

Stop Looking and See by Paul Constant

At the age of 43, Paul wrote the following discoveries. Rather than think about Paul or the sequence of events, try to feel the meaning behind the words.



May 16, 2007

For whatever reason, I'm inclined to start from the end of the story and work backwards...

What I now know with conviction:

- That it is possible to glimpse an empty, boundless, One Awareness and retain a memory of it.
- That I (Paul Constant and everything connected with him) *did not exist* while immersed in that Awareness.
 - I now struggle with the words that best describe It—R's¹ "Absolute Awareness" and Art's "Empty Observatory" seem best. In the months leading up to May 14, I was *so frustrated* with the tail chasing involved in awareness watching awareness, that I now simply want to call it "One Awareness" because it was a massive awareness-identity problem solved with finality.

While in the Awareness:

- I don't know how long I was immersed...I would estimate a few minutes, but that was enough. Somehow, Paul was out on the wispy fringes, vaguely witnessing this Experience because I now have a memory of it all. But Paul was not "there"...
- No "mind stuff" was present for the Awareness to reflect from (thus, the description as empty and boundless). And so the mind now cannot describe it with any plausibility.
- I haven't read any of Douglas Harding's writings, but I was startled by the recognition of being headless—Nothingness sitting on top of a body dropping out of a Void. If that's what he meant by headlessness, it's a good depiction (if not, I don't care because it's still a good depiction ☺).
- Near the end of the Experience, while still sitting in the chair, I placed my face in my hands and thought over and over, "I do not exist." I thought—no, *I felt*—that I was an empty shell, or Hollow Man. I did not weep. I was not devastated, nor was I rendered senseless or drained. And I was not in a state of bliss.

¹ References to "R" mean Richard Rose.

First thoughts in the seconds upon return:

- I remember an embarrassing ego-gratification—embarrassing perhaps because it was such a “base” reaction, like a mountain conquered—that I have finally glimpsed that which I sought for almost 22 years. A deep satisfaction. A relief. No more cursed “awarenesses” endlessly caught in a tail-chasing pattern.
- I am completely surprised by what I experienced; It is not at all what I expected. Another embarrassing thought—It is so simple and anticlimactic compared to my preconceptions.
 - Note: As a student of R, I originally thought (in the 1980’s and ‘90’s) that glimpsing the Absolute was a devastation beyond all comprehension. For R, the devastation was real, perhaps because he made the trip entirely on his own, with little help or even a hint at what lay ahead in the final Seeing—or what to expect afterwards. Also, his ego-character was hardwired quite differently than mine. Some of my beliefs eroded with time as others described their Experiences, thus depersonalizing it. Still, the Experience was supposed to be the death of the mind. *It was a death*, but only for a few minutes. I’m still here. ☺
- Later, while walking in the woods, R’s words resonated: I indeed looked out of the windows of a mansion like a strange prowler.

In the seconds leading up to the Experience:

- “Something” very palpable was located diagonally (a foot or two?) behind my right ear. It felt like an intense electricity, the same feeling I had during intense rapport sessions of past years, when R was around. This time, it was in such close proximity and so intense that my head involuntarily tilted away from it slightly.
 - Note: This palpable electricity is not something that I have read about or heard anyone discuss in connection with their Experience. I wondered (the next day) if it was because I asked for help in the minutes leading up to this point? Perhaps a more plausible explanation: the electricity was extreme tension manifested? Or, maybe it was R’s picture hanging on the wall behind me. ☺ I also know the implications of stating that something was outside of me, especially for those who believe in entities. However, if it was dangerous, R surely would not have directed this electricity, which he often “saw” through closed eyelids, toward people during rapport sittings.
- I don’t remember a specific thought that was the catalyst, but in a fraction of a second, two “me’s” did not exist, and the One Awareness flooded in and I was Nothing.

In the minutes leading up to the Experience:

- I wanted to sit and meditate that morning.
 - Nothing profound about that idea. I didn’t have a rigid plan while entering a period of isolation; instead, I knew only that I wanted to sit and watch thoughts a few times during each day. To me, the quantity of meditation time wasn’t important. While in isolation, I knew I was going to have a productive period of self-observation within 20 minutes or so, or I was going to give up until an undesignated time later on.

