

Pointer Series – Program 2 – No centre, no substance

Voice over

In this second program in the pointers series we examine Bob's pointer that there is no centre or substance to this entity you believe yourself to be. Also in the program, Douglas Harding guides you through an experiment that allows you to further examine the truth of this pointer.

Firstly, I ask Gilbert to explain what Bob means when says there is no centre or substance to this entity we believe ourselves to be as well as how he would suggest that we can go about seeing this.

Excerpt

GILBERT: The problem is that the mind has ideas and concepts about all this and what we're talking about is non-conceptual awareness. So if you have a look at where you're seeing from, where the knowing is taking place, it's absolutely obvious that there's nothing there, there's no substance, nothing with any independence whatsoever. For the mind, the problem is that it is so obvious, it can't label it, it can't think about it, it's non-conceptual. It's presence, it's not a concept. So have a look, see if you can find a self-centre.

Voice over

Let's listen to Bob on this pointer.

Excerpt

Q: I have this big thing of, 'Okay, now that I've left Bob's, what should I do with all this? And ????' said to someone, 'Just do nothing. Forget everything I have said. That is the best thing you can do because you are dragging it from the past.' And I'm just talking to myself here. I always try and you know... What...so you need to know what to use during the day when I am not in the presence of someone who's...

BOB: Again, ask yourself, 'Who's asking the question?' And that must be 'me'. And then you say, 'Well, that idiot up there the other night said there is no me. Is he right or is he wrong? I'll have a look.' In having a look and trying to find where this me you believe yourself to be is, see if you can find it.

Q: That is the only way, isn't it, to keep having a look?

BOB: Yes, until the firm conviction is there that there is no place that you can call the centre or a reference point here, nothing substantial or any independent nature that I can say, 'This is where I begin, this is what I really am.'

Q: 'Cause if you don't look, it is like taking your teaching on faith or something. You have got to look.

BOB: You have to see for yourself. Nobody can do it for you.

Excerpt

Q: The thoughts are catching on something, this sense of 'I'.

BOB: All right. What's this sense of 'I'? Have a look at that. If that's what is catching on, that is your problem.

Q: It is a point of view, yeah. It is just a point of view.

BOB: A point of view, a reference point.

Q: A reference point.

BOB: Now, has it got any substance, that reference point? Is it something you can really grasp? Can you grasp that reference point and say, 'This is it? This is where I am'?

Q: No!

BOB: See because we don't look at it, and when you really look at it and try to find some place you can grasp on, you can't find it, can you? But we've habitually believed it's been there, so it's seemingly very real, isn't it? – until it is questioned and looked at.

Q: Yes.

BOB: So that we've immediately jumped to that 'I'm thinking', you know and we just take it for granted without...

Q: And then see how the thoughts relate to the reference point.

BOB: Yes - the energy giving it the seeming reality.

Q: So, when there is a glimpse of something, when there's insight (for want of a better word) when something is seen, there's no 'I' seeing it. What is actually happening? There's just seeing.

BOB: Just seeing, yeah. You've got to question... see the only instrument we've got is the mind. So you use the mind to question the mind, utilise it, let it question it, see the falseness of itself, in the seeing of it and that is no problem Like Ramana Maharshi says, you have got a thorn in your hand, so you get another thorn off the tree, you dig the first thorn out, then you throw them both away.

Voice over

Many suggest that investigating implies the existence of an entity who is investigating and so they resist the suggestion of looking for a centre or any substance. Let's listen to what Bob has to say about this.

BOB: That awareness or natural state has been ignored. The constant focus has been in the 'me' of memory. But the innate nature was always there. It hasn't been cognised; it hasn't been re-cognised though it's always been there.

But in looking to see what is there, and when you ask who is looking, that comes about naturally also, there's no entity that's ever done anything, there never was an entity. The thing comes about where instead of just taking everything that you believed in to be true, now things are looked at and questioned and that comes up from the innate intelligence.

