

BESHARA

ISSUE 7

COMPASSION THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

The first Interfaith Conference held by the Tibetan Buddhists, with papers from the Khentin Tai Situpa, Peter Young and dom Sylvester Houédard

A TRIBUTE TO SINAN

Keith Critchlow and Peter Yiangou on the great Ottoman architect.

ALL THINGS GO IN PAIRS

Rev. George Pattison on 'The Wisdom Books'

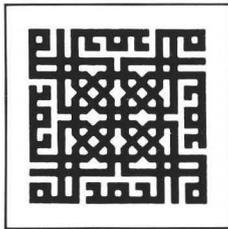
GOING OUT I FOUND THAT I WAS REALLY GOING IN

A tribute to John Muir, founder of the American National Parks Movement

Reviews of *A Brief History of Time* by Stephen Hawking; *The Presence of the Past* by Rupert Sheldrake; *Under the Eye of the Clock* by Christopher Nolan; new books on *The Global Situation* and *Confucius*...

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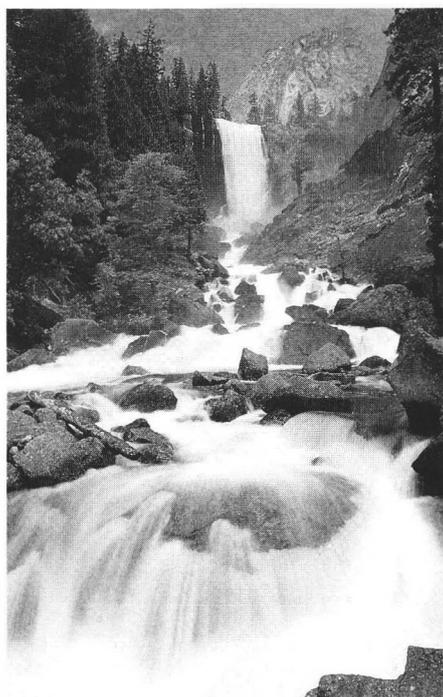
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BESHARA

THE MAGAZINE OF THE BESHARA TRUST

Issue 7



Vernal Falls, Yosemite. Photograph by Bill Ross

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EDITORIAL



WHEN WE BEGAN to put this issue together, two major disasters were dominating the world headlines; in Bangladesh, the worst floods in recent history had made millions of people homeless, whilst in South America, Hurricane Gilbert was laying waste Mexico and Texas. We do not know for certain what caused these disasters, but there is a fair body of opinion that says that neither was 'natural' in the usual sense of the term; the floods could well have been caused by the large-scale deforestation of the Himalayas whilst one of the consequences of 'The Greenhouse Effect' is to produce hurricanes of unprecedented power.

In this context, it seemed most appropriate that the question of compassion should emerge as the dominant theme of BESHARA 7; and particularly that we should cover in depth the interfaith con-

ference at the Samyé Ling Tibetan Centre in Scotland. For BESHARA is not concerned with issuing warnings of environmental doom, but with the reality of things. And even the possibility that these disasters – not to mention the ongoing situations in places like Ethiopia and Sudan – are 'man-made' must, for any feeling person, raise large questions about the way in which we live and about what we can do to change the situation.

The importance of the Samyé conference lay in its willingness to tackle these questions at their most fundamental level. In his talk which we print on page 15, the Khentin Tai Situpa, Patriarch of the Kagyu tradition, said that "... the most vital thing in terms of contribution to the well-being of others is to improve one's own mind. When the mind is OK then everything else will be OK too". To take this approach, which affirms the essentially spiritual nature of reality, is in no way irrelevant to the vast problems we face in the world. On the contrary, Peter Young points out (page 18) that "compassion... necessarily entails knowledge of the cause of things, since the cause of things is Compassion". And it is only when the cause of a problem is known that effective action can be taken.

Other pieces in the issue bring out further aspects of this universal compassion; George Pattison, for instance, reminds us that in its action it goes beyond our own subjective ideas of right and wrong, whilst Martha Chamberlin emphasises that it is compassion itself which allows any form of expression to occur.

Several other articles cluster around what may seem to be a second theme; that of temples. This appears predominantly

in our tribute to Sinan but also in Jane Carroll's article on John Muir – where she points out that for the traditional people of America, the land itself is a temple – and in Richard Twinch's review of the Samyé Temple.

This second theme is perhaps related to the first. For Peter Yiangou suggests that the essential meaning of a temple is not so much the particular structure or the religious form it represents, but the quality of the space which it contains. This is an 'emptiness', kept pure and perpetually open, which creates the conditions for the influx of the sacred, of grace – for what Keith Critchlow calls 'the Breath as Spirit or Self', and Akong Rinpoche simply 'compassion'.

Seen like this, the presence of so many temples in this issue highlights an attitude which many speakers at the Samyé conference were concerned to emphasise. For a physical temple is only a symbol of what we are ourselves. And in our essential nature, dom Sylvester Houédard points out, "perfection of mind (heart) is its perpetual reception, not the state of having totally received ..." (page 21).

This would indicate that wisdom lies not so much in 'being compassionate' nor in rushing into actions which, generated by a limited understanding, may actually worsen the situation; but in cultivating an attitude of receptive emptiness, of humility or selflessness which leaves space for a greater action to take place. For as the Khentin Tai Situpa says, "When there is this fusion of universal compassion and the wisdom of selflessness, there will automatically be unlimited spontaneous activity to help everyone".

Jane Clark

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GOING OUT, I FOUND THAT I WAS REALLY GOING IN