- In the preceding months, I was having intense observation periods after I lay down in bed before going to sleep, so I am surprised that the Experience occurred while sitting in a chair in the morning.
- A distinct thought crossed my mind that morning: the Community Building is a perfect place to sit and meditate (days before, Mike Casari actually planted a seed when he said he planned to meditate there during his upcoming isolation). Many people have put their heart and soul into the place, expecting no reward in the process. In the past six months, when I first entered the building after being away for a few weeks, a warm feeling washed through me upon each visit. I kept asking others if they felt the same thing. Regardless, this is meaningless in relation to the Experience—but I now find it so fitting.
- I pulled a chair to the center of the room, and like any other time, I just started watching thoughts. Slowly, over the course of an hour(?), the watching became much more intense than anything I can remember. The pattern went like this: like always, my mind would start to drift on thoughts, and when I became aware of it, I pulled it back to the center. I kept trying to be aware without being immersed in the thoughts. It was not effortless—it was a fight that grew ever more intense, and it continued far longer than a normal “Paul” period of meditation.
- I was so disgusted with the awareness-watching-awareness game that I grew ever more determined to just keep fighting this time. I heard a large bee in the loft above me, and I watched my mind “go there,” but I pulled it back to center. Again and again, thoughts passed in front of me, and I worried that any one of them would break the rising tension. “My hands are numb. If I put them to my side, will it break the intensity?” (It didn’t). Fear passed through me, and like a distant observer, I heard my breath quicken and felt my pulse pound. But I was determined not to be afraid, and the fear subsided.
- I was so distant from the thoughts that it started to feel dreamy. I even asked myself if I could be asleep, but this was anything *but* sleep. I was vividly awake and aware of the thought-stream in front of me—and the strong desire to just watch without letting the thoughts go off in their own direction.
- I had thoughts of giving up, but I wasn’t satisfied. I started to silently repeat phrases that I read recently: “Stop looking and See” (Bart), “Relax into the looking” (Art), “Nothing of you shall remain” (Pulyan), “All that remains is All” (R). Several times, I silently said “Stop! Stop! Stop!” (meaning, do not allow the mind to wander or become distracted). At some point, I even asked for help.
 - Note: These words only mean something to me. I don’t know why I latched onto them, but they were vital to maintaining a focused awareness. Mind-death is a battle, and this time, I threw everything at it that I could muster.
- After an hour or so(?), I felt the palpable electricity near me...

In the days and months leading up to the Experience:

- The following excerpts from email messages best illustrate the precursory struggle and describe my state of mind—and my mind’s (false) attempts to know what it possibly couldn’t grasp at the time:

- *September 20, 2006. Email message to Bart Marshall.* “Spiritually, I ran out of pavement a long time ago. By that, I mean the road is gone but I’m relentlessly determined to understand the Awareness that watches Paul and his robotic motions each day. To put it into words seems to trivialize my yearning, but I am not satisfied with me. It took years to figure out intuition as it relates to logic, from the perspective of the Process Observer. Sometimes, an intuition tells me the reflection I witness might be me, but alas, I do not know because I have not experienced it. In the latest Forum, Anima’s comment resonated: ‘In the final mile...even the desire for finding the Self burns off. You continue your search for the sake of search. Ego is pretty much shriveled by this time and any desire for self-enhancement is gone completely.’ ”
- *February 27, 2007. Email message to Art Ticknor and Shawn Nevins.* “Ever since I saw the headless drawings pointing outward, away from the circle, I’ve been stewing over the implications (*Note: Shawn did a Harding exercise that involved sketching a self-portrait from the perspective of looking out our eyes, then asking the participants to turn their portraits around, facing ourselves*). It planted a seed that resonated even more when I reread your 12/31/06 email message last night, Art (for the 10th time). I went to bed, thinking about the drawings, and the need to look upon a reflection in order for ‘me’ to be there to see it. It somehow made perfect sense. Then I pointed to the wall and then back at me, and that finger was now paul looking at paul. Not really a separate paul, but an image (my finger) needed to be present for my awareness to know that it was there looking. Wait—can it be this simple? I am not only the ‘I’ behind my eyes; something needs to be out there too. The ‘out there’ needs to be present in order for paul to be self aware. But this can’t be true. Where or who am I if paul needs something to look upon? This is not the Answer, because it is my mind still trying to make sense of mind stuff.”
- *March 17, 2007. Email message to Bart Marshall.* *In a previous correspondence, Bart said “Paul and Bart are IN Awareness, they do not have little separate awarenesses.”* “Your comment struck me because I’ve never considered the possibility of being IN Awareness. I always imagined that Awareness was ‘behind me,’ shining through me like a light. And, as I mentioned in my last message, that light needed ‘me’ (the screen) to shine upon in order to ‘be.’ As Shawn said at the winter retreat last month, most seekers think they can muscle their way behind their Awareness and find the Absolute. Of course, of late, my previous perspective makes no sense at all—I cannot be both the light and the screen.”
- *April 24, 2007. Email message to Mike Casari.* “In early April, I saw—or was shown—that Awareness does not exist ‘behind’ me, only blackness. Thus, though I am still not certain of the source of my Awareness, I now struggle in the thin veneer between nothingness. These words haunt me every day because I do not See:
 - *And now I look upon the looker...Twice I see myself and then I see myself no more.* - Richard Rose
 - *The degree to which you do not exist cannot be overstated.* - Bart Marshall
 - *Let go and let God.* - Bart Marshall