It comes up and is looked at and questioned because the pointers possibly resonate with you, they ring a bell or you hear them resonate. And recognise that this sounds true, this is something I already know innately, and you do, you re-cognise that you already know it, it's always and ????? there but it's been overlooked or ignored.

Voice over

Here are two more examples of the pointer.

Excerpt

Q: The feeling I get bound by is resentment.

BOB: Was which?

Q: Resentment. I can go all day, all week resenting somebody. Lately, I have been doing what you have talked about. I've been going, 'Okay, it appears that that is what is going on. It appears that that's what's happening. Was that my mind?' I have been examining it.

BOB: Just ask yourself, 'Who is resentful?' Ask yourself.

Q: Well, me. I am.

BOB: Naturally, that's the logical answer – 'me'. But then who is 'me'? Have a look for that. Now you can say, 'That idiot up there says the 'me' is only a thought or an image. Now can I find a 'me' there?' Go into it yourself with your mind, looking at your mind and see if you can find some spot. Or that thought 'me', see what it is. Has it got any substance, that thought? Is it independent? Has it got any spot where it's residing?

Q: Yeah, it's one of the emotions that I forget to do that with.

Excerpt

So when you see that what we are referring to, the reference point, the 'me' or the self-centre that we are referring to is an invalid reference point, because it is based on past memory, past events and experiences and conditioning. It has no substance or independent nature. It can't stand on its own, that reference point. When that's looked at and seen that there's nothing there with any independent nature, well, the thoughts and that or whatever comes just goes through. You let go what needs to be let go, you know. Not that you do it, but it happens that way. Nowhere for it to take hold! So if somebody calls you a nasty name, where before it'd hit this image and the image doesn't like being called that, and so the anger, the resentment, and the guilt or shame or whatever would come with it, now it's... you know what it's referring – is just an image that has no substance or independent nature, it goes right through.

From that point you understand that there is no centre here, with investigation, you must also understand that there is no centre there, anywhere else. From there, who can be superior to you? Or who can be inferior to you? So you see it is all part of the functioning.

Voice over

Another way to examine if there is a centre or any substance to this entity you believe yourself to be is to look and see where thoughts are located or from where they appear.

Excerpt

Q: I'm still struggling with the idea, yeah okay, questioning as a way into this oneness, questioning my beliefs because I am quite happy, as you say, I feel quite in tune with the idea that we trick ourselves with thought and get swallowed up in it or think that it is 'me' making decisions. But how do I get beyond that? I can't stop thinking. I can question what I'm thinking, if I'm aware enough to do it or strong enough or not in the pit of despair and thinking that I can't do anything.

BOB: Yes. All right. Well, you're thinking right now?

Q: Yes

BOB: What's that that thinking is appearing on?

Q: What is it appearing on? In my mind. I suppose, what I call my mind is where it appears. In my head.

BOB: Does it appear in your head or your mind? Have you had a look? Question that and have a look. See if you...

Q: Where does my thought appear? Sort of um...Thoughts, thoughts go on in my head.

BOB: Now we say, what we mean by questioning, just don't take a guess at it, you know. Whereabouts in your head? Can you pin-point it, exactly?

Q: No. it sort of floats around!

BOB: So you see. You take it for granted it is in your head but when you go to pin-point it...Now you're aware of thought taking place.

Q: I'm aware of thought, yes.

BOB: Right. So what is it that's aware of thought?

Q: I'm aware of thought. What's aware of those thoughts? Well, "I, 'me', but then the next question is...

BOB: Well 'I'. 'me', that's a thought.

Q: *Yeah.*

BOB: Now before that, before you said that, you're aware.

Q: Yeah... I'm aware of other things besides thought, I suppose.

BOB: Yeah.

Q: But I'm not aware unless I think about them.

BOB: If you're not thinking do you fall apart?

Q: *No.*

BOB: Why?

Q: It's not my thoughts holding me together.