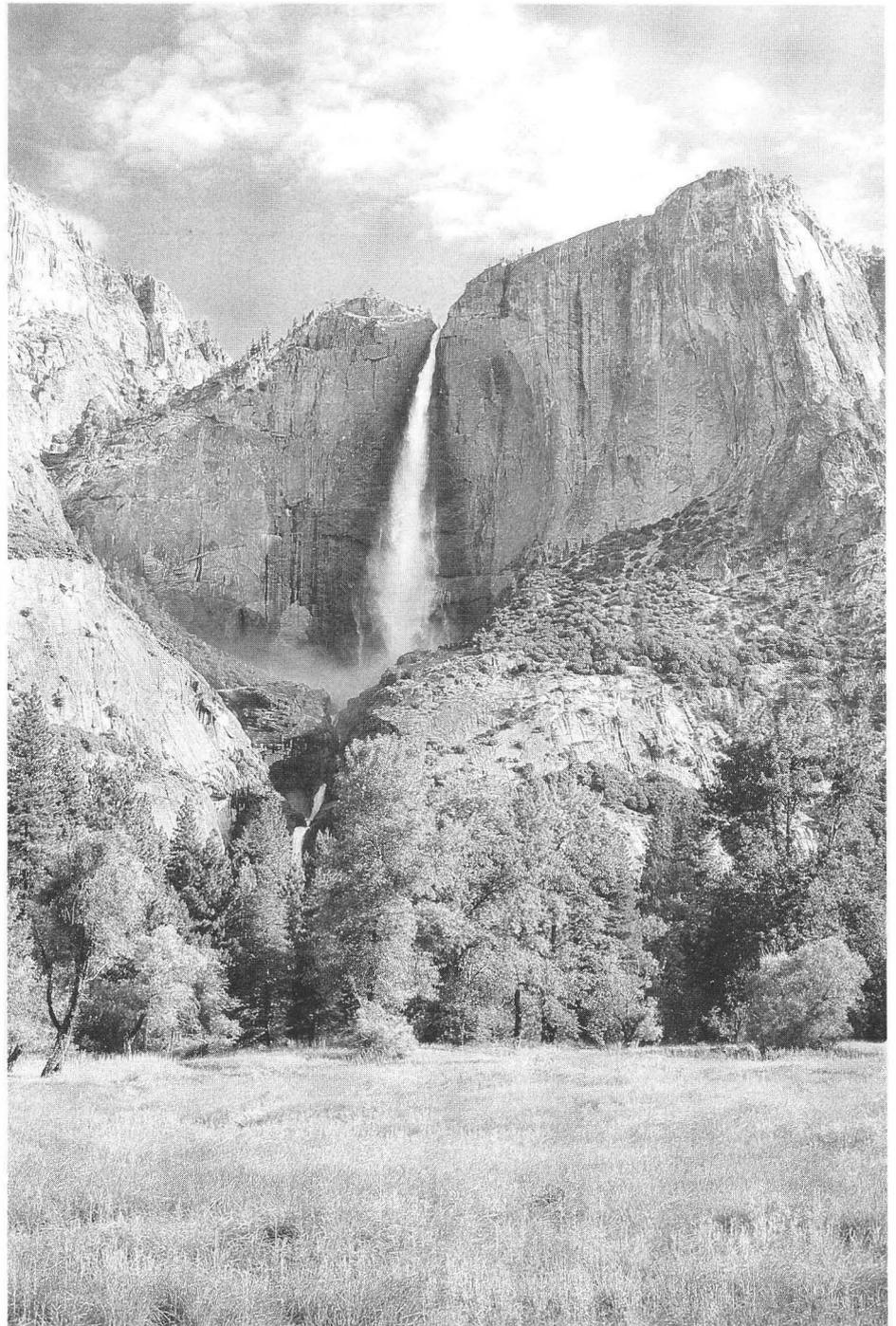
Jane Carroll pays tribute to
John Muir, who was born 150
years ago this year

"I went out for a walk and finally decided to stay until sundown. For going out I found that I was really going in".

THIS YEAR marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of John Muir (1838-1914), the American naturalist, geologist, wanderer and wilderness mystic. He is something of a patron saint of modern ecology, being one of the first of the great Victorian naturalists to study nature as though he himself were inextricably a part of it. His two great legacies to America are the foundation of the National Parks and the foundation of the Sierra Club which to this day protects the wilderness.

John Muir was born in Scotland but emigrated with his family to America when he was 11. He had a hard childhood, being worked to exhaustion on the family farm in Wisconsin under a severe Calvinist father. He nevertheless always loved nature and when he was 19 he left home to study the natural sciences at university in Madison. There he was taught by a wise fellow student of Botany that nature had its own order to be observed, not constructed: "Man has nothing to do with the classification of plants. Nature has attended to all that, giving essential unity with boundless variety, so that the botanist has only to examine plants to learn the harmony of their relations". (2). This accorded exactly with his own inclinations and in 1864 he left university to study first hand in the 'University of the Wilderness', travelling towards Canada on the first of his great trips.

In the footsteps of Thoreau and Emer-



Yosemite Falls. Photograph by Bill Ross. Courtesy of the Art Directors Photo Library.

son (whom he was to meet later and who greatly admired Muir), he wished to cleanse himself of conventional and traditional trappings of man and live with nature "not as a mere sport or plaything excursion but to find the Law that governs the relations subsisting between human beings and nature".

He returned to civilisation in a year and began working in a factory in Indianapolis. Interestingly enough for a man who was to devote his life to the perception of beauty in nature, he also loved the rush and whirl and roar of the factory and was

a great inventor. At home in Wisconsin he had made marvellous clocks of hickory wood and whilst at university had constructed a machine which would tilt him out of bed in the morning, turn on the light, select a book from his desk shelf, allot him a certain amount of time to study it and then close the book and open another!

In Indianapolis he invented a machine to make wheel spokes which was beginning to make him a wealthy man when he suffered an accident which caused him to lose his sight temporarily. This he was later to consider an act of God, for it

caused him to re-evaluate his life and realise that he was not fulfilling his great desire to spend his time with nature. "I could have been a millionaire", he was to say with pride in later years, "but I chose to become a tramp".

HE SET OUT ON FOOT on a 1000 mile journey through the wilderness areas of the south-east of America to Florida. This was to be the pattern for the rest of his life. Even in later years, after he had become a famous writer and friend of presidents, and when he had settled down in prosperity on a ranch in California with his wife and daughters, he would frequently "throw some tea and bread in an old sack and jump over the back fence" towards whatever wilderness called him.

In the spring of 1868, he arrived in Yosemite in California for the first time and was overwhelmed. "It seemed to me not clothed in light but wholly composed of it, like the walls of some celestial city". (3). He was to spend many years living in the wild and exploring Yosemite valley and the surrounding Sierras, immersing himself in the wilderness in order to understand it, and thereby himself. He was, he says, baptised and born again many times there and he describes these experiences on top of Mount Ritter, under Yosemite Falls, cascading down the mountain in avalanche, climbing a 100 foot Douglas fir in a storm "rocking and swirling in wild ecstasy" and smelling the wind there, knowing through what countryside it had passed on the way. "Oh these vast calm measureless mountain days, inciting at once to work and rest. Days in whose light everything seems equally divine, opening a thousand windows to show us God". (3)

He studied and read a great deal at Yosemite, and conducted much useful research, but unlike other scientists of his day, he never saw the study of nature as being separate from the love of its beauty. He was the first to propose that Yosemite valley had been formed by glaciers, the study of glacial action on the land being in its infancy then. Muir, realising their effect on the land, called them 'God's ploughs'.

