

BESHARA

ISSUE 1

SPRING 1987

BULENT RAUF

To Suggest a Vernacular . . .

RUPERT SHELDRAKE

The Presence of the Past.

DOM SYLVESTER HOUEDARD

The Question about Questions.

RICHARD TWINCH

Memory and the Brain.

BESHARA

The Magazine of the Beshara Trust

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EDITORIAL

This magazine has grown out of the Beshara News Bulletin, which has been circulated for several years now to those associated with The Beshara Trust. The expansion into magazine format has been prompted by the degree of interest shown in recent issues, which have included articles by a number of distinguished speakers. and by the fact that within the UK the forum for intelligent and informed discussion on matters which concern a spiritual perspective is virtually confined to publications pressing a particular point of view.

Beshara is not associated with any particular political, social or religious group or stance. Rather, it is the name of a spiritual emergence, and an inclination towards a truly universal perspective, that lies behind so many movements in the world today. Beshara is no-one's exclusive domain, but its reality carries its own order; like "the yeast in the dough" it is discernible within all movements that aspire to a holistic understanding.

The scope of the magazine is therefore wide. Movements within science have been already been discussed in previous issues of the News Bulletin and will continue to be a major area of coverage. In this issue we also look at movements within the major religions and the World Life Fund's initiative towards a global perspective on conservation. Future issues will be considering economics, psychology, art, education, literature and many other areas. Central, always, will be the theme of the real place of conscious man in a reality understood to be one and unique.

The Greek word **Krites**, from which our word 'critic' derives, means 'judge', but it also includes the meaning of 'he who chooses the best'. This is the meaning which Beshara adopts in commenting upon current events and reviewing recent works. The other face of the work of such a critic is that drawing out the best is equally being drawn towards the best. It is in the hope that this will be the case for our readers as well as for our contributors that this new venture is launched.

Jane Clark

BESHARA

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News and Views

First European Monastic Exchange between Buddhist and Benedictine Monks of Tibet and Britain

A Conference on The Light of Enlightenment and Monastic Life according to the Two Traditions

Adam Dupré reports:

This one-day conference, held on Saturday 14th July in the Benedictine monastery of Ealing, represented the first step in public of a developing exchange between the monastic traditions of Tibet and Western Christianity. Each approached the conference, and the underlying current of exchange that it represents, with the aim of learning from each other and of proferring each to each the fruits of their respective wisdoms.

The motivation that found expression in Ealing on St. Valentine's Day came from the Pope and the Dalai Lama, each of whom has instructed their monks to seek dialogue and understanding with the monks of other traditions. Yet further, the conference was part of the preparation for the welcome of two Tibetan monks of very high rank, who are due to come to Britain soon on an extended visit which includes a series of stays at 12 Benedictine monasteries throughout Britain and Ireland. These are the Panchen Yudol Lama and the Venerable Thupten Tashi. Two Benedictine monks are expected to visit India for a similar programme next year.

This was very much, and explicitly, a monastic dialogue and consciously restricted its concerns to a movement towards mutual understanding of the spirituality and lives of the two ostensibly radically different traditions. However, I think that one could venture to suggest that the central concern was with monasticism as the expression of a giving oneself up to Truth,

rather than as a form of religious practice. Hence the events at Ealing have significance not only for those who explicitly follow a monastic rule, but also for all those whose inner conformity is to truth. This was reflected in the fact that the conference was open to the public and over 100 'lay' people were present.

Since the first step in any dialogue is the establishment of a common ground of understanding, it seems appropriate to begin this consideration of an historic event by referring to the remarks of dom Sylvester Houédard, a monk of Prinknash Abbey and one of the main figures behind the building up of this particular dialogue.

Dom Sylvester pointed to three points on which there is accord between the two traditions: both agree on the absolute indefinability and unknowability of the 'Aseitas' or Essence; both admit no third element in man beyond 'mind' and 'body' (though one should be careful to understand that these two terms, although related to their commonly understood meanings, actually have implications far beyond this): and for each, Being is not relative in itself. God is not a Being, but Being itself, and what belongs to the relativity (which is empty – *sunya* for the Buddhists – of inherent existence) is only becoming.

With both traditions being so firmly founded on reason (as the necessary starting point of the Way) it is not surprising to find that it should be suggested that

their meeting point might be through the works of Thomas Aquinas in particular and the Scholastic tradition of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in general.

The morning session of the conference was given to two talks on the monastic spirituality of the two traditions. The Venerable Ato Rimpoche from Cambridge spoke on **The Six Paramitas** (Qualities) which are necessary to the Way. These he summarised as: generosity, moral conduct, compassion, strength, concentration in meditation and wisdom in knowledge.

In discussing each of these in turn, he pointed always to the inner reality and attitude, rather than to outward conformity to rules. In discussing generosity, for instance, he emphasised that what is required is generosity of spirit, which is based on knowledge of what is required, so involving *hearing*. He pointed out that motive is crucial; a small act of generosity performed with the right (selfless) motive is of great value, whereas a large act, done with the wrong motive, can not only harm the giver but also affect the result of the action. On moral conduct, which for a monk is bound up with the vows that he takes, he spoke of the need for complete honesty with oneself, and most essentially, of the need to have always 'a good heart'.

Dom Adhelm Cameron-Brown, Abbot of Prinknash, spoke on **The Deifying Light**. He began by saying that although we speak of God, we do Him a disservice even to name Him, since He is nameless, beyond all concepts, images, words and knowledge. Only He knows Himself as He is. We can know *that* He is, but not *what* He is, unless He shows us and we can only know Him as He reveals Himself, as in Christ.

Going on to the primordially of light – which in Genesis appears before the relative sources such as the sun and the moon – dom Adhelm spoke of the Deifying Light, which is mentioned in many scriptures and indeed, in the Rule of St. Benedict, as that through which ‘Divinisation’ ie. the radical transformation of our being through the Glory of God, is possible. Because eternity has no beginning and no end, such ‘sharing’ in the light of the Divine can happen here in this life and not only after death.

On the particular contribution which contact with the East has brought the Western traditions, he mentioned the true meaning of detachment. In the past, it has generally been understood in the West as equivalent to despising – the world, for example. Since dialogue began, it has been seen to mean not turning one’s back on the world but not grasping it either. Then the creation can be seen as nothing but the images of God, through which He manifests Himself.

Dom Adhelm finished by touching on a theme which was echoed by all speakers – that of love, by which he means the selfless, non-possessive love equivalent to the Compassion of the Buddha. Even love of God is not enough, since it can be a form of self-love, but love must be completely selfless, raised in humility. All speakers emphasised that the monastic life, although it may appear cloistered and enclosed, is a life lived entirely for others – for ‘all sentient beings’ as Ato Rimpoche put it.

In the afternoon, there was a talk on the historic development of the Benedictine tradition by dom David Highams of Farnham Abbey, and an elucidation of the disciplines of life in a Tibetan monastery, by the Venerable Geshe Konchong of the Manjushri Institute in Cumbria, followed by a film on the three great monasteries of Tibet before the Chinese invasion of 1959 – Ganden, Drepung and Sera.

Religion and Conservation

John Hill reports on the events at Assisi in Autumn 1986 organised by the World Wildlife Fund

In autumn last year, a unique and extraordinary event was held at Assisi, the place of St. Francis. Here, at the invitation of the World Wildlife Fund, the five world religions met in the Basilica of St. Francis for a joint celebration. This unprecedented occasion was intended as a dialogue between Conservation and Religion in which representatives from Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism expressed their visions of man, nature and God in order to offer a spiritual basis for conservation and to effectively communicate the message of conservation to their faithful.

That the meeting was arranged by such a body as the World Wildlife Fund is itself interesting, for it marks both the beginnings of a great change in the perspective of many conservationists as well as an unusual degree of communality among the world faiths. The WWF represents the establishment in conservation and the events at Assisi (there was also a pilgrimage centring on Assisi and a conference of religious, political and business leaders) marked their 25th Anniversary. The quarter century since Peter Scott and others set up the WWF to raise funds to secure the survival of endangered species has seen a natural and intelligent development of emphasis from the protection of a single species to the protection of the environment in which endangered species live, to the focus on education and environmental awareness on a global scale. That this development should lead to an understanding of the need for a spiritual base is equally natural and timely. During the Interfaith Ceremony, this refinement of focus was made most explicit by HRH Prince Philip (The International President of the



Woodblocks by Gibbings

WWF), who said, in his opening and closing remarks *“The time has now come for us to look to the future, but before we can go forward, we must, each in our own way, make an effort to understand the purpose of life and to rediscover what the prophets and visionaries had to say about the Creation and about our relationships with the world about us”*

and *“Those who are already engaged in the business of the conservation of nature appreciate the immensity of the practical problems, but recognise that we must also have the vision and the motive force that can come only from spiritual sources”.*

It can be no coincidence that such clear statements of the need for a spiritual vision come at this time, when there is beginning a global impulse towards a real perspective. And perhaps not surprising that they should be made in the context of conservation, for, no doubt, those involved in such an area are already to

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▷ some degree selfless in their approach and have some taste for beauty, some love of order and life, and are involved in conservation first of all because of a movement of the heart, however much this may be couched in the terms of environmentalism. Thus, an impulse towards the spiritual – ie. towards an education of the heart – is a natural step.

It is, though, a step to be taken with strength, for what is required is a completely new vision, the elevating and all encompassing nature of which was expressed beautifully by Dr Karan Singh, who gave the Hindu Celebration at the ceremony in the Basilica at Assisi, and in the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, whom he quotes.

This universal and unifying vision of the singleness of life, of nature, which is seen to be identified with the Divine Nature which permeates all forms, is far from being mere utopian idealism, but rather, the open-eyed vision of the true state of affairs. As such, it is intensely practical, for it is inevitable that those for whom “*a profound reverence for life permeates (their) consciousness*” and for whom “*the divine power is seen in front and behind, to the right and to the left, above and below*” should display, in accord with an established certainty in their hearts, a balanced and discriminating compassion towards man and nature – not only those that are threatened with extinction and change but for the whole of “this magnificent universe”, including ourselves.

As Dr. Karan Singh points out “with this our life would undergo a fundamental transformation”. It is clear that such certainty of vision cannot just come from the expansion of either a conservationist or a dogmatic religious perspective, but only from total humility and openness of heart to a single, universal and all-

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The Hindu Celebration

An extract from the celebration given by Dr. Karan Singh at the Religion and Nature Interfaith Ceremony held at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, 29th September 1986.

Heaven of Freedom by Rabindranath Tagore

**Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee to ever-widening thought and action –
Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake.**

THIS FAMOUS POEM of the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore postulates a state of inner freedom in which the human mind can develop its full potential without being distorted and constricted by rigid formulations. It beautifully expresses the Hindu concept that freedom, in the ultimate analysis, is an inner state of mind. Certainly, outer factors play a major role in creating such a state. From the conservationist point of view, the ideal situation would be one in which a profound reverence for life pervades our consciousness, manifesting itself in a deep compassion for all living creatures. Indeed, the elements – the earth, the sun and the moon, the mountains and forests, the air and the water – would all be looked upon as manifestations of divine grace.

THE BASIC CONCEPT of Hinduism is that the divine is both immanent and transcendent; it follows that the ideal human condition would be one in which all human beings are imbued with this awareness. In that happy situation, not only would man's rapacious exploitation of Mother Earth and all its treasures give way to a creative symbiosis between man and nature, it would also put a stop to the terrible conflicts within mankind which have disfigured this earth ever since the dawn of history. Deeply aware that all creatures represent varying degrees of manifestation of the same divine power, the conflicts and turmoils which we have witnessed so far would disappear, and in their place would emerge a great spiritual commonwealth of mankind.

THE IDEAL STATE, according to the Upanishads, is one in which the power of the divine is seen in front and behind, to the left and to the right, above and below, and in which this entire magnificent universe pulsates with divine power. If this is achieved, then our life would undergo a fundamental transformation.....

IT IS IN SUCH a situation alone that what Rabindranath Tagore calls the “Heaven of Freedom” can be brought down upon earth, or, to put it the other way earth itself transformed into heaven.

A Consideration Since Assisi

A comment on the Assisi Events by Bulent Rauf

That which is already not cannot become that which it is. Is there no development, then, no metamorphosis?

Development is the becoming. One must remember, though, that this is not a process but a realisation. It is when one has realised in oneself, no matter what that self may be, that one is that which it is — then the self has realised its development and its becoming. If the self yearns for completeness then it will realise itself in completeness when it becomes the complete self. If, on the other hand, it is satisfied with an aspect of completeness then it will realise itself only to that extent and will not go further. This is in case it has the desire to go further. The potential exists in every self; the choice is 'personal', individual, sometimes flawed by or encumbered by a lack, a deficient receptivity due to one thing or another of its own choice and/or making, but never essentially.

However, it remains that Nature is the expansion of the breath of the Most Compassionate; therefore it englobes all possibilities inherent in the Essential. To remain in the choice of aspects of this total Compassionate Nature — like interest in Geology, in Wildlife,

in childcare, in RSPCA work, in Forestry or Fisheries, etc. — is useful in bringing one to the recognition of the Total Essence through particularised media. When the self is fully tuned and is in harmony and has complete knowledge of the Essential factor which permeates Nature, it is impossible for that self to disregard any particularised sector and refrain from putting all its efforts and ability and tact to the service of that which is no other than the closest kin of its own Spirit. Because that self will be constantly aware that that self is a particularisation of the One Universal Self imbued with the Breath which at the same time permeates, and is inherent in, Total Nature of Compassion in the unlimited expanse of, not only this world, but also all the universes.

A self which re-integrates the One and Only Self must perforce be conscious and aware constantly of this integrity, knowing full well that the service of the universes is the service of the Spirit.

Such a man is rare, one might think. But the development of anyone to this degree of consciousness is within at once one's potential and power. Only choice interferes and the fact that the self

has choice is its guard-light to its closeness and intimacy to and with The Spirit.