BOB: Right. So, if it's not your thoughts holding you together, it means that there is something there prior to thought.

Excerpt

BOB: Well, the brain is just like the transistors in the radio. That life-force or energy is jumping from one spark to another and forms a pattern, an image or a thought. But you see, as you say, you think it occurs in here. But go back to what I told you a little while ago; cognising emptiness. Realising it's a cognising right now, everything is being registered, then have a look and see where you're cognising from. It is empty. It is clear and empty there. Try and take that back. It is clear and empty. There is not even a concept of a brain or anything else, or even a head! Then take it out and see that everything is reflected in that emptiness; being cognised in that emptiness, like everything is reflected in the mirror. You've been told and conditioned and believe and probably dissect it and have a look and see that everything comes from the brain and all the rest of it but like Douglas Harding always says: on present evidence, what you're actually seeing, can you see anything here except clarity and emptiness? There's no thoughts there. But can you see...there's not even the head there when you look at it closely, not even two eyes, on present evidence - what you're actually seeing - just space. If you go and try and look from that to see whether the thought is coming from a brain, I can't think or grasp it.

Voice Over

In this next clip, Douglas Harding guides you through an experiment so that you can investigate this space-like awareness that you are. He asks you to point at various things and when he demonstrates this, the pointing hand is about a hand span away from the eyes at about chin level or above so that the hand, the pointing finger and the thing being pointed at can all be seen. At one stage he asks you to point at him pointing at you. If you have a partner with whom to do this experiment, you can point at your partner sitting opposite you. If you are doing the experiment on your own, you can point at an object in the room.

Excerpt – Douglas Harding

Pointing, we have a very good instrument here for bringing us home to the place we never left. You know mums and dads, I expect in Australia as in England, told us it was rude to point at people. Did your mum tell that, 'It's very rude, very rude, you embarrass people by pointing at them.' Well there's one place where the inhabitant loves being pointed at - who you really, really, really, are loves being pointed at. Absolutely adores it. And we are going to point at who we really, really, really are and see what we are pointing at. And this is the most neglected place in the whole universe. I think this place we are going to point at is more neglected than the moons around Venus, the black holes in the galaxies. And we are going to point to that. But let us begin by pointing at something else.

And if you would kindly, in doing this experiment, don't look at Douglas pointing. Look at your finger and what your finger is pointing at. So, would you kindly point to the ceiling? And you will see that your finger is pointing at something. And now bring your finger down and point at the wall. And you will find that your finger is pointing at something again, at a wall. So finger, space, wall. Now bring your finger down further and I have to ask you do this, will you point a Douglas and I will point at you?

Now you are pointing at a thing here called Douglas, and there is finger, Douglas. Now bring your finger down and point if you can, at the floor just down at your feet. So you have your finger, and space and the floor. Now point to what you can see of your legs which may not be very much, your lap perhaps. So you've got finger and you've got space, and you've got a lap. Thing, space, thing. Now point to your tummy. Finger, space, tummy. Don't look at me, look at your finger, at what it's pointing at, which is your tummy. Now bring your finger up and point to your chest. Still it is pointing at something. Now bring your finger further up and point

to what's above your chest. What is your finger pointing at now? Point at what you are looking out of now. What is your finger pointing at? You're the authority. I think you have never pointed at this place. You have never, most of us have never, never, never pointed at this place. It is extraordinary that we never pointed at this place. Is it not pointing at space for the world to happen in? Is it not pointing at this vast window without a frame and the view out of the window full of all those people in the room and so on? But please, before you put your finger down, have a really good point at what lies at the centre of your world. You can bring your finger down now. Isn't this the most neglected place in the whole universe and isn't it essential to get that right and be our own authority at where we are coming from, at who we really, really, really are? And I suggest that you are infinite space. Imperishable transparency! Infinite space for all those perishable things to come and go in. And that you are exactly the opposite of what you look like to me. You look solid, I think you will see that you are transparent. You look two eyed and I think you will have seen you are single eyed. You look small, very, very tiny, and I think you will see you have no boundaries. I think that in every respect you are the opposite of what you have been told. And when you took everybody's word for what you were like but your own word, you had got everything, as I had, upside down and you had rejected, along with me, a world full of blessing in which love has a chance, where we are built for loving and built not for dieing but for being who we really, really are through all eternity.