He became one of the foremost authorities on glaciers, studying them later in Alaska where he also travelled extensively within the Arctic circle, more so than any other man of his day. Characteristically, he was to claim that his conclu-

sions concerning glacial action derived from a contemplative rather than an analytical approach. "No scientific book in the world can tell me how this Yosemite granite is put together, or how it has been taken down. Patient observation and constant brooding above the rocks, lying on them for years as the ice did, is the way to arrive at truths which are graven lavishly upon them".(5).

JOHN MUIR'S PROFOUND intimacy with Nature caused him to rail against the prevailing anthropocentric view of the 19th century. He found it absurd that 'Lord Man' should view the rest of creation as existing only to serve him. He saw every creature, animate or inanimate, as

"Another glorious Sierra day ... Life seems neither long nor short, and we take no more heed to save time or make haste than do the trees and stars. This is the true freedom, a good practical sort of immortality"

having its own inner necessity and as existing for its own happiness, independent of its usefulness to man. "What creature of all that the Lord has taken the pains to make is not essential to the completeness of that unit – the cosmos? The universe would be incomplete without man; but it would also be incomplete without the smallest transmicroscopic creature that dwells beyond our conceited eyes and knowledge".(6)

In denying the role of man as Lord over all creation, Muir (along with many of his followers amongst 20th century ecologists) left unexpressed the role of the Perfect Man as viceregent of the universe, but he did clearly establish that man's relationship to the natural order was as servant to its essential unity. Man's high rank, Muir claimed, derived from the fact that all of creation flowed through him; he

was the composite of the rest and thus the microcosm, "most richly Divine because most richly terrestrial". (1).

He subscribed to the theories of 'The Origin of Species' which were troubling so many thinkers of his day, but, very sweetly, he did not like its language. Terms such as 'struggle' or 'survival' in no way expressed for him the exhilaration he perceived in all life. Man himself he saw defined by that happiness when he wrote: "I think that one of the properties of that compound which we call man is that when exposed to the rays of mountain beauty it glows with joy." (5).

Muir lived on to become the venerable old man of the mountains, travelling throughout the world giving talks and writing. He disliked this work initially, finding it hard to limit what he had seen into prose: "As soon as one begins to describe a flower or a tree... up jumps the whole world and God Himself". He worked constantly for the preservation of the wilderness, saying "One must labour for beauty as for bread". By the time he died in 1914, he had helped to secure for posterity Yosemite and the Grand Canyon, that "gigantic statement even for nature to make".

Like most of his contemporaries Muir was, sadly, less than sympathetic to the plight of Native American Indians, whose beautiful land had been usurped. Yet in some kind of essential way he did a great deal to preserve their spiritual tradition which was so intimately connected with that land. In the United States of today, where the separation of the church and the state is such a cornerstone and where no one religious way informs the environment built by man, it seems entirely appropriate that Americans should turn to their great National Parks as their temples. The beauties of the continent are revered in these places, providing knowledge and inspiration. Consciously or unconsciously, thanks in part to John Muir, modern Americans as they visit their parks in great numbers continue in some way the spiritual tradition which long predated their arrival on that extraordinarily beautiful continent.

1) 'John of the Mountain'. 1938

2) 'The Story of My Boyhood'. 1913

3) 'My First Summer in the Sierras'. 1911

4) 'A Windstorm in the Forests of Yuba'.

5) 'Letters to a Friend; Written to Mrs Esra Carr 1866-1879'

6) 'A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf', 1916.

MIND AND NATURE

World Conference for the Future of Human Civilisation
Hanover, Germany, May 21st–28th 1988

A report by Richard Gault

MIND AND NATURE' was an extraordinary and important event. For a whole week two thousand participants gathered in Hanover to hear sixty of the world's leading minds probe the limits of civilisation's understanding of itself. From the talks they heard, and from the replies to the questions they asked, participants left Hanover with a keener understanding of the gravity, profundity and character of the crisis facing our civilization, but they left, too, with a surer sense of hope.

The Indian philosopher and former government minister, Karan Singh, voiced the concerns of many in his address on the opening day of the Conference, and set the tone for much of what followed:

"I respectfully submit to this distinguished gathering that unless we are able to recapture the symbiotic link between mind and nature, to rediscover the uniting principle that transcends this dichotomy, and to re-establish a deep awareness of the spiritual integrity of this planet, the prospects for our survival over the next few decades are not bright, and we may well turn out to be like the fabled continent of Atlantis, rich and resplendent beyond compare, but ultimately sinking below the waves, unable to survive our own technological ingenuity."

ORDER OUT OF CHAOS

What progress, then, was made "to recapture the symbiotic link between mind and nature" in the six long days that followed? Did the other speakers, drawn from such diverse backgrounds (science, music, philosophy, theology...), cultures (European, American, Asian...) and religions (Catholic, Protestant, Tibetan and Zen Buddhism, Hindu, Tao and Islam) even agree on the basic questions facing our civilisation? Might it not be more reason-

able to anticipate that with such a variety of viewpoints, any agreement would be largely superficial; that as speakers elaborated their ideas, it would become more apparent that they each represented radically different and often conflicting beliefs?

To think along the latter lines would be (consciously or otherwise) to apply the Second Law of Thermodynamics to social and intellectual life. This 'law', which describes a natural tendency for entropy (or disorder) to increase, has been widely taken up by scientists and the public as applying to life in general and its adoption might help to explain the widespread resignation to the phenomena of chaos and decay in our midst.

But two very different speakers argued against this belief. The first was the Belgian Chemist and Nobel Prize Winner, Ilya Prigogine, whose theories suggest that turbulent phenomena, far from being 'chaotic', are highly self-organising systems. The cosmology which he has developed envisages a movement from chaos to order. But this inherent tendency to order does not mean that the future (more ordered) state of natural processes can be predicted or controlled. On the contrary, their complexity makes them, in principle, beyond the reach of our predictions. The implication is that nature cannot be completely controlled – a conclusion in stark contrast to the generally accepted belief created by the philosophical fathers of Western science, Francis Bacon and René Descartes. If just Prigogine's ideas were to be seized by the general imagination, then humankind's relationship with nature could radically alter.