The choice is a matter of taste. Good taste is learned, therefore given to one freely to allow the essential development through the potential of the Self. 'Given' is what is 'learned'. One can only learn what is given, but being given is dependent upon desire to receive for its effect — *potentia oboedientiales*. The resultant 'learning' is a realisation which comes in some linear time after the lesson is learned. This is the usual procedure. A more direct procedure is to submit to a system of receptivity, for instance like in those schools of esoteric education open to all those who wish to imbibe therein, like Beshara — which word in itself is a promise, because joy is a resultant and perfect if it is the consequence of good taste. In a very remarkable and delightful exposé by Dr. Karan Singh which starts with the genius of Rabindranath Tagore, this is aptly put but we believe that this ideal situation should not be considered a prerequisite for the conservationist. Rather, the conservationist should naturally be in this ideal state if he acquired the necessary learning and taste. However, again, this depends on the individual decision and desire to undergo willingly the servitude of Love and Beauty. This is what Beshara serves. This is what Beshara strives for.

▷ Religion and Conservation

embracing Truth. Nor can its final purpose be to produce a spiritualised conservationist or a conservation-minded follower of religion. Rather, it is its own purpose, whose aim is God, not man nor animal nor ecosystem. For each person, it is a matter of their own volition and in the light of this vision the nurturing and refinement of the original intentions — the love of life and order and the taste for beauty.

The understanding that this is not only a possibility but a necessity for all peoples at this time is most certainly a message of hope. While a syncretic fusion of the religious and the conservationist will not in itself produce a universal vision, their meeting at Assisi was a focal point of great significance which may not have been evident to all those taking part. For this meeting took place under the auspices and invitation of St. Francis, whose life was one of the

greatest and purest saintliness. Both the religious and the conservationist may take St. Francis for their model but his true position is simply and singly as an 'intimate of God'.



The Basis of a Universal Religion

Stephen Hirtenstein comments on an article in The Guardian

For some time now, *The Guardian* has been running a series called 'Face to Faith' which appears on Mondays. This series is an open forum for people from different backgrounds and traditions to state a view on the present state of religion in the West and some interesting ideas have been aired.

On 19th January 1987 the Reverend John MacDonald Smith approached the possibility of establishing a universal religion. He asserted that "the creation of a universal religion would start by setting out as precisely as possible exactly what most world religions commit their adherents to. The basic belief of nearly every one of them is that the entire universe, is utterly dependent in every aspect of its being upon the unique, all-knowing, purposive, beneficent force which all men call God". He goes on to liken this 'basic belief' to the basic axioms of logic and mathematics, where neither the axiom nor its derived conclusion have any real reality, but are simply convenient tools. "Thus", he claims, "the 'necessity' of God which in traditional metaphysics is ontological (God is pure Being, etc.) is, on this view, purely logical" and "there is no real

need to insist on a heavenly realm in which God has reality".

In response to this, Stephen Hirtenstein wrote:

For countless centuries men have dreamed of establishing a universal religion and countless bloody wars have been waged in the name of a particular belief system professing itself as the 'true' and hence universal way. We now live in an age when it seems that the order of logic, as expressed mathematically, is the key to all problems. Rev. MacDonald Smith states that "there is no means of verifying" the essential dependence of the universe upon God and therefore we should resort to using God as a concept to develop our understanding of events in reality.

However, any concept (however refined) which we may use to denote a reality behind all forms is of necessity limited and conditioned, whereas that of which it is a concept, namely God, is unlimited and unconditioned. At the heart of every religious system is the same fundamental premise – the Unity of Being beyond all condition, not as a concept but as that sky within which the clouds of thought appear. Man alone has the capacity to 'rise' beyond his particular nature and the

constricted beliefs imposed upon reality to the vision of Truth as It is 'in fact', since he is no other than It. To verify this vision is to subscribe to the creed of love which is passionately expounded by mystics of all traditions and the prophets in whose way they follow. This comes from living experience of the Divine, not simply from an intellectual standpoint which by its very nature cannot comprehend the incomprehensible.

The creation of a new universal religion, albeit on a global scale, will still remain a matter of belief unless people can penetrate beyond the dichotomy of believer and believed, of seer and seen. A universal faith upon which everybody globally agreed would otherwise degenerate into a particular form of propaganda like '1984'. Surely a truly universal perspective starts in the act of self-knowledge, founded upon reason, and can only come about through verifying the reality of things for and in oneself; this does not deny the validity of belief, be it scientific or religious, for 'the colour of the water is the colour of the receptacle'. To reach such a viewpoint is the pressing need of our times, and demands an education unbounded by any fixed dogma which subscribes not only to a rational Unity but to the essential Unity beyond our grasp – but which nevertheless grasps us.

QUOTES

"I rather feel that deep in the soul of mankind there is a reflection, as on the surface of a mirror-calm lake, of the beauty and harmony of the universe. But so often that reflection is obscured and ruffled by unaccountable storms.

So much depends, I think, on how each one of us is introduced and made aware of that reflection within us.

So I believe we have a duty to our children to try and develop this

awareness, for it seems to me that it is only through the development of an inner peace in the individual and the outer manifestation of that reflection that we can ever hope to attain the kind of peace in this world for which we yearn.

We must strive, if we can, to make living into an art itself, though it will always remain a tremendous struggle"

HRH Prince of Wales in a speech to Canadian lumberjacks in May 1986.

"if one is genuine in denouncing obscurantism and in demanding the unconditioned, either one already adores God or else one has not far to go to reach him"

Bernard Lonergan, Jesuit & philosopher

"All of these (scientific) endeavours are based on the belief that existence should have a completely harmonious structure. Today we have less ground than ever before for allowing ourselves to be forced away from this wonderful belief."

Albert Einstein, Physicist

Education at the Beshara Schools

An Introduction by Cecilia Twinch

This talk was given to the Institute of Careers Officers, East Anglian Branch, in Ipswich on November 3rd 1986. The Beshara Trust was invited to give this talk following the 1986 Scottish Careers and Education Exhibition in Glasgow, where the Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education, based at Chisholme House, had a stand.

I hope to show that the Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education has not so much to do with alternative life-styles but with the development of a universal perspective which is fundamental to all expressions, and, in that sense, is very definitely 'mainstream'.

As a teacher, I often see young people nearing school-leaving age who, to understate the situation, are unwilling to do their best at their school-work. "What's the point", they say, "I'll never get a job anyway." This aimlessness, this "what's the point?", is not something airy-fairy, removed from everyday life. Seeing the value and reason behind what we do is at the basis of all our actions, every moment of every day. It is of great concern to young people about to leave school, who see no worthwhile future for themselves, and it is of great concern to those whose job it is to inform and advise them.

Motivation is one of the key words in both education and work. The person who is highly motivated is the natural survivor in all situations because he (or she) does not see himself as a victim of the conditions within which he finds himself, oppressed by outside influences, but rather, sees the conditions as challenges and opportunities to be overcome and entered into by inner application. It is a fundamental difference in attitude. But motivation needs to be properly directed if it is not to be an entirely selfish expression of the egotistical desires of the personality. Proper direction can only come from knowledge – knowledge of the self, the real self, of reality as it is, rather than a limited view of it. Then motivation is directed by an awareness of the underlying oneness of all existence, the proper place of man within a universal context and the correct relationship of the individual to reality. Then a person's behaviour, actions and attitudes are at all times in keeping with the dignity of his true position.

An understanding of what Beshara is does require one to have less stereo-typed ideas,

and it does require one to widen one's horizons to the limits, and indeed, beyond. Beshara is concerned with the Unity, or Oneness, of Existence, which is the premise of all esoteric (or inner) knowledge. The School offers people the opportunity to come to an understanding of what the Unity of Existence means, not just as an intellectual idea but as a direct experience. Beshara is not a religion or a sect; people from all sorts of backgrounds, religions, cultures, classes and ages have benefitted. But it does require a shift in one's entrenched patterns of thought; it promotes a spiritual orientation towards life which becomes meaningful in its expression in the outer world. It is only through an understanding of his relationship to Reality, Truth, God, that a person can come to a real understanding of his relationship to anything – to the universe, to the environment, to the society in which he lives – and so find a sense of purpose in fulfilling his responsibilities in knowledge and awareness.

At this stage of world history people are less willing to depend on outside authorities. They want to know for themselves. People need to be prepared for a new level of understanding in this shifting world, relying on their own inner certainty as an anchor, not on any temporary external structures or edifices of imposed belief. All aspects of modern life, from the most material such as world money markets to the more academic sciences, such as physics with its universal field theories, now acknowledge the interdependence and interrelationship of one country to another, one atom to another, of one planet to another; the truth of Einstein's theory of Relativity, in which things are related to each other *ad infinitum* has become generally accepted; the sort of questions scientists are asking have changed and scientific materialism is being replaced by discoveries which point more and more to a unique, cohesive force underlying the physical world. The

▷ language with which this is talked about is particular to each discipline but it all points towards one, universal, unified consciousness expressed in a myriad of diverse forms, where the intricate complexity and stark simplicity of Beauty is simultaneously displayed.

Moreover, global crises of pollution, terrorism, food and oil shortages make it evident to everyone that, whilst not refraining from action within one's own sphere, it is necessary to take into account a global point of view – or, indeed, a universal one, as every ripple of action has repercussions throughout the whole universe. In this situation, our present fragmentary forms of thought have to be given up and we need a flexibility of approach and constant re-assessment where, as in any learning process, structures perceived to be 'inner' and structures perceived to be 'outer' have a continual modifying effect upon each other.

Beshara is the good news that there is One Absolute Reality which is more universal and all-encompassing than the individual ego, although it includes it. The individual consciousness cannot of itself encompass this degree but needs to be raised to the level of that essential reality in order for truth to be revealed without condition. It is only by being of service to this oneness that we can be of service to others – otherwise we are acting according to our own limited notion of what is required and it is impossible for us to be aware of all the factors and influences which are in conjunction at any particular instant. For this reason, it is necessary to divest oneself of the limited concepts and abandon oneself to the absolute reality which is the source of all knowledge. To do this does not require the giving up of anything except one's ignorance and one's fixed ideas about one's self, and a will-

ingness to re-evaluate the concept of who and what we are in the light of a spiritual perspective which goes beyond the individual and reaches towards the perfection of man (ie. the genus man which is beyond gender). Spiritual does not mean "other worldly": it is the reality of this world when freed from the blinkered vision of selfhood.

These are matters of great weight which cannot be conveyed in a short talk. The Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education was established to help those who question the nature and purpose of their existence. There are weekend and ten day introductory courses which can give a taste of what is involved, and there are six month intensive courses which have a carefully structured programme of group study and discussion, personal training, meditation and work of a practical nature; in the latter, students can put into practice what they study by being of service, whilst at the same time learning skills such as cooking, gardening, care of livestock, buildings, etc.

The residential courses have helped many previously unemployed people to develop motivation to find or create work, and it is this which so impressed the local DHSS in Scotland. The sort of careers taken up by ex-students are extremely varied, from gilding to systems analysis, from shipping credit reporting to printing and pottery. It is not so much the kind of work which is important (although there are obviously some things which an individual may find unethical) as the quality with which the work is carried out. Esoteric or inner understanding is thus expressed in an exoteric or outer way, in all walks of life and in whatever ways are appropriate to the time in which we live. It is not confined to a chosen few as an 'alternative' way but is offered to all people as a basis for living. ▲

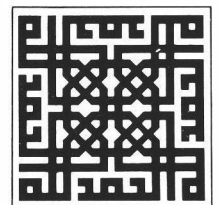
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To Suggest a Vernacular...

by Bulent Rauf

In an old article which appeared some time ago under the heading of "Opinions" entitled **Quarks, Quasars and The Meaning of Life** by Paul Davies, it is quoted, presumably from Professor Davies; *"This theme of simplicity, wholeness and beauty – revealed through mathematical formulae or delicate experimentation – recurs again and again as nature's mysteries and subtleties are explored"*.

If you leave out that which is between the two dashes, what Professor Davies marvels at has been expounded upon in exactly the same tone as the quote above and in much greater detail and depth seven to eight centuries ago – not to go any further back in time – by the one who is known as the greatest of all teachers, Doctor Maximus, or, because he developed in Moorish Spain and in Arabic, as the Sheikh al Akbar.(1)

Whether it is the credit of modern physics or not to rediscover these Essential truisms, well known to many, and re-express them in modern *"mathematical formulae or delicate experimentations"* is secondary to the immanence of the context of appreciation of *"this harmony and order which pervades the physical world"*. The important matter is to acquiesce to the fact of Professor Davies's assertion that *"the laws of the Universe, from quarks to quasars, dovetail together so felicitously that the impression that there is something behind it all seems overwhelming"*.

Unfortunately, Professor Davies seems to stop in fear that he might discover *"behind the miracle of physics"* a "designer" which might look like the "traditional creator". It seems odd on two accounts that Professor Davies does not appreciate the discrepancies entailed, dove or not. One, that there could be, if physically pursued, a coming into being from nothing – big, small or medium bang or no bang at all. The other is the "traditional creator"– it is explicit in the realms of intensive integration into the nature of existence that there can be only one Creator cum created, thereby reducing or magnifying, as the stand-point of view or the end of the telescope describes, a single existent.

A third danger in matters, which up to now were esoteric (simply because the generality of the literate public was, so to speak, in its whizz kid adolescence) and which are now in their outward expression, is to overlook the fact that they will require a definition, and will define by reason, that if the premise is such that there is only one single unique existent or existence, the nature of that can only be comprehended if there is a

re-integration of that oneness by the one seeking to know. Obviously this procedure would demand a premise or a platform which would go beyond a formalised religion which is very akin to a medieval concept of a town with its keep and encircling walls to which one either belonged or was excluded from 'intrusion' to its embracing, exclusive form. It would need to break down the walls of dogma and creed, enlarging its periphery to allow – in short, to tolerate – all other forms of belief by the sheer fact that all belief must irreversibly concern the same one and only existent or existence.

