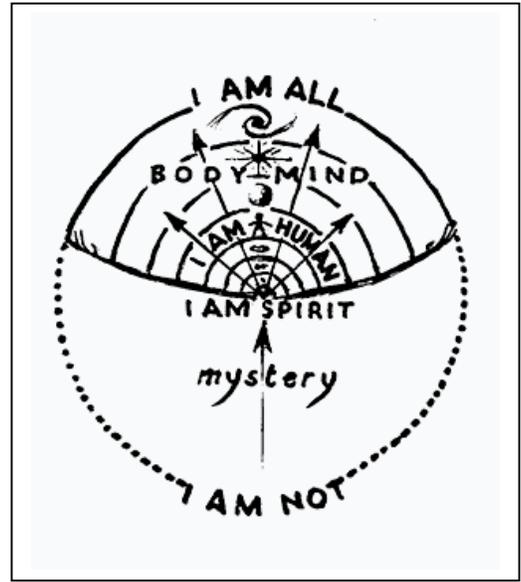
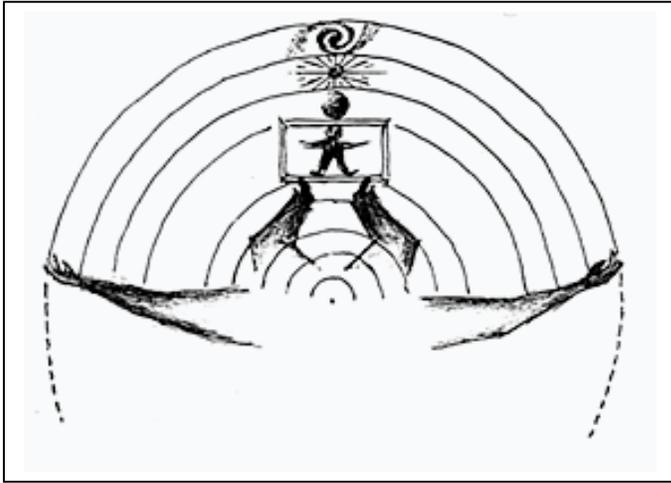
the world. Until science of the 1st Person is brought to the fore, which is the foundational reality of the ancient unanimous understanding of many cultures worldwide, then modern-science will always be lost, focusing on very small parts of a much larger contextual picture and so missing the wood for the trees. It will remain deeply biased in its process of seeking and experimentation, which is founded on the ideals of separatism not on the clarity of viewing from an already existing platform of which even a very small child has an innate awareness.

If there is true interest within you to explore the truth of seeing and to feel the world from the empty-Centre of reality, I would urge you to investigate this through the expression of Douglas Harding and others who share these insights of the nature of reality as we know it. For Douglas there was very little reason to be interested in anything else and I can understand why, for if one is eccentric then life will naturally skew into a maze of difficulty. Therefore it may be interesting to have an insight into what truly is at the Centre, to understand the nature of this “self” that was added on some time earlier and see indeed if he/she really is running the show or if not what is?

For more information on the content of this article and its original foundational understanding please see the work of Douglas E. Harding at www.headless.org.

Here are three of Harding’s diagrams explaining the nature of how we literally view the world simply from the point of view of looking down at the floor. (With thanks to Richard Lang for permissions, please also see <http://www.headless.org/experiments/the-bottom-line.htm>):-





Love to you Douglas.

David Nassim
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