Prigogine's theoretical ideas were practically demonstrated by the German professor of music, Joachim-Ernst Berendt. He asked each of us to make as loud a sound as we could: it could be any single pitch sound which came naturally, but we should try to maintain the pitch. Despite this explicit instruction, and despite the



fact that we all acted individually, within 15 seconds the huge auditorium was filled with a harmony: we had 'self-organised'.

So if Prigogine's ideas are generally valid, and if talks are self-organising like music, then despite the variety in the character of the speakers we should have expected a consistency in their ideas, and a harmony amongst their beliefs. And indeed, over the week there did emerge a number of harmonies, although discord was also not absent.

CARTESIAN DUALISM

Many speakers spoke against the idea of dualism. In the introduction to the conference theme, the distinguished physicist Carl Frederick von Weizsäcker declared that the Cartesian dualism between mind and matter was something he had never been able to understand, except as an excuse to justify power. Why should not the extended universe think, or thought

not manifest itself? The following speaker, the German-American philosopher, Hans Jonas, offered his answer in a highly metaphysical talk. From the physicist's own cosmological description of the origin of the universe, he inferred that matter and mind were the inseparable twin aspects of Being. The development of the material universe could not have been *ordered* at the time of the Big Bang, he maintained, because there was simply no means then of 'storing' the information necessary to direct evolution. Rather, evolution could only be explained teleologically by a cosmogonic eros: "Thus the least attribute which we have to allocate to matter is its ability to attain the possibility of inwardness."

In drawing the conference to its conclusion Karan Singh remarked that its very name – 'Mind and Nature' – implied dualism. In an analogous manner, a leading Chinese exponent of Tao and T'ai Chi, Chung-Liang Ai Huang, had earlier explained that Yin-Yang simply could not be separated into 'the Yin' and 'the Yang', as many Westerners attempted. And at one of the Zazen meditations, Zen master Eido Tai Shimano-Roshi instructed us to locate the boundary between an outer sound and our inner experience of it. Our failure pointed to the illusion of dualism, he told us.

This last point was echoed by the polyglot and polymath Indian, Raimundo Panikkar, whose talk was one of the most outstanding of the conference. Panikkar drew special attention to the fundamental Western distinction between thinking and being. As he saw it, the main quest of Western culture is to uncover being via thought in order to reveal and master nature. By contrast, the Indian doesn't 'think' being, but lets being 'be'.

Ranking with Pannikar's talk, but challenging its content, was the paper given by Persian-American Professor of Religion, Seyyid Hossein Nasr. Nasr began by noting that he was the only speaker at the conference representing the one billion people of Islam. He derided the contemporary tendency of the West to look to the Far East whilst ignoring a culture with which it shared so much. His principle topic was Islamic mysticism, and specifically Sufism. He made the important point that, particularly through the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi, Sufism integrated rationality and mysticism. It contrasted both with the way of the East, which

emphasised the mystical path (as Pannikar had explained), and with that of the West, which relied upon intellectual thought.

Though there may have been some disagreement about how to approach it, Pannikar and Nasr, and many other speakers, recognised the central mystery of self-consciousness and the importance of developing it. Even Sir John Eccles, whose work on the nature of the brain and its functioning appears to fit squarely within the mechanistic paradigm, concluded his talk on 'The Origin of Mind' by declaring that "Self-consciousness is not explicable by evolution itself. It can be understood only by appealing to religion."

Others went further. The Canadian historian of consciousness, Morris Berman, spoke of "the ontological need to discover the self", and in an impassioned address the psychiatrist-philosopher R.D. Laing amplified Berman's words by quoting Auden's line "We must love one another or die", which then served as his text. He went on to supply a conundrum: "Only the realisation of who and what we are ontologically can reveal the nature of love, and only love can tell us who we are."

RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Perhaps the most visible harmony at the conference was provided by the members of the various religions present. Their very juxtaposition appeared to betoken a movement toward a new understanding of their role and of what they represent. Secular speakers also drew attention to



We heard from no hunter gatherers...

the changing understanding of religion today. Pannikar had noted in this talk that no single religion is the solution to the divisions in the world today. The Swiss parliamentarian and theologian, Heinrich Ott, described the fruits of the mutual explorations of Christianity and Buddhism by the theologians of these religions. To a Christian, Buddhist beliefs appeared so different to his own that there was even doubt whether Buddhism could properly be termed a religion. However, as the two sets of theologians had explored one another's beliefs and learnt to understand each other's esoteric terminology, they had discovered an astonishing amount of agreement.

This agreement was manifested by the remarkable nonagenarian, the German Jesuit and Zen Master, Father Hugo M. Enomiya. He spoke of the need for the Christian understanding of religion to be extended, and went on to confirm what Ott had told us. "The Eastern experience of being", he said, "and the Christian experience of the presence of God are not basically different. The presence of God is hidden within the Being of Buddhism." Whilst Father Hugo outlined the Zen way, the German-American Benedictine, Brother David Steindl-Rast, spoke more generally of mysticism and its role in religion. In his view "...people entrust themselves to a religion which they hope will make them religious. But this is the task of people as individuals: to bring - through mysticism - religiousness to religion and so enrich and put meaning into their lives."

Opinion on the issue of science, however, did not converge, nor did it polarise, but ranged over a spectrum. Many speakers criticised the way it has developed in the West. Nasr, for example, had begun his talk by noting that many civilisations had taken to science just before their downfall, and so the failure of Islam to 'develop' its science was probably a wisdom, not an error as perceived in the West. He went on to conclude his talk on a sombre note by warning that science would crush not only ecological life, but also all our visions. On a similar note, Laing described the scientific culture as 'out-culturing' all other cultures: the only remaining question was whether it would out-culture itself.

Occupying the middle ground were speakers like the futurist Peter Russell who saw science and technology as neu-

tral, and whose vision for global unity and the (imminent) appearance of a universal consciousness involves a global computer network. Taking a similarly neutral view of science and technology *per se*, but somewhat less complacent about the way they are actually being used, was Cardinal König of Vienna. The world is God's creation, he said, but is being treated as if it is simply a place for technological experimentation. He stressed the need to develop a spiritually responsible science and technology.

A more traditional view of science was offered by the German biochemist, Manfred Eigen. He held that scientists should be allowed to satisfy their curiosity at whatever cost to the community, because the benefits of any particular line of research could not be foreseen and moral decisions not to pursue pure research would expose a country to danger in war.