Here we have to appeal to another writing of Professor Paul Davies **God and the New Physics** (2) as reviewed by Adrian Berry under the title "God and the The Big Bang" (3), and to tolerate that one is bound to take exception to a portion of what is exposed in the article; viz, that *"if we maintain that he (God) exists outside space and time"* he should wish to apply to the process of verification of this *"unknown region of nothingness"*, as he calls it, an *"astronomical evidence"* which has to do with *"space, time and matter"*. How, if something is either nothing or outside the boundaries of our conceptual space, time and matter, does he wish us to elucidate that nothing through these means? It would seem obvious that for that which is "outside space and time" one would need parameters equally outside space and time, therefore beyond the scope of relative thought or expression. Hence, to try and delve into a nature which, by its position, is left outside relative conception with the use of physics, which at best gives a relative impression of how things work, seems, at this juncture, as desuete as the dogmatic insistence on religion.

1) *Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi*

2) *God and the New Physics* by Paul Davies. Pelican, 1984

3) *Telegraph* 15th June 1986

Hospitality

A Reflection by John Brass

There is a tradition of hospitality in the world to which the Orient lays more than a partial claim. It is based on an understanding of the best measure of reception appropriate for the meetings of true minds, and its execution allows for the best in persons to rise to the surface without hindrance and for them to feel at ease in surroundings familiar or unfamiliar as quickly as their characters can adapt. The host beckons, offering the right hand at every turn.

One of the major features of this refined hospitality is the ability to give; be it from one's kingdom, house, pocket, table or mind. To give freely without stinting, recognising all the while who is the owner of all bestowing – this is expansion and expansion is the order of Creation.

The best host invites to his table with his guest in mind, and all details carry the stamp of fond regard for the guest. Then the dishes invite, drawing out the best praise from both of them in more and varied ways, as taste and nourishment are limitless in variety and kind.

The variety and kind of nourishment is offered without counting. The host does not comment on who has had how much, or of what. Not only is he able to provide for whoever comes to the door, but also knows how to prepare and when and what to give; these are parts of generosity. The shelves might be full but what if the cook is away?

1) Aziz
Mahmud Hudayi
Effendi – of the
Jeluti sect.

What the guest is offered as nourishment is according to how he is thought of by his host. However, if the host knows the higher forms of the Art of Hospitality, he will endeavour to provide the best taste, because, whilst he knows that one can eat without tasting and spend one's life without waking, his aim is to taste the best in all things and to receive and be received in the best of ways, and under all circumstances. The lesser is always there, but the better and the best is always to be looked for because it points to the purpose – His purpose – expansion into Beauty; then words carry a weight and conviction corroborated by every aspect of the setting for the feast. The feast is the place of nourishment, He is the Nourisher and the best of nourishment is knowledge of Him.

If, when in Istanbul, you buy a lamb to feed the poor who come to the kitchens by the Mausoleum of Aziz Mahmud Hudayi Effendi,(1), then, before you offer, you will be offered: white cheese, olives, tea, whatever they have. Then, after their initial hospitality to you, yours is accepted. Their manner is based on a long noble history, because for hundreds of years the kitchens of the Tekké fed the poor of that quarter of Istanbul, set as it is by the Bosphorous on a hillside overlooking Uskudar.

In that area, for as far as the eye could see, no-one went hungry – His Baraka.

‘It is the required birthright of today that it should be allowed to benefit from a new expression of both religion and physics in the formulation of a new vision – and this vision is Beshara.’

▷ To Suggest a Vernacular

It would be to the credit of Professor Davies if he would carry forward the processes of his enlightenment, as glimpsed from his hesitant assertions to reach beyond the present day syllabus of physical terminology and practice, and allow space to the visible, although conspicuously tremulous, innate impulse of intuitive elaboration of reason pregnant in his exposition of his thought. It is the required birthright of today that it should be allowed to benefit from a new expression of both religion and physics in the formulation of a new vision – and this vision is Beshara.

Beshara is the good omen for the coming Age, where the equally entrenched dogmatic insistence upon religion and a denial of religion and God come together with clenched fists. Neither is a vacillating and consequently self-excusing washing down of the fall-out the answer; nor is ‘scientificating’ an ex-cathedra pontification in the guise of a solution anything other than debasing the issue. The answer and achievement would lie in the domains of such as Professor Davies. They could evolve a *processus* to go beyond the confines of the present day's inherited and closely-kept procedures to coincide with a proposition which would emerge from an expansion beyond a stigmatised and meticulously closed conformity to an eroded dogmatism. Otherwise one has to prognosticate that, were Jesus to come a second time, both scientists and the people of the robe would at last come together to deny him without waiting for a cock to crow. ▲

The Question about Questions

Considered in Questions about The Question

by Dom Sylvester Houédard

This article is drawn from a talk given at Chisholme House on February 16th 1986. The first part was published in the November 1986 issue of the Beshara News Bulletin, of which copies can be obtained from Beshara Sherborne.

Light and Glory

This 'mere factor of luminosity' (as the Dalai Lama calls it) is the natural light of reason when turned to the world of space and time, but when turned to that of which the mind is an image, it is 'elevated' by that of which it is the natural luminous image, to that of which it is the luminous image; the Divine or Deifying Light. This turning, which can't be from the image that it is, can be only through what it is, through awareness of its own emptiness to that of which it is empty. This luminosity in the Buddhist tradition (which avoids every name and concept of God as 'not helpful' to progress on the spiritual path) is the clear, the invisible, light which, as a positive phenomenon, is an affirming negative (or, should one say, a phenomenon which is not a non-affirming negative: Aquinas says that every negation presupposes some affirmation). It is that within us by which (at least in the Nyingma tradition (1)) we become Buddhas.

As the way we come to know anything is through the union of subject and object, any understanding of the world requires three capabilities:

of knowing,

of making the effort to know or understand
of being attracted to make this effort.

These are discussed as:

the *possible* intellect

(capable of knowing all knowables)

the *agent* intellect

(capable of making that effort)

the *phantasm* (which attracts the intellect).

If intellect can name, (ie *question what* thing is being presented through sense knowledge), this presupposes it has already judged *that* it is (that there is something to be questioned) and it becomes aware of this through asking the question. Attracted by the phantasm, the agent intellect illuminates it to make it

intelligible, (as light makes things visible): ie. to abstract its intelligible form. This process of trying to understand, (of making data intelligible) is complete when we actually understand with the possible intellect. The process of understanding what is not ourself is the process of coming to understand ourself.

Illumination of the phantasm is already a participation in Divine Light. God creates all things through the *Logos* or mental word, and since this is God's knowledge of his own essence, by his own essence, it is by knowing his own essence that God knows all things. We, on the other hand, know ourselves only in the process of knowing things other than ourselves. In this process of coming to know them, we are participating in God's knowledge of them and so in his knowledge of himself.

Having created all things by his *Logos*, all things that are not nothing are logical and, as such, are images of God. It is thus that the *logos* or mental word in our own mind (our concept or understanding of intelligible things) is an image of the divine *Logos*. The intelligibility of the immaterial form in material things can be abstracted and understood only because, and in so far as, that immateriality corresponds to the immateriality of our own mind, of the form of our body. As the food we eat becomes our body, so our minds become in a certain way the truths we understand.

Such intelligibility as all material things have in the universe is what enables us to call material creation the Glory of God (Isiah expresses this in the *tersanctus*: **Holy, Holy, Holy; creation is filled with your glory**). But greater than (i) that glory which fills all intelligible things is the glory that fills (ii) the immaterial created mind able to

1) *Nyingma* is the oldest of the four orders in Tibetan Buddhism

- ▷ know these intelligible things, and greater than that is (iii) the glory filling any immaterial mind which actually makes the effort to understand all these understandable things. And since created mind is greater than the created things it understands, God's Glory is even brighter in (iv) minds that turn to understanding mind in the act which leads us to understand that mind can know itself only by knowing things and thus only as unknowable to itself. Even brighter still is (v) the glory that fills minds which turn to

6...so we come to share the nature of God by him knowing us as participating in the truth that he is. Hence, John says, we shall know as we are known: we shall know through being known. 9

2) *Dzogchen* is the 'all perfect' doctrine of the Nyingma Order. *Dzog* means 'perfection' meaning that there is no higher practice and *chen* means 'no higher or more expansive teaching'. *Dzogchen* can therefore be translated as 'perfect perfection'. For more information, see *Tantric Practice in the Nying-Ma* by Khatsun Sanbgo Rimp-oché, Rider 1982.

3) As summarised in the Quoranic quote "I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I created the world that I might be known".

knowing that of which mind is the image, that which knows itself through itself and is its knowledge of itself, and is that in which all knowledge participates, but is only known to us as unknowable. This, in time and space, is the highest way we *become* the lumen gloriae, and thus how the lumen intelligibilis not only reflects the lumen gloriae but is enhanced by it. This lumen which we thus become is also created, since no becoming can become the unbecome and yet it is that which disposes us both to and for the Beatific Vision. As knowledge in us is union of mind, as form of body, with form abstracted from material things, so the Beatific Vision is the union of mind as created form with the pure and uncreated form of God. This union, however, is not through us abstracting intelligible form from him who makes all intelligibilities intelligible: not through us knowing him but through him knowing us. As things come to share our nature through our knowledge of them (through what unites their form to our mind, to the form of our body) so we come to share the nature of God by him knowing us as participating in the truth that he is. Hence John says, we shall know as we are known: we shall know through being known.

Our mind, as mind, is perfected by knowing God, and since we know him through the created, the perfecting of mind is a perfecting of the whole universe of creation, in so far as we understand it. This is the praise or glorifying of God by which we participate in his glory, in his praise of himself. Is this the way we should approach what Dzogchen (2) sees as the mystery of

samantabhadri in union with *samantabhadra*?

If it lacked our human possibility of questioning and knowing all that is knowable, (including ourselves), the creation would consist only of unknowable knowabilities; if there were no possibility of minds actually knowing them by the union of form and form, creation could never be the lumen gloriae. Unknowable knowabilities would be a poor image of God's Essence, which we define as that which is knowable as unknowable. The reason given by Ibn 'Arabi for the creator creating creation would be invalidated.(3). As it is however, given the inclusion of the human mind in creation, we see what is meant by saying that human mind is the fundamental question to which God is the answer (and since we only know him as the unknowable, to which God is that silent answer to which a prophet listens and turns into human speech.) But this has already taken us further than we have been expecting. As we become the lumen gloriae, which is the Communion of the Saints in glory, we participate in that silent answer to the question that we are by fulfilling the possibility that we, as far as possible, are. And we are that possibility because the possible intellect is our possibility of understanding all that has the possibility of being understood. But we too have the possibility of being understood. When we know ourselves through knowing things, we are the Question but we come to share the nature of the Answer when we come to know through being known.

Things on the other hand have the possibility of being understood by us only in so far as they have being and are not nothing, and the degree to which they have being, actual or possible, is the degree to which they are understandable by the noetic beings we are since that which can know and that which can be known have this in common, that each has being, and though we have that being noetically, we have it in the same way as the beings we actually come to know, which is contingently. That is, we and they have being not absolutely but by way of becoming.

Ways of Understanding the Crucial Point

The light of the agent intellect which illuminates common being in the act of knowing things, reveals to us by that act that being-as-such is *one* and is knowable only as the unknowable.

To put this into slower motion, we don't judge that an object has being by the being we abstract from it, but by the being we *are* and this is something pre-conceptual; we can know things only because we *are* but we only *know* that we are because we know things. Mind's knowledge of the truth and reality of its own act (even the act of doubting all truth and all possibility of truth) is the self-certifying act that is the condition of knowing any truth since it alone makes no appeal and can make no appeal to anything else. This is the one reality that discloses to us that we are auto-lucid and, because this is the only way this is disclosed, it also discloses (co-discloses) that we, though we do not appear to ourselves, are, like all objects that do appear, empty of inherent existence and mere participants in being-as-such. Is this the reason why in Dzogchen, the mind of samantabhadra is said to "recognise by itself its own face by seeing its own emptiness in all things as in a mirror"?

Our pre-conceptual being constitutes our ability a) to conceive the concept of being common to all beings and b) to conceive the concept of the inconceivability of being-as-such. God is knowable from creation, not just because we infer from an existent to the ground of that existent (since what we infer might simply be also an existent) – our fundamental act as humans (our meta-physical act) is the act that, to the human-as-knower, reveals being-as-such as the ground *both* of the existent *and* of its knowledge.

A third way of saying this is that because we *are* noetic beings before we *know* we are noetic beings, the light of the agent intellect discloses the object not just as having common being but as a limitation of being.

It is here we come to see the crucial point where the Dalai Lama and Ibn 'Arabi and Catholic scholastics talk about the same thing.

Ways of Not Talking about It

But talking about it indicates that to set out on the spiritual path by which we perfect the universe or world of becoming, though it means setting out *from* this point of the pre-concept that we are, in no way depends on reaching a scholastic understanding of that point (which is the scholastic understanding that we are that point before we understand it). Talking about it indicates there is no need to talk about it for most who live the spiritual life. When Aquinas was dying

and said that all he had written was like straw, his insight is into the truth he was living now he had stopped writing about it. Dante's two circles of writers on the spiritual life (as knowledge and love) are similarly joined by the vast unnamed third circle of the non-writers who had simply *lived* that life.(4).

This is why the *prasangika*, which talks about being and knowledge in such a way as to make it the cream of epistemological discourse, is far exceeded by the actual practice of mantra in the tantras which are the process of becoming that reality as the *trikaya* (or strictly speaking, its semblance) by which the clear light of the invisible lumen shines through us into the world as the five-hued rainbow light that illuminates all since this shining of the lumen by the agent intellect on the phantasm is the only way spirit can be in the world (to use the title of one of Rahner's books (5)). It is the way of *nirmanakaya* or *tulki* (6).