- *Awareness is Self-aware.* - Art Ticknor
- *What you are is a play of light upon the still hand of eternity.* - Shawn Nevins”
- During the drive out to the farm (TAT retreat center) on May 12, I distinctly remember feeling more serious than ever, and the frustration and tension was mounting since the February workshop at Linsly.
- I entered what was supposed to be a four-day period of isolation in Bob Cergol’s cabin. I decided beforehand to steer clear of the heady directional-type reading material during isolation—I only brought poetry (Shawn’s writings from the Forum collection and R’s *Carillon*), *The Albigen Papers* (it contained the *Three Books of the Absolute*, which I read aloud the night before), printouts of descriptions of realizations (they have always inspired me, ever since reading *Cosmic Consciousness* in the late 1980’s), and a few recent email messages from Bart and Art.



In the hours and days after the Experience:

- In the first hour, I scribbled notes on a piece of scrap paper. A thought occurs, “Rose’s *Three Books of the Absolute* is a masterpiece, something I will *never* duplicate. I am not a poet. I’m still the same noncreative Paul.”
 - Note: To place this statement into perspective, I have never really resonated with *Three Books*. I now understand it better and think highly of R’s work, knowing that it can very well trigger an Experience for a seeker. But it still doesn’t stir a deep emotion in me, the thinker-logical type who learned how to develop his intuition only later in life.
- I looked forward to the evening hours in Bob’s cabin, where I can read how others described their Experiences. In the mean time, the mind is a potent doubt machine, and predictably, its doubt mechanisms kicked into high gear (doubts that Art placed into perspective the next day):
 - I no longer struggle to know which awareness is Me, but the mind says, “Sure, Paul, you’re satisfied that your ‘awarenesses’ dilemma has dissipated, but *you* haven’t changed one iota.”
 - Why didn’t I experience “everythingness” (R’s and Art’s description) or intense weeping? (Bart)
 - Why wasn’t it painful or agony? (Rose/Shawn) (Note: but my Experience was not pleasant—it just *was*).
 - Why was the head seemingly the center for the Nothingness that had no boundaries? (Bart said It came from the heart).
 - I have glimpsed the One Awareness, but I still don’t want to die. This was a temporary death of the mind; if that’s “where I go” after body-death, then there’s nothing to fear (Note: paradoxically, there *is* no “place” to go and nothing of me will go “there.” Later, Art repeated what I already knew in my heart: “As for not wanting to die, what we are couldn’t even if it wanted to.”).
- For two hours, I sat in a rocking chair on Bob’s cabin deck, just staring out at the surrounding woods, the birds, and the deer—something I could never do before.
- The next day, I visited Art, who listens and offers perspective, and helps me to grapple and understand. (Before going into isolation, Art helpfully threw

unanswerable questions—from the mind’s perspective—at me, thus adding to the tension.)

- We sat on Art’s porch, where we discussed a myriad of unconnected topics. We marveled at how many people over the past 34 years have worked to help other seekers in some small way. Per the Law of the Ladder, each may have gained something in some small way, but most of the group members worked and expected no reward. The true miracles in life are often small, and right under our noses. (I still believe—but cannot prove—that part of the formula for Seeing is to maintain a genuine interest in helping others, all the while expecting no reward).
- I see more humor in more things. The atmosphere is peaceful, and I have to pry myself out of the chair on Art’s porch. During the five-hour trip home in the car, I scribbled more notes while driving (ugh!), writing snippets in bits and pieces.
- The thought crosses my mind: “All that I witness in front of me and passing around me is flowing *from* me. How can I be the center?” The mind throws another curve ball at me: “Can each person be a point of Awareness that has no boundaries? Impossible!”
- I think: “This has no value to someone who doesn’t seek. I don’t know what creates the burning desire to See. Perhaps the satisfaction of Seeing is only created by the intense desire to See. In essence, seekers create their own dilemma, and the satisfaction comes in solving the Problem with finality, which ironically is the only problem worth solving.”
- Because it was a guiding beacon for me, I still believe that R’s description of the path in *Psychology of the Observer*—all contained in a few pages near the Jacob’s Ladder image—holds the true key in as few words as possible.
- The next day, I finally realized what R meant by creating tension on the path. As a seeker, we shouldn’t artificially go looking for tension by abandoning a job or our family, but instead create it by seeking for the sake of seeking. At some point on the path, we back ourselves into a corner (i.e., R’s reverse vector), where awareness struggles to become self-aware with immense frustration. For the male, it’s a battle that ends in finality when the One Awareness pushes aside the mind.
- What to tell others who search? You can’t simply believe what others say and expect to See (on the other hand, listening to others and working with fellow seekers provides invaluable inspiration and direction). You must believe in your own ability. And you must continue to take action without thinking that you’re “doing” anything. At some point, without you deciding, you will stop looking and See. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say the looking will be stopped for you.
- I have a desire to tell those who are only left with awareness watching awareness. You are *so close*—don’t give up!