The strongest defence of science came from the venerable philosopher, Sir Karl Popper. "It is untrue, grotesquely untrue, that the world is being ruined by science, technology and industry," he told a capacity audience on the final morning of the conference. He concluded, "Our world is better than any social world that has ever existed... This is the freest and most just society that ever existed." The distrust of science which is now widely felt in the West was an over-reaction to the 'mistake' of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he asserted.

EMERGING HARMONY

The divisions in opinion about science and technology contrasted, then, with the more general agreements in the philosophical and theological realms. It seemed that there was an emerging consensus concerning new theories of mind and nature, but a far less clear agreement, or even understanding, of what should be done in practice. Indeed, the difficulties that practice poses were often avoided by simply ignoring them. Only the American New Age theorist, Hazel Henderson, addressed questions of economics; education was overlooked; politics was studiously ignored.

A response to this critical observation would be to argue that it is still premature to be prescribing changes in our civilisation's economic, educational, social, political and technological structures because, though the theoretical harmony

was encouraging, not all voices have yet been heard. For example, the American composer, David Epstein, prefaced his talk by noting that he was the only creative artist invited to speak at the conference. Amongst others Karan Singh remarked also on the scarcity of women speakers, and he commented on the complete absence of anyone from Africa or from amongst the European gypsies. He might further have mentioned that we heard from no craftsmen, nor specifically from a representative of any of the still numerous hunter-gatherers of our planet. The absentees were significant because, as Karan Singh noted, theirs would have been the voices of people living closer to nature than many of those who did speak.

These criticisms cannot detract from the achievement of 'Mind and Nature', which, I believe, marked a fundamental

and revolutionary transition in the philosophy and general outlook of Western civilisation. As more voices are heard, we can also anticipate an ever more resonant harmony to sound concerning the indivisible unity of life. We can expect this to happen because, to borrow Prigogine's words, we do seem to be moving forward towards order out of chaos.

Mind and Nature was organised on the initiative of the Minister-President of Lower Saxony, Ernst Albrecht, and supported by the German cultural body, the Goethe Institute.

More information about the conference, and copies of all the presentations made at it (both in printed and recorded form) are available from MEDIA & CONGRESS Nymphenburger Str 137, D-8000n Munich, West Germany.

Drawings by Julie Dry

ECKHART AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Hilary Williams reports on the second conference of the Eckhart Society

THE ECKHART SOCIETY held its second annual conference at Trinity and All Saints Training College, Leeds, from 2nd – 4th September this year. Entitled 'Eckhart and the Christian Life', it featured talks from dom Cyprian Smith, author of a recent book on Meister Eckhart's thought 'The Way of Paradox'; Dr Lyndon Reynolds from the University of Bristol, Dr Oliver Davjes of Wolfson College, Oxford and the Benedictine monk and poet, dom Sylvester Houédard. The Society, formed in 1987, was born of a recognition of the importance of the teaching of Meister Eckhart (c1260-1328), and an awareness of the growing interest in his work both inside and outside the Catholic Church. Eckhart attracted the attention of the Inquisition towards the end of his life, with the result that some of his works were pronounced heretical. One of the main purposes of the society is to see his position within the Church clarified, as we reported in a previous issue (1). It also includes in its aims the promotion of the study of Eckhart's teaching within the wider ecumenism,

since it is clear that he already plays a considerable role in the dialogue between the Christian and Eastern non-Christian traditions.

Dom Cyprian, opening the conference, chose as his theme 'Going Out and Remaining Within': a paradox illuminated by Meister Eckhart as follows:

"It is a marvellous thing that something flows out yet remains within. That a word flows out yet remains within is certainly marvellous. That all creatures flow out yet remain within is a wonder. What God has given is simply marvellous, incomprehensible, unbelievable...God is in all things. The more He is in things, the more He is outside the things; the more within, the more outside; the more outside, the more within. ... I have said many times that God creates the whole world right now all at once...There where time never entered nor image shined in, in this innermost and highest (part) of the soul. God creates this world..."

(German Sermon Number 30)

In his excellent appreciation, dom Cyprian Smith spoke of this as the key to all spiritual life. Just as God remains unknowable and transcendent in his Godhead (what Eckhart also calls the Abyss or the Silent Desert) so equally He does not remain locked up in His unapproachable transcendence, but pours Himself out giving utterance to the infinite secret hidden within His own depths. Yet Reality and its image; Speaker and Spoken; Expressor and Expressed; remain one and undivided. This apparent two (God and His eternal Word, Father and Son) becomes three with what unites it, the Holy Spirit. Simultaneously, He is Three and He is One, Spoken yet Unspoken. Dom Cyprian explains,

“Now we can see how it is that the Trinity is not some pale, bloodless abstraction, dreamed up by philosophers and theologians. On the contrary it lies right at the heart of life; indeed we only truly *live* to the extent that we are caught up in it... The Silent Desert cannot remain enclosed and dark; out of it the Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit emerge. Yet they, for their part, cannot remain distinct, but commune, unite and return to the transcendent Oneness of the Silent Desert... We have to talk about this ‘melting out’ and ‘melting back’ as if they occurred successively, one after the other; but in fact they are simultaneous and prolonged through eternity...

***“This, too, is what it means
to be a Person ...***

***Going out yet remaining
within is the creating and
sustaining mystery of the
universe.”***

This, too, is what it means to be a Person – to aim perpetually at transcendence, oneness emerging into multiplicity, multiplicity returning to oneness... Going out yet remaining within is the creating and sustaining mystery of the universe.” (2)

In his paper ‘Eckhart and the Trinitarian Theology’ Dr Lyndon Reynolds spoke of the context of Christian thinking during Eckhart’s time, and described how Eckhart synthesised both the formal theology of St. Thomas Aquinas and the more mystical, metaphorical expression of St. Bonaventure. He included comments on Eckhart’s trinitarian explanation of “I am who am”, whilst Dr Oliver Davies gave an account of attitudes taken to Eckhart’s writings in his own time, and considered his possible influence on Christian and secular thinkers in later centuries.

It was a particular pleasure to be present to hear dom Sylvester Houédard’s paper ‘Eating God’, on the text “They shall eat me and hunger” (Ecclesiasticus 24.29). Dom Sylvester expounded the meaning of this as the paradox of instantaneous influx and extinction; the mystery of efficacious causality; of ‘boiling over’; continuous creation or mercification.