The Consequences of Being Aware that We are Questions

The scientific, the scholastic, the talking approach to this point which is what we are is the exercise of mind; the spiritual, non-talking path from this point is first the stilling in quietness of the concept-conceiving mind or *sems* to disclose our pristine awareness of the pre-conceptual mind, the possible mind of luminousness, so that, with

6) *The life of each of us, each of our personal histories is part of world history, and our life, our history, is the way (in varying degrees of prophetic brightness) that spirit is in the world.*9

awareness maintained as perpetual silent remembrance (*zikker* in Hebrew, *dhikr* in Arabic), anamnesis or memoria (*rigpa* in Tibetan), our advance on the path takes place in that pre-conceptual mind or *sems-nyd* even during the bustle of everyday life, allowing that luminousness to shine *sine ulla labore velut naturaliter* (without effort, as if naturally) (S. Benedict quoting Pinufius via Cassian and The Master), *spontaneously and effortlessly* (Dzogchen). Somewhere evidently Ibn 'Arabi must also have said the same thing (perhaps in the same words), but if not recorded in his writings we can see him teach it in the way he lived his life. It is the profound basis on which Beshara understands good cooking. A

4) In my article *The Rainbow Crystal in The Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 1985, on page 29, 12 lines up, insert after emphasise "the cherubic wisdom of knowledge, the outer with Francis and those who emphasise"

5) *Spirit in the World* by Dr Karl Rahner, Sheed and Ward 1968. Dr Rahner was professor of the Religion with Philosophy Faculty, University of Munich.

6) To speak of *nirmanakaya* as 'shamanic spirit possession' as found in paper XVII (p343-360) in *Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas* (1976, ed J T Hitchcock and R Z Jones (Aris and Philips)) is certainly not very helpful.

- ▷ luminosity dimmed only by ego-centricity and blocked out only by assuming that we are the answer and not the question means that dhikr, awareness of being spirit in the world, is awareness both of being the question you are and of Allah as being the one and only answer, and so of creature as having been created in order that (through eliminating the selfishness that pretends that we are the answer, ie. through the non-selfishness of compassion by which we understand ourself

6 'The world' in its pejorative sense is simply what humans see when they refuse to see that what encounters us as world, is always world transformed by spirit, that is, theophanised: profanity is the failure to see that the purpose of matter is spirit⁹

to be the question) God himself could be the answer. This is the crux of Ibn 'Arabi's insight into the Holy Spirit as the Sigh of compassion, the insight that eliminates pantheism from his thought.

The life of each of us, each of our personal histories, is part of world history, and our life, our history, is the way (in varying degrees of prophetic brightness) that spirit is in the world. We cannot know God except through knowing creation and our pre-conceptual openness as noetic beings (which is the possibility and precondition of the union of life and truth, bliss and emptiness, of *vajra* and *bell*), to being-as-such, is how the lumen of the intellectus agens discloses the limitation of being in (or emptiness of) every knowable object. Every human encounter with the world is its illumination by the agent intellect – so Rahner can rightly say the first thing encountering us is world transformed by spirit: without the lumen to show us something is there, there simply is no encounter – so that for human beings there is no such thing as world devoid of spirit that we can encounter. Not only that, but only through this encounter with world transformed by spirit can we first encounter ourself, since it is only through its acts that mind can know itself – if it turns to itself it can only know itself as unknowable, which is the condition of having that 'awareness' which isn't 'knowledge' but the mere factor of luminosity. It can't even gain the knowledge necessary to achieve that awareness until it has encountered the world as the precondition for cognising emptiness, and in every encounter with the world, (ie. in every

act of turning to the phantasm), being-as-such is revealed as what exceeds its limitation in that which mind illumines, so in every act of understanding the world, the knowledge of what theists call God's 'existence' is already achieved, as the answer to the question posed by the becomings that we are, for every act and understanding presupposes the question it answers.

If there is any point both simple and profound where Abraham and Buddha meet it is how this illumination of the object by the agent intellect shows itself as limitation of being, since this is the western scholastic terminology for cognising emptinesses. Since the light of the agent intellect makes its disclosure by means of a non-affirming negative, the pre-concept of being allows the judgement that all contingencies are limitations of being-as-such and thus are empty of inherent existence. It would be interesting to develop this with you now, but it would remain hypothetical until one met a Tibetan Geshe who has not only understood the *prasangika* and the Nyingma tradition but who has read and understood the relevant parts of S. Thomas, or who has read and understood Rahner's synthesis of these relevant points, conveyed, alas, in those terrible existentialist teutonocisms, for which, like Dr Guenther and his Nyingma translations (7), he is celebrated.

What one can say here, since it is relevant to Ibn 'Arabi and to Catholic and Buddhist scholastics, is that though it is possible to be either a contemplative or a metaphysician, the scholastic who in fact is both, whether Buddhist, Islamic or Catholic, will always be concerned that talk about each will be conducted in a unified terminology and won't cultivate separate languages for the sacred and the profane. 'The world' in its pejorative sense is simply what humans see when they refuse to see that what encounters us as world, is always world transformed by spirit, that is, theophanised: profanity is the failure to see that the purpose of matter is spirit, or as the Dalai Lama (Kalacakra p345) (8) says, cyclic existence is essentially pure and **therefore** release from it is possible and so the natural purity of mind is itself the possibility of Buddhahood. ▲

If you would like a copy of the first part of this talk, please contact The Beshara Trust at the address given on page 1.

7) Professor Herbert V Guenther, Head of the Department for Eastern Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, author of a number of books on Buddhism, including *The Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice* (Penguin 1971)

8) *The Kalachakra Tantra (Rite of Initiation)* by Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama. Wisdom Publications 1985.

The Presence of the Past

An Extract from the Seminar given by Rupert Sheldrake at Sherborne last October.

*Dr. Rupert Sheldrake's visit to Sherborne as part of the Beshara Trust's autumn seminar series **Paragons and Parameters of Being** was both momentous and pleasurable. Momentous since, together with the visit by Professor Brian Goodwin of the Department of Biology at the Open University to Chisholme House in July, it marked the start of what promises to be a long dialogue between the 'scientific' and 'mystic' views of Reality and Self, and pleasurable in that the perceived space between these points of view is smaller than at any time since Isaac Newton.*

What is more, the weekend provided those of us privileged to be there with a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge in science and the position and philosophies of its various 'disciplines' viz. cosmology, physics, chemistry & biology. We include here a short extract from the seminar, followed a piece from Richard Twinch prompted by some of the ideas it introduced. We will be including a second extract in the next issue of BESHARA.

The Current State in Biology

Biology got underway in a big way in the 19th century – experimental biology really coming into its own by the end of the century – and it was formulated within the mechanistic framework. This, in a nutshell, says that living organisms consist of dead matter, completely blind, governed entirely by eternal laws (the laws of physics and chemistry) and that's that: there's nothing more to it – living things are essentially inanimate and they can be understood entirely in terms of the laws of the sciences of the inanimate. This is still the predominant view in biology. While the mechanistic philosophy has been transcended over the past 50 years or so within physics, within biology it is still taken for granted as the very obvious, common sense basis of the whole science. Most biologists are proud to tell you that they are **mechanistic** biologists; **mechanistic** has become a pejorative word in many people's vocabularies nowadays, but in biology it's a good word – it shows that you are the right kind of chap.(1)

However, there are problems within this mechanistic biology in understanding living things, about which we will talk in a moment. But before that, I would just like to say that what has changed the context more than anything is the idea that the universe is evolving.

The idea of evolution of society, of ideas, has been a commonplace for 2–300 years or even longer – one could say that there is an evolutionary view of history inherent in the whole Judaic-Christian-Islamic tradition.

In the 17th and 18th centuries it became widely recognised that there had been a real change or advance in human understanding – that Newtonian physics, for example, went far beyond anything the Greeks had known – and by the 18th century, most people thought that human understanding, at least in the sciences and arts, was progressive. By the end of the 18th century this was commonly understood in terms of social evolution as well and this was the driving impetus behind the American rebellion, the founding of the United States, the French revolution and indeed, all the great revolutionary movements to the present day. At the end of the 18th century came the idea of biological evolutionary change and by 1859 (with Darwin's Theory of Evolution) it became rather commonplace and was in fact accepted very quickly.

But the context of evolutionary discussions was physics, and the cosmology which prevailed until very recently was, essentially, that the universe was eternal, static, and in fact even worse than static – it was slowly running down to a thermodynamic heat death. The only way of explaining how the evolutionary process was possible was to regard it as local aberration, a kind of statistical fluctuation which must be averaged out by things going the other way elsewhere in the universe – hence basically the product of blind chance. And so we see that the Darwinian and neo-Darwinian evolutionary theories that seek to explain evolution in terms of chance are really trying to fit an evolutionary vision into a universe which is static or devolutionary.

1) Not the wrong kinds of chaps who are usually called vitalists. Vitalism, as its name suggests, is the doctrine that living things are alive.



- ▷ But since 1966 physics itself has moved onto the evolutionary paradigm. It is important to remember that this is very new; we tend to think of evolution as a very old idea and forget that physics was a bastion which stood out against it until 1966, when, for reasons which I have not got time to go into now, evidence persuaded most physicists that the universe had originated in a primeval explosion and what's called the **Big Bang Theory** became generally accepted. Now we have an evolving physics and this really changes the way that we think. The evolutionary vision of things – of life, human societies, etc, – no longer needs to be seen as a local aberration but takes place within

Now we have an evolving physics and this really changes the way that we think. The evolutionary vision of things no longer needs to be seen as a local aberration but takes place within the context of a cosmology in which everything is evolving.⁹

the context of a cosmology in which everything is evolving.

2) The English word *animal* derives from *anima*, meaning *soul*.

But all existing thought in biology, the basic concepts and the standard positions of Darwinism and neo-Darwinism, were all worked out long before 1966; they are, as we have said, rooted in a 19th century version of mechanistic theory. The reason that it continues within the profession, as a kind of living fossil of an older way of thought, is that it has been very successful. It has concentrated attention on the chemical and physical details of life, and by exploring those it has been possible to work out the chemistry of the genetic material, to understand how hormones work and a great many things about physiology; advances have been made in medicine, agriculture, chemical fertilisers, insecticide sprays, etc. which have had a huge economic impact. Now it seems to be yielding even more promises of profit in the bio-technology industry, genetic engineering and so on. So most biologists are confident about this approach – it works, it makes money, and they are impatient with the minority within biology who say, as a minority has always said, that this may be all very well but it doesn't go very far in explaining the nature of life.

There has always been, within biology, an **holistic** tradition that has tried to understand the nature of living things in a different way. The holistic tradition historically grows out of the vitalist tradition, and the vitalist tradition has grown from the Aristotelian and Scholastic traditions. The

basic idea here is that living organisms – or indeed, nature – are **self-organising**; ie. they have their own purposes, their own goals, their own ability to organise themselves. For Aristotle and the scholastics of the Middle Ages, this organising principle was called the **Psyche** or **Soul**. Their concept of Soul was rather different from the vague and confused ideas that are common today, which confine it to human beings. The Psyche or Soul was present in all living things – animals, plants and indeed, the whole earth – and was also, as Aristotle (and also Plato) put it, the form of the body. The Soul was not in the body, the body was in the Soul; it was that which shaped and formed the body and in animals, it was that which organised their behaviour.⁽²⁾

In human beings, in addition to the vegetative soul (which organised the development of the embryo and maintained the form of the body) and the animal soul (which was responsible for nutrition, respiration, and all animal functions), there was a rational soul with which was associated the higher functions and which was open to the spirit.

Thus, before the work of the mechanists and Descartes in the 17th century, matter was conceived of, not as dead and inert, but as potentiality, as having the potential for taking up form. There was a hierarchy of matter, organised by the Soul, and above the Soul was the realm of Spirit and the Divine Ideas and Platonic forms. Descartes eliminated the middle level, leaving dead inert matter on the one hand, and eternal, transcendent laws, on the other, with nothing in between, and this is still the basis of mechanistic biology. The attempt was, and is, to explain everything in terms of the properties of atoms and molecules – hence the emphasis on molecular biology on the one hand and the laws of physics on the other. The only problem with this is that it doesn't work and it has not actually led to an understanding of even the most elementary things about life. This is where we come to the problem of form, and the hypotheses which I have been developing.

The Problem of Form – Traditional Approaches

Form is one of the most central and important problems of biology because it is obvious that all things have forms. We classify animals and plants on the basis of their shape and form – if you look up a plant in a flora you will see a picture of it, a description of the shapes of the leaves, fruit and flowers and the ultimate reference is not a mathematical

equation but a herbarium specimen of an actual plant pressed on a sheet of paper at Kew. Similarly with animals; even though we may also take account of other things like behaviour and, more recently, chemistry, we basically classify them morphologically. So to ask "How do organisms take up their form?" is to ask about their most characteristic feature, and brings us to one of the most central problems of the whole science of life. Where does the form – of this fern for instance – arise from? What is its source?

The Platonic tradition (at least in its most popular form which has been accepted within science) would suggest that there is an archetypal fern – an eternal fern form – which is reflected in the matter of this particular fern. This is the approach which many biologists have taken and at the beginning of the 19th century it was probably the most orthodox. People tried to study the archetypes of organisms. Richard Owen, the British biologist, for example, wrote a book on the archetypes of vertebrates, in which he showed that the same pattern of the five-fingered limb could be seen in cows, people, whales, fish, birds, etc. and concluded that these were all variations of a fundamental archetypal theme. But he did not think of it as an evolutionary process. He thought of it in a much more Platonic sense, i.e. that the mind of God had basic themes on which He, as it were, rang the changes and these were then reflected in the different forms of living things. In the Platonic view, the affinities between different kinds of animals and plants were thus understood in terms of affinities of form, not, as Darwin said, in terms of historical affinities arising from descent from common ancestors.

The problem of the Platonic view, interesting and satisfying though it is in many ways, is that it does not immediately lend itself to an evolutionary interpretation of nature and has therefore, traditionally, tended to be associated with a static or cyclical view of the universe. This was one of Darwin's strongest points; if there is a fixed archetype, how can species change? How can we develop new breeds of animal – great danes, dachshunds, pekinese, greyhounds and spaniels – if there is a fixed dog archetype? An archetype, if it exists, must be flexible and capable of developing in different ways, since these are the facts we see before us. And so the Platonic view has gone out of fashion in biology since the time of Darwin and although there are still defenders of it, it is now very much a minority view.