Voice Over

Let's hear what Bob has to say about what is found and realised on investigation.

Excerpt

Another thing they use is 'cognising emptiness'. Now, the cognising is constantly happening. That is the pure intelligence cognising everything. Everything is registering. Isn't it? Just as it is. So, cognising emptiness. Now how would you take that? 'Oh, I'm seeing emptiness. Now I'm starting to notice emptiness.' Don't you see, what they're saying is that cognising is emptiness itself? It is the emptiness that is doing the cognising. It is the emptiness that is the pure intelligence-energy. And realise that, when you look at that and see, that cognising emptiness...because the very first thing you see in here, when you really look at it, there's no head there as such, there is just the emptiness. Everything is being seen from that. So, cognising emptiness, you look back in that and you see there isn't anything that is a seer or a thinker or a choice-maker. It is all emptiness and these things are displaying on it - this body, the sides of the head you can see, the front of the body – all these things are like the reflections in the mirror. The nature of the mirror is to reflect. It is just clear and empty. But it is reflecting whatever comes near it. The things in the mirror don't contaminate or touch the mirror either.

Now seeing that and realising that, that you are the emptiness itself, the no-thing-ness and you see that everything appears and disappears in that space-like awareness or emptiness. Emptiness doesn't mean it is a vacuum or a void. It is cognising emptiness, it's the pure intelligence, the same intelligence that functions this universe.

Excerpt

Where is it all taking place on? And what is that that is taking place on that I already am? Does it have any substance or does it have any independent nature? Can it be fixated on, can it be pointed to? Well I looked for years and years and years. I can't find anything I can fixate on or point to though it was firmly believed in that there was an entity here. Now there is no way in the world anybody could convince me that there is an entity here. It's like we use the blue sea – when you see through... you see that you will never get a bucket of blue water out of the sea, it does not stop the sea from appearing to be blue and we can go around and admire the appearance, how blue it looks and how lovely it looks, '???? blue water, sparkling

water' but it's never ever been blue. It's simply that. Seeing that this entity we believe ourselves to be might appear as this, that or the other, it's just an appearance in that which I am.

And they call it - many metaphors for it - but they call it is, one of the things in Buddhism, they call it emptiness. Space-like awareness. They liken it unto space. Use that metaphor. But emptiness, so if, as I say, I can't find a centre here anywhere at all with any substance or any independent nature and the seeing is happening, the hearing is happening, these words are coming out, where can they be coming from if they are not coming from a centre, they're not coming from this pattern or this appearance? It must be coming from that emptiness itself. So it is emptiness with the capacity of cognising or knowing that is speaking, that is hearing, that is tasting, touching, smelling. Wouldn't it be the same there?

Excerpt

Another way they call it is emptiness, emptiness with a capacity of knowing, an emptiness that is suffused with intelligence. That knowing is a pure intelligence. Or cognising emptiness. It's not that we are cognising emptiness, it is because if I can't find a centre in this body, and I can't, that I can call me, I can't find a centre in this mind that I can call me, yet basically I am still seeing, still hearing, these words are still coming out, the activities, the livingness is going on, but I can not attribute it to a centre with any substance or independent nature. Can you? If you can, question that centre, have a look and see if it is real. And we tell you this, the false cannot stand up to an investigation. It will fall apart if you look closely.

Voice Over

Some apparent entities see this once and that is all that is needed, but for others this needs to be seen again and again, until, as Bob said earlier;

'...firm conviction is there that there is no place that you can call the centre or a reference point here, nothing substantial or any independent nature that I can say, 'This is where I begin, this is what I really am.'