“Since it is the instantaneous annihilation of the gift of ‘amness’ that makes us hungry as we eat it, the gift of ‘isness’ itself prepares us for receiving the gift, or, as Eckhart says, each gift is a preparation for receiving another gift... Consenting to the unceasing extinction of ‘amness’... makes *apex mentis* (*heart of mind*) the virgin spouse in a marriage of wills, and the virgin mother bearing the fruits of compassion”.

One is reminded in connection with this text of St Bernard’s discussion of “My soul has longed to desire” (Ps.118:20), which Meister Eckhart quotes: “Only the person who has longed to desire cannot be satiated by desire. Desire is the soul’s hunger. Because the God he loves is love, he loves to love, and to love love is to make a circle so that there is no end to love.”

In addition to a luminous exposition of its central point, dom Sylvester’s paper also contained helpful correlations with other traditions of truth, such as Tibetan Buddhism and the Islamic tradition of Suhrawadi and Ibn ‘Arabi.

Eckhart is a theologian and mystic of very great stature. He speaks not from opinion or conjecture, nor from dimly-sighted (if not blind) faith – rather he speaks with the penetrating insight, freshness and vitality of one who both knows, and is what he knows, and his importance transcends the boundaries of particular religion precisely because his insights spring from the Universal – that Reality which both transcends form and gives meaning to all form. As has been said, the real ecumenism is God’s own. We wish the Eckhart Society well in its endeavour to orientate itself to the profound responsibility involved in expressing and promoting a teacher of such stature.

(1) See *The Man from whom God Nothing Hid* in Issue 3 of BESHARA.

(2) From *The Way of Paradox*. Darton Longman and Todd, London, 1988.

The Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society Sixth Annual Symposium

SAINTHOOD

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April 7th-9th 1989

Details from:

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23 Oakthorpe Road, Oxford OX2 7BD
Telephone: Oxford (0865) 511963

NEWS IN BRIEF

Alison Yiangou comments on recent events

FROM THE BIG BANG TO BLACK HOLES

Stephen Hawking makes a big bang in the publishing world

PROFESSOR Stephen Hawking's latest book 'A Brief History of Time', reviewed on page 31, has turned out to be an unprecedented success. Refused by at least four major publishing firms as being too arcane, the book was eventually published by Bantam Press last June and was at the top of the bestseller lists in both Britain and America for weeks. In the UK, it is expected to reach sales of 200,000 by Christmas. It has claimed the attention of the whole gamut of the press from the Sunday Mirror to the Sunday Times, and has evoked widespread media interest in America and Europe.

To summarise what must by now be well known, Professor Hawking, Lucasian Professor of Theoretical Physics at Cambridge University, addresses the question of the 'why and how' of the origin – and end – of the universe, and does so in language accessible to the general reader. (The book is famed for having only one equation, the inescapable



Stephen Hawking, courtesy of Bantam Press

$E=mc^2$ as Hawking had been warned that each equation would halve sales!) Whilst in his 1970 paper Hawking 'proved' that the universe must have begun as a singularity, in this book he dispenses with this explanation in favour of one in which the universe does not need an origin, it just IS.

The question that all would-be popularisers of science – and their publishers – must be asking themselves, is what has contributed to the book's phenomenal success? Doubtless there is the factor of Professor Hawking himself, who, crippled with motor neurone disease, communicates his extraordinary ideas with the aid of a voice synthesiser. Doubtless there is an element of the 'cult book' factor – that to discuss this book in pubs or at dinner parties (even if one's discussion is limited to a confession that one couldn't get beyond the first five pages) shows that one is definitely 'au courant' in these matters. But equally doubtless is the fact that large numbers of people are actually deeply interested in the fundamental questions which Professor Hawking addresses, for this is a book which deals with questions upon which whole world-views are built, and destroyed. It has been said that, whereas in the past people sought answers to these questions from their religions, today they seek it from science. Seen in this light the book's popularity would seem to indicate that mankind's desire for knowledge has not lessened. Whether the book is indeed a source of knowledge is a question for the reviewer.

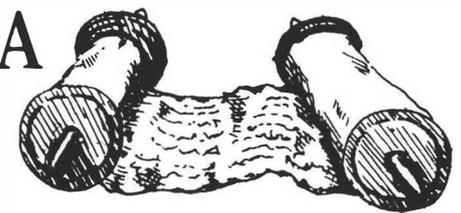
THE LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA

Plans are afoot to rebuild this great centre of learning

IN JUNE 1988, the first stone was laid of a new library at Alexandria. Sponsored by the Egyptian government, UNESCO and UNDP, this courageous project consciously aspires to emulate the great library of antiquity, which was one of the most powerful symbols of wisdom in the ancient world. Attached to the famous Museum, the Great Library of Alexandria was a repository of learning and knowledge for nearly a thousand years and at its height contained in excess of 500,000 manuscripts.

Alexandria was founded in 322 BC by

Alexander the Great, himself a pupil of Aristotle, and it rapidly became the centre of the world in terms of commerce and of thought. This was due both to its location – at the meeting point of three continents and the main communicating link with the wealth and civilisation of the East – and to the commitment of the Ptolemies (the ruling Greek dynasty) to learning. The Museum was akin to a university, and manuscripts were collected from all over the world. Indeed all travellers who arrived in Alexandria were compelled to leave a copy of any work they possessed.



Alexandria from the beginning was founded on the principle of equal rights for all citizens, and for many years it was the only place in the civilised world which granted full freedom the Jews. Those appointed to the university had no obligation to teach or to produce written work, but were employed only to think. Under the Ptolemaic dynasty the school specialised in science and literature; Archimedes, Euclid and Callimachus are but a few of the great names that date from this first period of greatness.

In the second century BC, the Library

THE PURPOSE OF E. COLI

A recent experiment challenges the central dogma of biology

IT IS SOMETIMES the case that the things which appear most certain in terms of our experience of ourselves are most vehemently denied at the level of scientific explanation. A particularly vivid example of this is the case of 'purpose'. We know ourselves to be purposive – to have dreams, wishes and intentions and to have the will to try to fulfill them. There are even those whose will is directed to serving a purpose not of their own making. Then there is the question of the purpose of life itself – one of the most profound that a human being can address.