The mechanistic view from the 17th century onwards was to try to locate all form in matter. They proposed that in the fertilised egg there was a miniaturised version of the adult organisms – as an actual material structure – and that development involved an unrolling or inflation of this. This is called the **Pre-Formationist Theory**.

Debates in the 17th century, right through until the 19th century, amongst pre-formationists largely took place on sex lines; the majority opinion was that the ready-made organism was in the sperm, and the egg merely nourished it; the minority was that the organism was in the egg and that the sperm merely triggered off development. This entire debate was superseded and made irrelevant when close observations of embryos showed that the organism underwent genuine development which was more than unfolding or inflation. Whole sheets of tissue folded in, for instance, to form new

“to ask “How do organisms take up their form?” is to ask about their most characteristic feature, and brings us to one of the most central problems of the whole science of life.”

structures such as the gut and the nerve cord, producing complexity which was not present to start with. The technical term for this is **epigenesis**. (3)

Another argument against the Pre-Formationist view was, that if rabbits, for example, grow from tiny rabbits in the egg, then they themselves must contain eggs in which are the next generation of tiny of rabbits, and those must have little ones within them and so on. Somebody calculated in the 18th century that, assuming that the world was created in 4004BC, the first rabbit must have contained $10^{10,000}$ miniature rabbits, each within another!

Nevertheless, Pre-Formationism has always been the view most attractive to the mechanists, whose tendency is to find a pre-existing material structure wherever possible, and we have it back again now, in a modified form, in the notion of the genetic programme, which says that its all there in the structure of the egg or, in this case, the DNA. In our democratic age, it is, of course, generally believed that the DNA is contributed equally by the male and the female.

The Aristotelian view is that there is an organising principle, the Soul or the Psyche, which is neither inside the egg, nor an eternal transcendent archetype, but which is an invisible organising principle associated with the organism and this is what gives it

3. The idea of the unfolding of pre-existing structure was called evolution. Thus the original meaning of the word was 'unfolding of pre-existing germ structure'

- ▷ form; it contains the form, as it were, in an invisible, non-material manner.

A New Approach

To approach the problem of form in a slightly different way, think of an architectural analogy, such as a house. The house has a form, a shape, a structure and it is made out of materials. The form, however, is not determined by the materials; it depends on them but with the same building materials you could build houses of different shapes. There is, of course, a certain limit – you could not build a sky-scraper out the materials for a suburban house – but you could build suburban houses of different

fields in modern science play much the same role that Souls did in yesteryear, but they are a better defined concept.

shapes and forms. If you demolish the house, and analyse the materials out of which it is made, you can produce a complete chemical analysis in the laboratory, with very nice computer print-outs and everything accurate and true. If you demolish another house made from the same building materials but of a different form, it will have exactly the same chemical analysis. The chemical analysis tells you nothing about the form because the form disappears as you grind it up to analyse it.

Now exactly the same is true in realm of biological organisms. You can analyse any plant in the garden by grinding it up and analysing its chemicals and proteins, and you can produce a true analysis of its constituents, including its DNA and genetic material, but this does not tell you why the plant has the form it does. To bring it closer to ourselves, consider your arms and legs. These have exactly the same chemical constituents and if ground up and analysed are chemically identical. The bones, the muscles, the nerves, the skin, the cells – all these are the same in the arms and the legs, yet they have different forms. Moreover, the DNA is the same. In fact, the DNA is exactly the same in every single cell of your body, including the eyes and the ears and the kidney and the brain. If we say that development of form is all there, programmed, in the DNA, we then have the problem of explaining how, with identical DNA in every cell of the body, they develop differently. Its obvious that DNA alone cannot explain this and all biologists will admit this. What they will say is that the DNA is influenced by “*complex spatio-temporal-chemical patterns of inter-*

ction not yet fully understood”. In other word, we don’t know; and that’s the pres-ent state of play and it’s been the state of play all along. We really have no better idea now than people did 100 years ago.

In the case of human constructions like buildings, we know that the form arises as a kind of idea from outside the building and the mechanistic theory is based on just this analogy; ie. the analogy of the machine. It says that just as the designs and purposes of machines lie outside the machine, in the human mind, so the entire universe has designs and patterns which are in the mind of God and the whole thing is imposed from without, by God, on to matter. The mechanistic theory does not exactly deny purposes and designs, it simply says that they are outside nature in the mind of God or, in the modern form, in the laws of nature (although the laws of nature are now supposed to be purposeless). But the problem in applying this view to the biological realm is that, in living things, the designs and purposes do, in some sense, seem to be internal. This is what leads us to the idea of a designing mind being associated with the organism – not outside but somehow in it – what Aristotle calls the Psyche or Soul. This does not have to imply a fully conscious mind, and one of the difficulties that we have now, in understanding these things, is that we hardly have the language to deal with them any more.

A new way of approaching the problem was put forward in the 1920’s, when it was proposed that the form of the living organism was organised by invisible, organising fields. Now fields in modern science play much the same role that Souls did in yesteryear, but they are a better defined concept. Fields are invisible, they are organising and most of them are teleological (or purposive): even gravitational and electromagnetic field have goals and purposes and lead to attractions and tendencies and strivings, as it were. It was proposed that in or around a developing embryo there is an organising field called the **morphogenetic field** (from *morphe* meaning form and *genesis* meaning coming into being). Morphogenesis means the coming into being of form and the morphogenetic field is the field which organises the coming into being of the form.

This idea, which was first proposed in 1922, has been quite widely adopted within biology, especially within embryology and developmental biology. In a cat embryo, for example, it is considered that the embryo is developing within a cat embryo field, and that the field is

an invisible organising structure that shapes the development. It is important to understand that the field is not just within, but also around, the embryo. The analogy for this is the magnetic field, which is also not just within magnets, but also around them; they involve an invisible patterning of the space, which can be revealed by sprinkling iron filings around the magnet. Even without the iron filings, the field is there; you can't see it, touch it, smell it, hear it, taste it but it's there, even though it is not material.

When the field concept was first put forward in its more or less modern form by Michael Faraday (4), he was not quite sure what fields were. One thing he was sure they were **not**, was matter. He had one idea that they might be modifications of the ether (which was not ordinary matter but some more subtle form) but the idea that he preferred was they were "modifications of mere space". Maxwell (5) preferred the ether interpretation but Einstein got rid of the ether in his Special Theory of Relativity and since 1905 it has not been taken seriously within physics. Fields are now regarded as "modifications of mere space"; ie. space itself has a form and a structure which does not arise from matter – rather, matter arises from it. In modern physics, matter is not primary but represents energy or potentiality within fields.

When this very powerful idea was applied to biology, it led to the proposition that there are spatial forms which organise matter but which are not themselves material. This would have seemed a highly occult notion had it not been for the fact that physics already has this idea as a commonplace, taught to every student of the subject. Many of us think of materialism and matter in terms of grossly out-dated concepts which bear no relation to the modern physical understanding.

The huge advantage of applying this idea to biology was that it was able to explain something which is otherwise virtually inexplicable, which is the way that living things seem to be wholes that are more than the sum of their parts – that wholeness can remain even though parts are removed. If you cut a leg off a newt, it grows a new leg; if you cut a flatworm into pieces, each grows into a new flatworm; if you cut a piece off a willow tree, each piece can give you a new tree. This property of wholeness is not found in machines (if you cut a computer into pieces, all you get is a broken computer) but it is found in fields; if you cut a magnet into pieces, you get lots of little magnets, each

with a complete magnetic field and if you cut a hologram (which is an electro-magnetic field phenomenon) into pieces, each of them can give you a complete structure. Fields seem to have a property of inherent wholeness which material objects do not have, and it seems as if it is the field which is the bearer or possessor of the wholeness.

With living things, it is supposed that the morphogenetic field is around the organism, and even if you cut part of it off, or cut it into

6*Many of us think of materialism and matter in terms of grossly out-dated concepts which bear no relation to the modern physical understanding.*⁹

small pieces, in many conditions the pieces still remain a whole field and can grow back or regenerate into a whole organism. This phenomenon is very hard to explain from a mechanistic point of view which tries to explain everything in terms of the interaction of parts, because if you remove a part, there should no longer be a whole. For this reason, the idea of morphogenetic fields has been very widely accepted – it is almost indispensable for understanding how embryos develop. There must be many sorts of fields – cat fields, dog fields, kangaroo fields, apple fields – and not only does each species have its own field but there are fields within fields. For example, within the fields of our body there are fields for our eyes, our ears and our arms and legs, our kidneys, livers, and within those, tissue fields and cell fields, and then fields for cell nuclei and mitochondria and further fields for molecules and proteins, etc.

The Nature of Morphic Fields

Now if these fields are so important and have such explanatory value, how do we explain them? Well, this is the great problem. Over the past 60 years, two approaches have been favoured. On the one hand, there is a resurgence of the Platonic idea that they represent eternal forms or eternal mathematical structures which are somehow transcendent of space and time. This view is advocated by a number of modern biologists, including Brian Goodwin, Professor of the Open University. The other view is that, yes, we adopt the concept of fields because we need it but actually it is only a concept and they do not correspond to anything in reality. What they are is simply a short-hand way of talking about "complex spatio-temporal-physico-chemical patterns of interaction not yet fully understood". In this way, one returns to the conventional position. ▶

4) See Hesse, M (1961) *Forces and Fields* (Nelson, London)

5) See Nersessian, N.J. (1984) *Aether/Or: the creation of scientific concepts* *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 15, p175-212.

- ▷ What I am suggesting – and this is the basis of the entire hypothesis – is that morphogenetic fields do exist, that they are not just ideas in our minds (or at least, that they are as real as fields in physics such as gravity and electro-magnetism) and that they have histories; ie. morphogenetic fields have a structure or pattern which depends on previous similar forms. This means that the cat field depends on the actual forms of previous cats; tomato fields on the actual form of previous tomatoes, etc. and through these morphogenetic (or for short, morphic)

6) as a scientist it is no use talking about these kinds of ideas merely at a philosophical level. Unless one can show that they have a predictive value, and that they lead to unexpected results, scientists are not going to be very interested. 6

fields the organisms within them are in a kind of resonant connection with all previous similar forms. This process is called **morphic resonance**.

An organism, such as a fern, is shaped by morphic fields which are in turn shaped by morphic resonance with all previous ferns of the species. The fields contain a kind of memory (collective memory) of the form of previous ferns and the morphic resonance takes place through or across space and time. It is not coded in the genes or carried in the material structure of the fern; rather, it is as if the fern 'tunes in' to the form of previous ferns.

This theory leads to a number of clear, empirical predictions, and this is where it begins to make contact with laboratories and all the paraphernalia of science, because as a scientist it is no use talking about these kinds of ideas merely at a philosophical level. Unless one can show that they have a predictive value, and that they lead to unexpected results, then scientists are not going to be very interested. But if they do lead to predictions of results that are unexpected, then that means that it is an interesting scientific theory. (6)

The theory applies in the realm of behaviour, and so it predicts that if you train rats to learn a new trick here in Sherborne, then rats all over the world should subsequently be able to learn the same trick more quickly – just because the rats here have learned it – and the more rats that learn it here, the easier it should become everywhere else. It should happen even in the absence of taking the Sherborne rats there, or making telephone calls telling people how to do it; and even if people there do not know, and even if the rats have never been able to

communicate by squeaking or any other means with the rats here. And already, experiments have been done which show that this sort of effect does in fact occur. The experiments were not done to test this theory, they were done to test others because, as you know, people have been doing experiments on rats for decades, and there is a vast literature on rat psychology. Experiments measuring the rate of rats escaping from mazes and such like do show that they generally get better at doing it as time goes on, and not only better in one place, but all over the world; and not only better if they are descended from rats who have been trained, but all the rats in a given breed seem to get better. In my book **The New Science of Life** (7) I give a particularly striking example of this and give the details and data for those who are interested.

This is not a unique example. There are a number of others in the literature on rat psychology, and in other forms of behaviourist research. B.F. Skinner, the *bête noire* of Arthur Koestler, the chief behaviourist who believed that you could explain everything in terms of reflexes and so on, specialised in training pigeons to peck at lighted panels in order to get corn, a process called **operant conditioning**. He had a complicated procedure, by which he trained them in a series of stages until after quite a long time he got them to peck at the panel and obtain the grain of corn. After he and several generations of his PhD students had been doing this, somebody discovered that it was all quite unnecessary; one could simply put the pigeon in the box, turn on the lighted panel and the pigeon would peck it straight away. They concluded that Skinner and his students were rather foolish not to have noticed this fact, but the alternative explanation is that Skinner and his students had actually changed the collective psyche of the pigeons, so that the pigeons themselves – all of them – had just been getting better at doing the task.

This sort of phenomenon has been observed by many experimental psychologists, and indeed, animal trainers. Since my book was published, I have received letters from all over the world, from people involved with animals, farmers, etc. telling me the most interesting anecdotes which seem to support the theory – only anecdotes, but very very interesting ones based on observation and experience by people who know animals and work with them all the time. ▲

Rupert Sheldrake's article in the June issue of BESHARA will discuss morphic fields which extend beyond the level of the individual, including collective behaviour in the animal and human realms.

6) The value of a scientific theory is partly, as Sir Karl Popper has said, in proportion to the unexpectedness of its predictions.

7) Sheldrake, R (1987) *A New Science of Life* (new edition) Paladin, London

Memory and the Brain

Some thoughts from Richard Twinch following Rupert Sheldrake's seminar

The aspects of Dr. Rupert Sheldrake's stimulating seminar that most struck me were those relating to memory and perception, since these are directly applicable to an immediate and direct grasp of the scientific concepts, whilst at the same time amplifying what is meant by 'Know Thyself' – a matter close to the heart of those of Beshara. As Dr. Sheldrake said during his talk on memory: "It makes a difference to your life where you think your memories are stored".