But our modern biology will not allow that such purpose is operative in evolution. At the genetic level, the so-called 'Central Dogma' of neo-Darwinism tells us that information flows from the genes to the body, but that it is impossible for adaptive information to be transmitted from the body back to the genes. Restated in terms familiar to students of evolutionary biology, Lamarck's theory that ac-

quired characteristics can be inherited, although accepted by Darwin himself, is resoundingly rejected by neo-Darwinists. They propose that random genetic mutations, or chance, is *the* mechanism of evolutionary change. Two points are worth noting here; firstly the ubiquity of this explanation – chance is seen not as a mechanism, or even the main mechanism, but as *the only* mechanism; and secondly the determinism that it necessarily implies.

Who, or what, one might idly reflect, could bring about a widespread, 'sea-change' in such established attitudes? Enter stage-right a most unlikely protagonist, namely a bacteria flourishing in the human gut and familiarly known as E.Coli. This stars in a paper published in the science journal 'Nature' in August (1) by a team of researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, led by John Cairns

The team put a strain of E.Coli unable to digest the sugar lactose into a medium

containing lactose and studied the mutations which occurred. They found that whilst spontaneous mutations of many kinds do undoubtedly occur, over a period of time the bacteria, deprived of any other source of energy, mutate in a way which enables them to use the lactose as food.

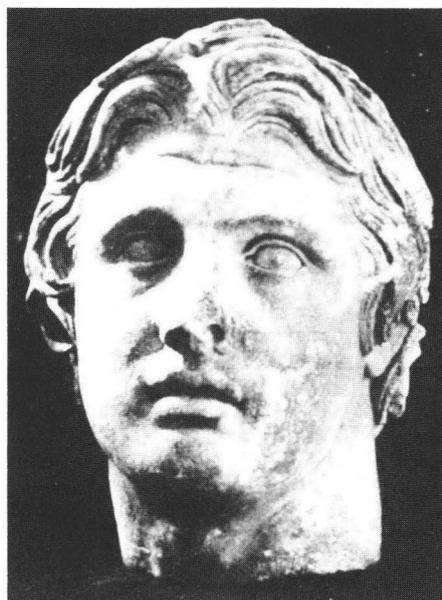
The number of such mutations is significantly greater than when no lactose is present, whilst other random mutations remain at the same level. Moreover, this 'enabling' process is itself extremely complex and may require several specific changes. In one such process involving cryptic genes (genes which become activated only if other mutations also occur), the probability of this happening by chance has been estimated as one in every ten million billion generations. The possibility that the bacteria are mutating in response to the environment – and so exhibiting responsive, purposive change – has therefore to be considered (2).

If this result is verified and accepted by the scientific establishment, it is of profound importance, and lends powerful support to the significant number of biologists who now believe that there is more to the process of evolutionary change than the central dogma allows. Already, physicists are discussing a set of ideas loosely called 'The Anthropic Principle' which suggest that the evolution of the universe as a whole is teleological (3). If we admit



at Alexandria came to be rivalled by that at Pergamon, a city in Asia Minor which reached the peak of its splendour under Eumenes II (197-159 BC). To try to curb this threat the Egyptians banned the export of papyrus, hitherto the principal source of writing material. The response of Eumenes was to 'invent' parchment – very fine goat skin prepared in a particular way. Indeed the name 'parchment' comes from the name Pergamon (Lat. *charta pergamena*; Fr. *parchemin*). The Library at Pergamon continued to expand until Mark Anthony took the entire contents to Egypt as a present for his beloved Cleopatra, where it is presumed that they were added to the collection at Alexandria.

In 30 BC the Greek Ptolemies were displaced by the Romans and the centre of learning began to move to Rome; however the Alexandrine school then entered the second period of its flourishing. Due



Head of Alexander the Great, c. 330BC.

to the intermingling in the city of Jewish and Christian religious beliefs with orien-

tal gnosticism, the second Alexandrine school provided the setting in which the work of the Gnostics and the early Church Fathers came to fruition, and gave birth to Neoplatonism.

Two people from this period stand out. The first was Philo who, born in about 20BC into a wealthy Jewish family, produced a Logos doctrine which laid the metaphysical foundation for the appearance of Christ. Such was his importance that the historian Henry Chadwick has said that: "The history of Christian philosophy begins not with a Christian, but with a Jew, Philo of Alexandria..." The second was Plotinus (AD 205–270) who represents the pinnacle of neoplatonic mysticism. Although himself not a Christian, it is said that he left a deeper mark upon Christian thought than any other man: the influence of Plotinian mysticism upon Augustine, the Cappadocian fathers and Pseudo-Dionysius led to its absorp-

that there is purpose also at the bacterial and genetic levels, and we know that there is purpose at the human level, what grounds do we have for denying that creation itself has purpose?

If we allow that it does, then clearly the arrow of 'causation' must reverse. Whereas ideas such as the central dogma point this arrow irreversibly from lower to higher – so that events at the most microscopic level determine all other levels – the understanding now emerging is that changes at a higher level of organisation have consequences all the way down. Taken at its highest degree, this is exactly the principle expressed in the perennial wisdom, that the spiritual governs and controls the material everywhere.

Research itself is never purposeless; the researcher or theoretician is guided in his seeking by the questions which he has posed to himself. If E. Coli leads more researchers to take as their starting point the fact that life, and hence all living things, have purpose and they begin to re-evaluate their findings in this light, then we should see the emergence of a biology which truly deserves the epithet 'new'.

(1) *Volume 335, p142*

(2) *New Scientist, 22nd September 1988.*

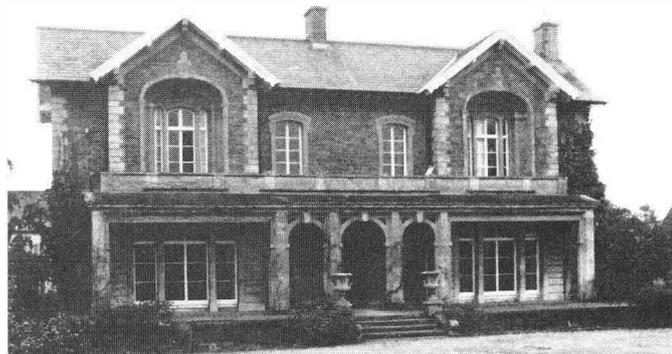
(3) See 'The Cosmological Anthropic Principle'. Barrow & Tipler, reviewed in BESHARA 6.

tion, almost unchanged, into the Church as the foundation of a Christian gnosis.

Such, then, was the Alexandrine school. Its destruction, with all it contained of man's intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual attainments, during the siege of the city by 'Amr in 642 AD was indeed a loss.