We are indebted to Osman Fazli of the Jaluti sect, educator, initiator, teacher and friend of Ismael Hakki Bursevi, (1) who wrote in the 17th century concerning these matters:

"Man does not possess anything else but his sensibilities as his real organ of intelligence and without Divine action man cannot even use his memory which is his sacred treasury of experience acquired long ago. The initiate, the saint, the insan-i-kamil (2) is he who possesses the faculty of being able to recognize the true non-existence of his faculties of thought and his own impotence in putting them in motion. It is he who leaves all the 'space' to God and who passes his life in controlling his intimate faithfulness, in actions, 'thought' or in the acts that materialize them. It is he who prays constantly to God, even if it is only by a breath or by a movement of the heart, when he perceives the natural and constant phenomena of thought. In fact everybody knows that this faculty is permanent, constant, irresistibly active."

From a historical point of view, Sheldrake would no doubt agree that 'everybody knows' is a statement of the traditional view of memory and thought that pervaded Europe, (and indeed most of the world), until the rationalists of the 17th Century, spearheaded by Descartes, re-proclaimed the Delphic oracle as "I think, therefore I am". Sheldrake entertainingly described how this egocentric view of the world became the dominating 'fact' in the development of western scientific thought; a key belief of which is that memories are stored in the brain which dissolves on death into 'nothing'. He further pointed out that not only has this belief become an underlying assumption of western thought but, through the spread of western scientific method, has supplanted 'traditional' understanding, so much so that

it is taken for granted. Yet, as Sheldrake explained, *there is no firm scientific evidence to prove it.* Descartes' theory of memory storage proposed a hydraulic mechanism, whereby pores were enlarged by flow of liquid. This has been supplanted in the 20th century by an equivalent theory of modulations to the synaptic nerve ends through electrical stimulation.

Dr. Sheldrake sees himself primarily as a scientist, ie. a person who carries out experiments that are repeatable to prove certain theories. The skill of a good scientist resides in being able to find simple (and if possible cheap) ways of demonstrating the proof of a particular theory. Perhaps another criterion might be 'painless', since the descriptions of the efforts of scientists (in particular Karl Lashly (3)) to prove that memory resides in the structure of the brain must have inflicted great distress on the numerous monkeys, rats etc. that were dissected to such little avail to discover 'memory traces'. After 30 years of looking, Lashly concluded that it was virtually impossible to find memory traces, which in no way deterred the scientific community from continuing the search.

Fortunately, Dr. Sheldrake is not alone in his view of memory as a holistic phenomenon, which according to him is another manifestation of 'morphic fields' ie. invisible fields to which the brain 'tunes in' in the same way as a television set 'tunes' into a particular channel. He pointed out that such an explanation would account for the ability to recover 'lost memory', despite accidental (or purposeful) brain damage. It would also account for the well-documented (by Professor Ian Stevenson at Virginia University) ability of children in India to remember 'past lives' (4), which phenomenon Sheldrake ascribed to the ability to 'tune into' other memory fields. Inabilities of the mind – such as remembering faces, which is quite

1) Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725). Successor to Osman Fasli and author of an extensive commentary on the *Fusus al-Hikam* by Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi (recently rendered into English by Bulent Rauf and published by the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society

2) *Isan-i Kamil. The Perfect Man*

3) Lashley, K.S (1950) *In search of the Engram. Symposia of the Society for Experimental Biology* 4, p454-483

4) Stevenson, I. (1974). *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation.* University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville.

- ▷ common – might equally be due to a failure in the ‘tuning mechanism’ rather than the elimination of the part of the brain where these memories might be stored. In the same way, we would not say that Channel 4 had ceased because a fault in the set no longer allowed it to be received.

An example of this ability to ‘tune into’ particular memory, and even ‘ability’ fields, is perhaps a solution to the conundrum presented by a recent television programme (5) called “The Foolish Wise Ones” which showed the remarkable talents of three severely mentally handicapped young people who had, respectively, an extraordinary ability to calculate dates, remember music and draw accurate perspectives from

5) Q.E.D.
BBC1
Wednesday
11th February
1987

‘The agreed fact that memory itself is holistic, perhaps implies that it need be neither visible nor invisible, ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’ the brain, but that it should concur with ‘place’ and function.’

memory. In each case these talents were far in advance of the normal abilities of even intelligent people, let alone those with IQs of 65. Indeed there was no evidence, or even clue, as to the processes involved either in the learning or the doing!

Another scientist holding a parallel holistic view of memory is Karl Pibram (6) who sees memory as a holographic image ‘etched’ into the fabric of the brain by some sort of ‘interference pattern’. Such a holographic theory implies that detailed analysis of a cell would reveal the whole pattern, although as yet there is no evidence of this. Sheldrake is sympathetic and admits, as a good scientist, that should the theory of ‘morphic fields’ be disproved then he would “plump for the holographic theory”.

It is perhaps a measure of the penetration of such holistic concepts of memory that even the biologist Professor Steven Rose of the Open University, who admits to adopting a reductionist strategy in his research and who, after 5 years, has just isolated a change in the protein molecules of new born chicks taught to reject bitter beads, (7) admits:

“Yet I am not arguing that memory — even so simple a memory as a chick’s avoiding a bead it has once experienced as tasting bitter— can be reduced to molecules. Indeed, if our model is correct, the molecular changes that we observe are in one sense relatively trivial ‘housekeeping’ processes for cells whose form and connectivity are remodelled during the learning. The memory does not lie in the molecules at all,

6) Karl Pibram. As far as we know, there are no readily available books about his work, which has been published in specialist journals.

7) Steven Rose “Memories and Molecules” New Scientist 27th November 1986. p40.

8) David Bohm. see Wholeness and the Implicate Order. Ark Paperbacks, 1980

but in some sense in the reorganised cellular networks that the molecules form.”

Here then is yet another variation of the holistic view of memory, albeit couched in terms of cellular networks. Looked at from the wider viewpoint, recently acquired by physicists and intuitively appreciated for thousands of years by mystics, all matter is considered as a particular crystallisation of energy that appears because of the conditions of the ‘place’ viz. space & time. Other invisible fields (e.g. gravitation, electromagnetic fields etc.) do not appear themselves in space/time but are evinced by their effects on space/time. The visible and invisible are both equally real, being intrinsic unfoldments of the ‘Universal’, whether expressed as the universal field or The Conscious Reality i.e. God. Mystics, however, make a distinction between the material and the spiritual, the visible and the invisible. This gives priority to unconditioned ‘levels’ (i.e. invisible) over conditioned levels (visible) since the unconditioned reflects more clearly the Universal. The spiritual rules and governs the material *everywhere*, though ultimately they are of the same Source.

The agreed fact that memory itself is holistic, perhaps implies that it need be neither visible nor invisible, ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’ the brain, but that it should concur with ‘place’ and function. In the case of the chicken, rejecting a bitter bead is a function of ‘chicken-ness’ and may affect the survival or otherwise of the individual. It would not then be surprising that such a memory would leave a molecular trace, albeit ‘trivial’. At the same time it is quite within reason to assume that this has an effect on the ‘invisible’ i.e. the ‘morphogenetic field’ of all chickens. Indeed it is to be expected that such interaction occurs constantly, as proposed by David Bohm in his theories of the Implicate and Explicate Order, with which Sheldrake broadly agrees (8). Sheldrake’s theory of morphic resonance proposes that other chickens (wherever they are) should subsequently find the process of learning not to peck bitter beads a faster one. Rose may find in addition that the offspring of the original chicks have an even greater advantage, though even such assertion of the ‘inheritance of acquired characteristics’ is itself heretical in some circles!

That memory can be brought under different categories is accepted by both Rose and Sheldrake; for instance ‘short term memories’ – like remembering a telephone number long enough to dial it – are different from the memories of consciously acquired

skills like riding a bicycle or learning that pecking bitter beads is unpleasant. Indeed the memory that is most vital (for Sheldrake's theories are related to a Nature that is alive rather than dead matter ruled by Timeless Laws) is the memory that perpetuates something in existence. The example given by Sheldrake was of a fern which retains its form from moment to moment by virtue of its memory of itself, since the closest possible 'paradigm' to itself is itself at the previous instant. Steven Rose perceptively picked on a similar point at the start of the article mentioned above: *"Yet, while we remember, we exist as individuals. One tragedy of the diseases of senility is the loss of personal memory, and hence of who we are."*

Scientists, and Sheldrake is no exception, do not like to speculate about consciousness (the experimental evidence is not repeatable), but it would seem that this process of dynamic recollection is very close to self-consciousness and touches on Osman Fazli's perception of the matter taken to the highest degree, the degree of Perfect Man, where the process of thought is "permanent, constant, irresistibly active".

Indeed, as Sheldrake explained, it is quite beyond science at present to explain how memory works, since mechanistic biologists (i.e. those looking for a purely physico-chemical answer) are caught in the well-known philosophical trap that in order to retrieve a memory it has first to be known that it exists and further where to find it, and so on in infinite regress. In 'morphic field' theory, fields are 'nested' one within another until all are held within the universal field i.e. there are memory libraries within memory libraries. This explains the process of recall, but Sheldrake remains uncertain on the matters of choice and the location of consciousness. Osman Fazli has no such doubts. Consciousness resides with the Universal from which thoughts and memories

arise. The individual having given up the false idea of limited consciousness *"and left all the space to God"* thus *"perceives the natural and constant phenomena of thought"*.

Here then there is a question of choice, which is not possible for the chicken which has only the possibility of 'resonating' with its own form and those of its kind and this forms the limits of its self-knowledge or consciousness. For the genus Man the situation is different and choice is exercised at every 'level' of being (social, moral, psychological, spiritual) and this determines self-knowledge. Indeed for the

For the genus Man choice is exercised at every 'level' of being and this determines self-knowledge. Indeed for the mystic there is no need to look for processes that support the "I think, therefore I am" philosophy. There are matters of greater importance which touch on the Universal.▲

mystic there is no need to look for processes that support the "I think, therefore I am" philosophy. There are matters of greater importance which touch on the Universal. Recollection is not merely confined to the continuation of the bodily or even psychological 'form' but to the Zikr (Recollection) of the Universes Itself. What better way of concluding than with the continuation of Osman Fazli's teaching:

"The intimate work of the mystic consists, therefore, in trying to attain the Divine proximity, to respond to His infinite clemence by his recognition, or through Zikr, whenever thoughts, 'visitors from heaven', manifest in his interior. Good or tempting, these visitors have for mission the exercising of our discernment to the most subtle degree of 'Good and Evil', whereby we accord them our consentment or refuse them."



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In future editions of BESHARA we hope to have a page of letters to the editor.

If you would like to comment on anything in this issue, or add anything which you feel is relevant, please write, before May 10th 1987, to:

The Editor

BESHARA Magazine

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The Beshara Trust

The Beshara Trust was set up in 1971 in England with the purpose of providing an environment where any person who wishes to establish a spiritual dimension in their life can come together with others to study and work towards this common aim.

The Trust runs two schools of esoteric education offering courses of varying lengths.

Beshara Sherborne

is an introductory centre which offers

- short courses, lasting a weekend or ten days. They are residential and consist of a balanced programme of study, work, meditation and devotional practices.
- seminars by distinguished speakers which last for a day or a weekend, and can be attended for individual sessions. Forthcoming speakers include Kathleen Raine on "Nature, House of the Soul" and Paul Ekins, author of "The Living Economy".
- Open afternoons every Sunday, which are informal occasions to which anyone is welcome.

For further information, and a programme of events, please contact:

*Beshara Sherborne,
The Stable Block, Sherborne,
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Telephone Windrush (045-14) 448.*

Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education, Chisholme House

offers six month courses beginning in April and October each year.

The nature of these, which have a similar programme to the short courses at Sherborne, is direct as well as intense in order to bring the student to an immediate and constant awareness of the oneness of life and the consequent position of mankind.

For further information and a prospectus, please contact

*The Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education
Chisholme House,
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Beshara Study Groups

are active throughout the UK and elsewhere. At present there are groups in

UK

Cambridge Edinburgh Huddersfield Hull Ipswich London Oxford Manchester York

Outside UK

Australia – Manly (NSW), Brisbane, Melbourne, Cairns **Canada** – Quadra Island (B.C)

Holland – Maastricht **Israel** – Tel Aviv

USA – Los Angeles, San Fransisco, Austin (Texas)

For further information on any of these, please contact Beshara Sherborne.

Reviews

Richard MacEwan reviews two recently published books – *God and The New Biology* by Arthur Peacocke and a new translation of the *Tao Te Ching* by R. L. Wing

God and the New Biology by Arthur Peacocke.

1986. J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd.
£10.95 h/b

God and the New Biology is the rather odd title of this recently published book; the subtitle 'Were matter, life and humanity Created?' is even more odd. However, let us not judge the book by its cover alone; far better to let the text speak for itself, for in an era that is littered with things 'new' – new physics, new economics, New Age – it may be the publisher's device to sell another new book and not truly representative of the sentiment and thesis of the author.

Arthur Peacocke, who is a physical biochemist and an Anglican priest, is the director of the Ian Ramsey Centre in Oxford, which is concerned with ethical problems in science and medicine and with the theological and philosophical issues involved. Overall, the book is a dedicated attempt to correlate the views of reality presented in the realms of biochemistry and socio-biology with the spiritual understanding of the Christian tradition. This correlation aims at the development of self-knowledge in the contexts of the spiritual and material life – "Our mental and spiritual life, it seems, must fulfill at least basic, evolutionary requirements long established, but we then go on to interpret ourselves to ourselves at our own culturally developed level". (p115).

What the new biology does for this process is to provide data at previously inaccessible levels which confirm the assertions of unity and the inter-relationship of all creation. It supports the imagin-

ative insights of early evolutionists such as Ernst Haeckel who wrote "Our Monistic system, the connecting link between science and religion, brings God and the world into a unity in the sense that Goethe willed, the sense that Spinoza expressed long ago and Giordano Bruno had sealed with his martyrdom" (1).

What it does not do, however, is clarify a spiritual aim. This Arthur Peacocke sees as the role of theology but to do this, theology has to adopt a new role in which it must draw on the evidences of science and "recognise its new and exciting brief". Consequently, the book sets the ground for just such an endeavour.

God and the New Biology is very analytical and can be heavy going at times, but it is orderly and carefully written. There are excellent reviews of the changing interpretations of biology and a sound analysis of the 'holistic' and 'reductionist' modes which is a good source for the layman familiar only with the terms in a general way. In Chapter 2, Peacocke dismisses the assertion that all biology can be understood as "nothing but physics and chemistry", pointing to the need to understand the organisation, processes and behaviour of systems at the level of their appearance as systems, not only in terms of their functioning 'parts'. On the question of what is real, he says that each level has to be regarded as a cut through the totality of reality – "there is no sense in which subatomic particles are to be graded as 'more real' than say, a bacterial cell or a human person, or, even, social facts" (page 28). At each ascending

level of increasing system complexity there are emergent phenomena characteristic of that level and these cannot be reduced to 'lower level theories and concepts'

Professor Peacocke then goes on to explore "the most complex and all-embracing of the levels in the hierarchies of systems, namely the complex of nature-man-and-God". (page 30). This exploration is an enjoyable one to follow, taking in as it does the concept of God as both transcendent and immanent, the process of continuous creation and the macrocosmic place of man. Chapter 9, which discusses matter in religion and science, is one of the most interesting, containing Peacocke's theological-scientific correlation of the eucharist and an explanation of his view of the world as sacrament (which is reminiscent of de Chardin's *Hymn of the Universe*).

The book contains only a fleeting reference to Taoism and none at all to any of the other major religions, remaining within the bounds of the Christian interpretation of 'God'. But that is only a criticism of its title, not of the book itself, which is an enlightening contribution to the task of closing the hiatus between religion and science. In its rigorous appraisal from this point of view, without popularising, it achieves a most difficult objective and is in this respect, in the opinion of this writer at least, a more significant contribution than Fritjof Capra's *Tao of Physics*. (2)

1. Ernst Haeckel. *Last Words on Evolution* 1906

2. *Tao of Physics* by Fritjof Capra. *Flamingo* 1975.

The Tao of Power.

Translated by R. L. Wing.

The Aquarian Press 1986. £6.99
(USA edition published by
Doubleday and Co.)

A new translation of the **Tao te Ching** is a happy event if it brings with it refreshing versions of familiar verses. This edition, which I came across in a bookshop in Hollywood Boulevard (and which now available in U.K), is an intriguing presentation (it was sitting on a display shelf of new publications next to a large hardback copy of **Mein Kampf!**). It is new translation by R.L.Wing and from the cover proclaimed itself to be Lao Tzu's classic guide to leadership, influence and excellence, while on the back it gave the useful advice to file under *Eastern Philosophy / Leadership Techniques*, announcing again that

"The Tao of Power is a magnificent philosophical treasure that can reveal the path to extraordinary social influence and personal excellence"

It did not stop there, but went on to say

"The Tao of Power blends the principles of management, physics and evolution with the philosophical insights of China. Accompanying the text are a series of Personal Power approaches to help today's reader tap the secrets of the Tao".

Well, this is California and Hollywood, no less, I thought, and having prepared myself for more potential distortions, I opened the book to find a series of introductory passages concerning how Lao Tzu was the world's first theoretical physicist and how to study the **Tao of Power** with the left or right hand side of the brain. There was also an indexing of the chapters according to topics such as *Power in Leadership* and *Power in Organizations*. It was all seemingly indicative of an American businessman's guide to the **Tao te**

Ching and, according to the terms in which I have grown to appreciate this book, a perversion.

The paradox is that the translation itself is in spirit completely free of such bias, although the 'sage' is now an 'evolved individual' and there are manners of expression that do seem to be 20th century Californian in style.

To help the reader, Mr Wing has given the verses titles and added a little metaphysical analysis at the end of each verse; in addition, there are, on each facing page, descriptions of the Chinese characters and their construction and meaning, or reproductions of drawings of Chinese emperors accompanied by brief biographies (and for those who like writing in books, there are even some blank pages set aside for precisely that purpose). The Chinese text is also included, but, to make it easier for those who 'cannot read Chinese (and to irritate those who can) the text reads from left to right instead of from right to left.

What it all adds up to is an attempt to bring to the **Tao te Ching** 'to the people' ('today's reader') and the style of packaging is consequently inappropriate, even tasteless, to a serious student of the **Tao**. The edition is in the same size format as the 1973 edition of the **Tao te Ching** translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English,⁽¹⁾ which has been used on Beshara courses since 1976, but it is on poorer paper and has none of the dignity or grace of the latter. It is perhaps an object lesson in why the highest truths should not be 'brought down' to an easy level of comprehension or wrapped in more appealing (?) packaging for mass consumption

However, even when all that has been said against it, this is a translation that communicates the flavour of the verses well and I would recommend it as a useful counterpoint to other translations.



The Character for Tao

The character for Tao is composed of several ideograms. At the top, there is the head of a leader, which is represented by a square with two little tufts of hair on top. It is combined with, (underneath), the marks of feet running and stopping, which means to advance. Together, they symbolise the higher mind, along with the feet, advancing on the same path.

From the *Tao of Power*

To give a couple of examples, Verse 1 is rendered as-

*The Tao that can be expressed
Is not the Tao of the Absolute.
The name that can be named
Is not the name of the Absolute*

*The nameless originated Heaven
and Earth.*

*The named is the Mother of all
Things.*

*Thus, without expectation
One will always perceive the
subtlety;
And, with expectation,
One will always perceive the
boundary.*

*The source of these two is
identical,
Yet their names are different.
Together they are called
profound,
Profound and mysterious,
The gateway to the Collective
Subtlety.*

Verse 4 is rendered as:

*The Tao is empty and yet useful;
Somehow it never fills up.
So profound!
It resembles the source of All
Things.*

*It blunts the sharpness,
Unties the tangles,
And harmonises the brightness.
It identifies with the ways of the
world.*

*So deep!
It resembles a certain existence.
I do not know whose offspring it
is,
This image in front of the source.*

in contrast to Arthur Walley's (2)

*The Way is like an empty vessel
That yet may be drawn from
Without ever needing to be filled.
It is bottomless; the very
progenitor of all things in the
world.*

*In it all sharpness is blunted,
All tangles untied,
All glare tempered,
All dust smoothed.(3)
It is like a deep pool that never
dries,
Was it too the child of something
else? We cannot tell.
But as a substanceless image, it
existed before the Ancestors.(4)*

and Gia-Fu Feng and English's

*The Tao is an empty vessel; it is
used but never filled.
Oh, unfathomable source of the
ten thousand things!
Blunt the sharpness,
Untangle the knot,
Soften the glare,
Merge with dust.
Oh, hidden deep but ever present!
I do not know from whence it
comes.
It is the forefather of the emperors*

(1) *Tao te Ching* translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English. Wildwood House, 1972.

(2) *The Way and Its Power*. Arthur Walley. George Allen and Unwin. 1968

(3) *Dust* is the Taoist symbol for the noise and fuss of everyday life.

(4) *Substanceless image* - a Hsiang, ie an image such as the mental images that float before us when we think.

BESHARA

Beshara magazine appears four times a year and is available only by subscription from the Beshara Trust and from selected newsagents and bookshops.

The June Issue will include

Rupert Sheldrake - Part 2 of The Presence of the Past in which Dr Sheldrake considers collective behaviour – in the animal kingdom in termites and flocks of birds and in the human realm in crowds, sports, ceremony and ritual, initiation and religious practice.

Richard Waddington – Heart, Art & The Artist
A reflection on the saying “Indeed the Self is extremely beautiful and loves beauty” which considers the true place of the creative artist.

Richard Twinch – Perception and The Mind
**Adam Dupré – What is Esoteric Education,
News and Views, Reviews and more.**

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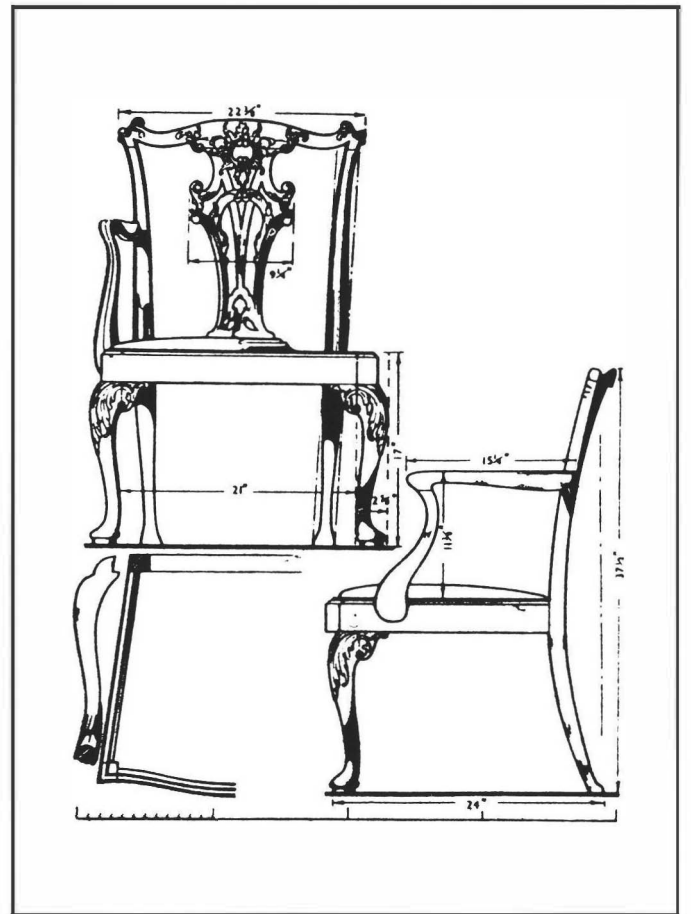
*For he on honeydew hath fed
and drunk the milk of
paradise . . .*

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The Beshara Trust – News and Events

Reaffirmation of Intent

The objects of the Beshara Trust, as expressed in its new constitution, are:

'The advancement of education in the consideration of the basic unity of all religions, in particular by the provision of courses to provide an understanding of the relationship of man to the universes, the earth, the environment and the society he lives in, to Reality and to God'.

Over the past year there has been a great change in our perception of the magnitude of what this implies, and of the urgent necessity for it to be fully expressed. This evolution from the understanding of a principle to its expression has demanded not only the clarification and reaffirmation of existing intentions, but also has given rise to a number of new initiatives.

Until recently the Beshara Trust has necessarily concentrated on the educational aspects of its work. Now, the need for expression in this world has naturally resulted in the extension of Beshara into areas of today's incentive, the foremost of which are science and finance.

Thanks to the great progress being made in these areas, a balance and a new understanding of reality today is developing which can provide a secure foundation for future expansion.

At a recent joint meeting of all the various committees which administer Beshara Trust projects, a schema was proposed for considering how the different functions and activities interrelate within the Beshara Trust. This is shown overpage, and delineates the major functions of **education, communications, expansion, science and finance** and the principle activities within each.

1) Communications

In response to this need for Beshara to 'go out and express and show itself' a communications committee

is working closely with a Public Relations Consultant to prepare the ground for a large scale communications exercise involving the press, television and radio. The steps currently being taken are the design of graphics for consistent use on all printed material, the preparation of a series of new brochures and the training of a small number of people in the skills needed for effective communication in the media.

2) Finance

Over the past years, finance (economics) has come to assume a far greater unifying role in world affairs. In line with this, the Beshara Trust has adopted radical new approaches to financing the expansion of Beshara and its existing activities. All financial needs will now be handled by The Beshara Company Ltd., an investment company set up and wholly owned by the Beshara Trust. The Beshara Company Ltd. operates BEST (Beshara Educational Securities Trust) and is expanding to include under its umbrella a number of other schemes.

BEST

BEST has now been operating extremely successfully for one year and has received deposits in excess of £109,000. The interest rate offered to investors remains at 13% per annum, and a new facility has recently been introduced whereby subscribers may make small regular deposits by Standing Order. As a scheme whose aim is to generate profits for use in the expansion of Beshara, the success of BEST depends on continuing investment by those who endorse its aims and it is hoped that the level of interest and investment will remain high.

Chisholme Endowment Fund

This new investment initiative has just been launched. Its aim is to meet the financial needs of

Chisholme and to ensure that scholarships are available as needed. The basis of the fund is a sizeable bank loan, secured by the guarantees of individuals, which is to be invested through The Beshara Company Ltd. Whilst it is anticipated that this fund will go a long way toward meeting all Chisholme's needs, it must be emphasised that at this stage other sources of income are also vital.

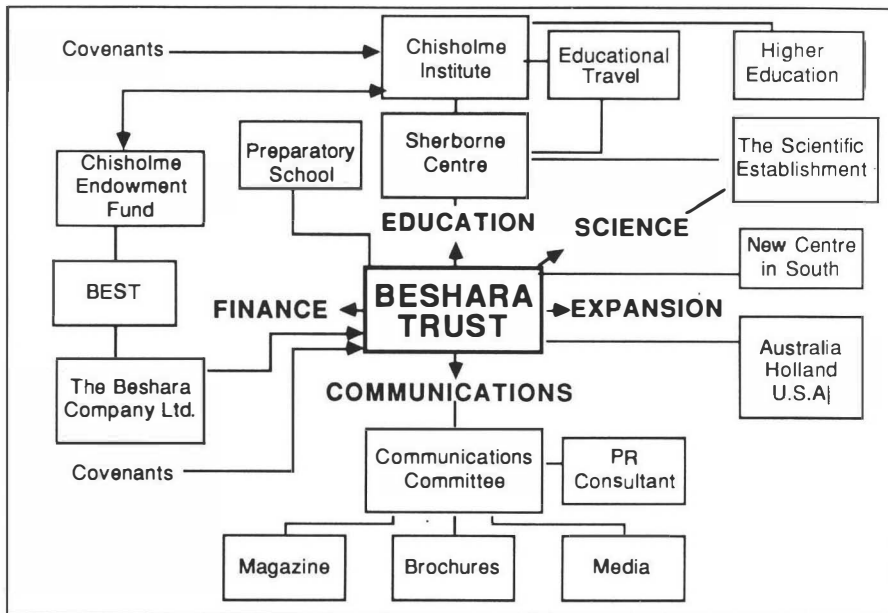
3) Science

At the frontiers of science, knowledge of our universe is undergoing a radical reappraisal. The conclusions emerging are consistent with the spiritual wisdom of God as universal Being, thus preparing the way for the emergence of a vision which unites the spiritual and physical universes. As Bulent Rauf comments in his article **'To Suggest a Vernacular.....'** on page 9 of this magazine, *"It is the required birthright of today that it should be allowed to benefit from a new expression of both religion and physics in the formulation of a new vision, and this vision is Beshara"*. Keeping informed of progress in scientific thought, allied to continuous exchange of ideas with the scientific community, is therefore seen to be of central importance to Beshara.

This has already begun with the visit of Professor Brian Goodwin of the Department of Biology at the Open University to Chisholme in July last year and the seminar given by Dr. Rupert Sheldrake at Sherborne in the autumn. It will continue with the forthcoming seminar programme and with reports and articles in future issues of Beshara.

4) Education

The programme of seminars and lectures at Sherborne which proved so successful last year will continue and expand. In accordance with the fact that *"Beshara must set the*



pace and the example of thought trends and directions". (Quoted in Beshara News Bulletin November 1986), those at the forefront of knowledge in their particular field have been invited to come and share their views, in order to stimulate a genuine exploration and enriched appreciation of the meaning of Unity in expression. Eminent speakers from a number of disciplines, with the emphasis on science and economics, will be conducting weekend or one-day events throughout the coming year. Chisholme has received an application for the introductory six month course from a student studying Ibn 'Arabi at an American University and hopes that the studies at the Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education can be credited towards her university course. This recognition is most welcome, and it is hoped that many more such links will be forged between the Beshara Schools and recognised courses of further education.

The Beshara Preparatory School
 Members of the Schools committee have been working to clarify the real intention behind the school, in order that this may be expressed in all stages of its establishment. The following statement has been prepared:

"The primary meaning and purpose of the Beshara Preparatory School is to facilitate a sound education informed by the universal and unifying vision of the child's uniqueness and potentiality as a being of God, placed in man's care.

It is the very best of visions, the most encompassing, which entails the very best educational practice; for it is incumbent upon educators to treat well those who are dependent upon them. Such a conception is the root ground of child-centred education, for the child is a place of meaning and purpose.

Quality and excellence will be the hallmark of the school, and the provision of an effective opportunity for acquiring those life skills and sound educational qualifications vital for the child's future as an adult. But above all, such an education will foster the love of beauty, a love of life and a love of learning commensurate with the vision of the child as a receptacle of God's meaning and purpose, beyond dogma."

Travel

The visit to Turkey in December each year has always been considered an integral part of the process of education within Beshara. In the past two years, other visits have taken place in late spring, each with an historical theme. The visit to Andalucia, 'In the Steps of Ibn

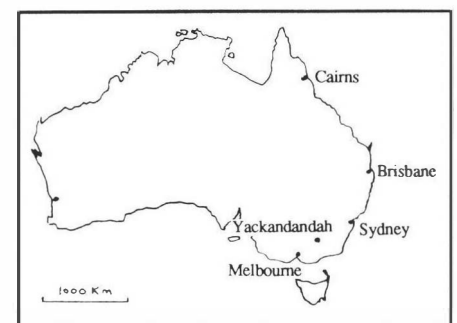
'Arabi', which was planned for Spring this year has been postponed and instead a tour of the most important Ottoman sites in Turkey will take place in late May under the guidance of Bulent Rauf. The itinerary will concentrate on the centres of the Ottoman Empire and will retrace the movement during the conquest of the Byzantine Empire from Bursa through Edirne (Adrianople) culminating in Istanbul. Further details from Peter Yiangou at Sherborne.

5) Expansion

As has been reported in previous issues, the Beshara Trust is in the process of establishing itself in Australia, where there is an urgent need for a proper representation of the Trust and the Beshara School because of the demand from potential students.

The process of registration in Australia has been delayed by the fact that the Trust is changing its constitution, but we are pleased to report that the new constitution has now been approved and it is hoped that the registration in Australia can be effected quickly.

Great progress has been made on the location for a school of Intensive Esoteric Education. Dan Carberry has made available to Beshara 70 acres of land at Yackandandah (see map) on the borders of Victoria and New South Wales, very well situated within a few hours drive of the major cities of Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney. When Richard MacEwan arrives in Australia, he will begin the process of designing, building and establishing a Beshara School there. A full report on these very exciting developments will appear in June's **Beshara**.



Sketch Map showing location of Yackandandah

News from Chisholme

by Peter Young (Director of Courses)

Over the past two years it has become increasingly clear that Beshara has entered a new phase of expansiveness. This has been reflected in certain new moves and changes; for example, there is the recent public relations initiative, the Beshara Educational Securities Trust, the Sherborne seminar programme, as well as the establishing of a school in Australia and a preparatory school in Oxford. At Chisholme, the estate has been amplified by the gift of land, the house is all but completed and both six month courses now run side by side over the winter months.

Beshara is reaching towards a far greater number of people. Those of us who are its potential representatives must also evolve similarly. There must be a body of people ready, highly tuned, and capable of coping with a surge of interest resulting from these initiatives, of talking to the media, supervising and correlating courses and fulfilling a host of other needs.

In direct response to the demands of this situation, a course will be running at Chisholme this summer which is open to all who have completed both six months courses.

It will be a new course, the immediate purpose of which is the reaffirmation of our intention, motivation and resolve.

If, for want of a better word, this project has been referred to as a course, it should be understood that it differs diametrically from the other two courses run at Chisholme in that there is neither a date of beginning nor end, nor is there a text or definite programme to follow. This summer will see Chisholme House adapted to the needs of all of us who have done the two six-months courses, where we can go and join a converse through which to reaffirm our resolve and re-establish our potential.

Therefore, please note that any of us can join in this summer session at any point during the six summer months from April 1st to end September, at any time that is most suitable, and leave at any time necessity determines.

The Chisholme Estate A report by Graham Falvey, The Estate Manager

The solum of a further 9 acres of the original Chisholme Estate has very generously been made available to

the Institute by Dr. Richard Gault. This plantation of young conifers reaches to the roadside by the entrance to the Estate, and whilst Dr. Gault wishes to retain rights over the conifers, he is happy for Chisholme to plant hard-wood seedlings in areas free of conifers. This means that when the conifers are felled, a young crop of hard-woods will already be present. BEST has offered to purchase this land as its first donation to the Institute.

Thinning activities in the coniferous area opposite the Gate Lodge have yielded not only £1150 but also wood for fuel and useful timber for future fencing. Windblow in this area is less severe than last year as, with each growing season, the trees that remain begin to stabilise. Planting continues on the front clear-fell area with 200 Scotts Pine seedlings and an experimental batch of 70 mixed hard-wood seedlings.

Since the New Year, I have been joined by Geoff Thomas, and the value of having two people working full-time on the Estate is already being felt. In addition, there are plans to buy a new compact tractor which will reduce that burden of laborious work, increase the quality of the maintenance work and allow more landscaping schemes to be implemented.

News from Beshara Sherborne

by Arthur Martin (Centre Director)

In concordance with the need for Beshara to be publicly expressed, activities at the Centre are gaining momentum. Weekend and 10-day courses will remain the heart of the Centre's programme, and will continue throughout this year.

The children's courses, which have been held over the past two years, have proved so important and popular that they will continue to expand. A course for 10-13 year olds will be held over Easter, with others later in the year. In February, the first day for younger children (7-8 year olds) was held, the aim being that they could enjoy and express themselves within the environment

and context of Beshara. These will also continue, and the 'content' will be developed in line with the children's inclination and capacities.

A weekend for those who have completed both 6 month courses is planned for 22nd-24th May, to coincide with the Night of Power. It is essentially an opportunity to reaffirm one's desire and intention towards the One and Unique Truth. Such weekends have taken place at Sherborne since 1981.

In addition to the two study evenings held weekly at the centre, and a weekly Zikr now held on Sundays at 9.30pm, it is proposed to hold a study day one Sunday

a month, to which everyone is welcome. Limited nursery facilities will be available.

As reported above, the seminar programme is to continue. At the time of writing, **Kathleen Raine**, writer and a leading scholar of William Blake, is coming in the Spring to give a talk on "**Nature, House of the Soul**"; **Paul Ekins**, Director of the New Economics Foundation and author of 'The Living Economy' is coming in September; the physicist **Paul Davies** and the biologist **Dr. Arthur Peacocke** are expected in 1988.

The future of a new centre in the South of England depends very much upon what has been developed at Sherborne. God willing, activities at, and support for, the centre will continue to grow.

A Letter from Holland.

By **Elli Deutschmann**

Elli Deutschmann has been running study groups at her home in Maastricht, Holland, for many years.

The Prayer 'Rabb zedni 'ilman' (*Lord, increase me knowledge-wise*), which is the prayer of the Prophet Muhammed, is a very important prayer in Beshara. Its full meaning is "Lord, since You are the Only and Absolute Knower (*alim*), bring me to know the complete non-existence of myself so that it is realised completely, with certainty and by taste (*dhawq*), in the place of your manifestation that is your individuation as me, that there is only You, the One and Unique, the Self-Subsistent (*wahid-al-ahad, samad*) and not 'I'".

In the News Bulletin of July 1986, it said "Clearly it is time that Beshara is widely known. This is our duty, responsibility and pleasure".

Reading this, the question we ask ourselves is: how to do this in the best way? Because the best way is the only way in which it is proper.

And here the prayer 'Rabb zedni 'ilman' gives an indication. As there is only one Unique Being, what remains for us to do is simply to be in Remembrance of this as constantly as possible, so that it might be given to 'see' that all there is in manifestation is His Zikr of Himself. Or, to put in it terms of Beauty, that all there is in relativity is His Beauty reflected in the mirror-image of His Self-revelation. As He is always in love with what He is, this means, for us, to love with His Love, not only in its quality but in its universality. If there is a meeting with people, and this meeting is the consequence of this attitude, then it is the proper way of bringing out Beshara.

Because 'we' do not necessarily know who is interested or not and what is the best thing to say to a certain person at a certain moment, all this is given. Here the 'hearing' (and of course the acting accordingly) become very important. Even the ability to be as constant as possible in His Zikr is given, as it would be impossible without His

Mercy. In the action of complete surrendering is the seeing that all action is His, which is the interior of the message of Ibn 'Arabi.

To love with His Love is not an easy thing, It means the complete giving over and consequently the giving up of what we consider to be our concept of love and of what we consider to be our capacity to love; it means going beyond that.

There is only One Unique Being, and the bringing out of Beshara (the announcement that it is He that is the essence of everything, so that there is no 'thing', only Him) is a great pleasure. Does not He say, "I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known". Beshara is the invitation to consciously participate in this.

The value of Beshara courses are beyond description. For me, they are as a miracle in 'life'. The knowledge given there is knowledge from the highest level; and through balancing the four aspects (which are all equally important) of study, meditation, zikr and work, they integrate, through their form, the principle that He, God, is both transcendent and immanent. Thus, they act as a support in making clear or 'remembering' how the proper attitude – the attitude to prepare the place entirely – should be.

In Holland, in Maastricht, we are very grateful that people come to study groups. It is not only important for them to be confronted with His invitation, but it has the same importance for those who have done courses; it is a necessary support. The most difficult thing is the waiting until sentiment awakes. When this is established, people not only come more regularly but also, sometimes, bring new people along, which is wonderful.

There is still a lot to learn for all of us. May He guide us in our way, He who is the Hadi (*the guide*) and the Hakim (*the wise*).

Notes on Contributors

Bulent Rauf

was born in Istanbul in 1911. He was educated in Turkey, where he had a classical Ottoman education – reading Turkish, Arabic, Persian and three European languages – then at Roberts College. He read English literature at Cornell University and Hittite archaeology at Yale.

He settled in England in 1966 and now lives in Scotland, engaged in counselling at the Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education and in research and translation. In particular, he is currently working on a new translation of Ibn 'Arabi's **Fusus al-Hikam**, the first part of which was published by the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society in 1986

Cecilia Twinch

read modern and Medieval languages at Cambridge University and, after teaching English as a Foreign Language in Cambridge and working as a secondary school teacher in London, she gained a certificate of Education from the Froebel Institute in 1975. She has attended a number of courses at the Beshara School of Esoteric Education, has 3 children and now works as a teacher in Ipswich.

Dom Sylvester Houédard

studied at Jesus College, Oxford and St. Anselmo College, Rome. He has been a Benedictine monk at Prinknash Abbey since 1949. He



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has been a member of the National Liturgical Society, Vice-President of the National Poetry Society and acted as literary advisor on the Jerusalem Bible. He introduced concrete poetry into this country as part of his interest in the unified theory of the contemplative traditions of the East and West and has had several exhibitions of his work.

Dom Sylvester is a member of the Benedictine committee for dialogue with other monastic traditions and is currently helping the Venerable Akong in arranging the first Interfaith Conference at the Buddhist monastery Samye-Ling in September 1988.

Rupert Shelldrake

read Natural Science and took a Ph.D. in biochemistry at Cambridge as the Rosenheim Research Fellow of the Royal Society. He carried out research at Cambridge on the

development of plants. He is consultant plant physiologist to the International Crops Research Institute in Hyberadad.

Dr. Shelldrake lived for a year and a half at a Christian ashram in South India, where his controversial book **A New Science of Life** was completed.

Richard Twinch

studied architecture at Cambridge and the Architectural Association. He has attended both the introductory and advanced courses at the Beshara School of Esoteric Education.

He currently runs a specialist computer software business, is computer correspondent to **Building Design** and acts as consultant on building technology. He has known Rupert Shelldrake since 1976, when they were both members of Clare College, Cambridge.

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