Whilst the original housed half a million manuscripts and anticipated our modern libraries in the way it was run, the new Library aims to hold 4-5 million titles in print, audiovisual and electronic media. It is attached to the University of Alexandria, and its purpose is to encourage the cultural development of Egypt, and also of the whole of the Mediterranean area, Africa and the Arab world. The Museum will also be reinstated and will specialise in the history of science and in calligraphy. The design of the building will be through an international competition, the results of which will be announced next September. The library is expected to open in 1995.

BESHARA FRILFORD



Beshara aims to promote a spiritual orientation to life without the bounds of dogma or religion; to provide an understanding of the relationship of man to the Universe, the Earth, the society he lives in, to Reality and to God.

Programme of Events

Saturday	10.30am-12	Study
Sunday	11am-12.40	Study and meditation
	4.30-6pm	Study

Weekend Introductory Courses

(residential or non-residential)

16th-18th December 1988

13th-15th January 1989

10th-12th February 1989

10th-12th March 1989

Ten Day Courses

(residential)

9th-18th December 1988

Seminars

3rd December 1988

The Theology of Number by Keith Critchlow

18th-19th March 1989

The Poetry of Ibn 'Arabi by Dr Ralph Austin

A full programme for the New Year will be available soon.

For this and further details of all events, please contact:

The Secretary

The Beshara Trust

Frilford Grange, Frilford,

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Telephone: Oxford 0865 391344



COMPASSION THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

A report by Elizabeth Roberts

THE THREE DAY interfaith conference that took place from 15th–17th August at Samyé Ling, the Karma Kagyu Tibetan centre in the Scottish Borders, marked the culmination of a whole month of festivities and spiritual teachings in celebration of the public inauguration of their new temple on 8.8.88.

At the inauguration ceremony the Khentin Tai Situpa (Patriarch of the Karma Kagyu tradition of Buddhism) called the foundation of this temple an historic event, comparable in importance with that of the original Samyé, the very first Buddhist temple in Tibet. What that historic significance will prove to be may lie in the very difference between the two situations. As he said at the conference, in the past in Tibet people looked only to

their own cultural traditions and their own religion, and it was not necessary to look further than that. Accelerating technological development means that today the opposite is true. It is no longer possible for us to ignore the variety of peoples, cultures and beliefs that lie beyond the bounds of our immediate horizons. Indeed any attitude of segregation, of animosity towards any aspect is an irrelevance as far as the current world situation is concerned.

It is with precisely this wider aim in mind that Akong Rinpoche, the joint founder and present head of Samyé Ling, was inspired to build the temple: a building unmistakably and exotically Tibetan in appearance, yet offering itself as a resource and refuge for all people, irrespective of culture or creed. It was therefore a

setting singularly appropriate for the hosting of a meeting of faiths – the first interfaith event ever hosted by the Tibetan Buddhists – and the quality of its intention was felt and appreciated by its visiting dignitaries.

Among those present at the symposium were representatives from the major world religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, although the setting of a Buddhist temple in a Christian country meant that there was perhaps a greater emphasis on these two faiths. The speakers included the Khentin Tai Situpa and the Ven. Hammalawa Saddhatissa, President of the British Mahabodhi Society and Head of the London Buddhist Vihara, on behalf of Buddhism; dom Sylvester Houédard, a Benedictine monk from Prinknash Ab-



Photograph by Rod Bull

Delegates from all the major faiths met in August for a conference at the Samyé Ling Tibetan Centre in Scotland

by: the Rt. Rev. Michael Hare Duke, Bishop of St Andrews; Rev. Dr Tartaglia, Rector of Chesters College, Glasgow; Rev. Dr Alastair Hunter of Glasgow University; Rt. Rev. Donald McGlynn, Abbot of Nunraw; Rabbi Fred Morgan, N.W. Surrey Synagogue; Mrs Brij Ghandi of the International Fiat; Mr Sharma, prominent Hindu scholar and author; Mr Ibrahim of the Islamic centre, Glasgow, and Mr Peter Young from the Beshara School of Esoteric Education at Chisholme House in Scotland.

During the first two days of the conference, the twelve speakers presented their papers to a closed gathering, with discussion and comments after each presentation, while on the third day the conference was thrown open to a wider public. There was also the opportunity of worship to-

gether with the unique celebration, inside the Buddhist temple, of a Catholic mass in which any who wished were invited to take part.

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

In his excellent summing up of the themes of the conference the Chairman, Dr Whaling of Edinburgh University, explained how these had divided into two main subjects: interfaith dialogue, meeting, cooperation and coming together on the one hand; and on the other the specific theme of compassion through understanding.

One theme that went through the whole symposium was the global situation in which we find ourselves, the global problems that the world faces today and the part that interfaith dialogue

can play in trying to find solutions. These problems Dr Whaling analysed at different levels. The first is ecological: at this level we face the fact of pollution, of disappearing rain forests, growing deserts, acid rain, the depletion of energy resources and the nuclear threat. The second level is human or humane: it includes the growing world population and the fear as to whether it can be fed; racial discrimination, sexual discrimination and the problem of AIDS; the political divide between East and West and the economic divide between North and South; the nuclear threat and the threat to world peace. At another level are the moral problems of how to use space and the sea to the benefit of the whole of mankind; and of how to use electronics and genetics. Finally at the spiritual level there is the perennial search for meaning that lies at the heart of the human condition.

In trying to see how, as world religions cooperating in dialogue, they could address these different global problems, the speakers were honest. They admitted that in some ways religions are sometimes part of the problem. Rabbi Fred Morgan, speaking from a history scarred by religious persecution, made a passionate plea for immediate compassionate action in the world to establish justice and tolerance between faiths. The holocaust was referred to by the Rabbi, Alastair Hunter and others, also Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Iran and Iraq, Sri Lanka, the Punjab: places where religions are not helping, but are helping to cause, the problems. However the conference as a whole felt very deeply that the world faiths do have a power to play for good, especially on the subject of world peace. Dr Saddhatissa and the Khenin Tai Situpa in particular spoke very eloquently on this matter.

Attitudes to other faiths and the possible future of religion were other subjects discussed – whether religions would wither away before the onslaught of secularisation; whether one religion would absorb all the others or whether, in the future, all religions would join together in one vast world religion. These possibilities were raised, but the consensus was rather that in the future all traditions will continue, but that they will come closer together in understanding, in cooperation and in dialogue.

Donald McGlynn, the Abbot of Nunraw, spoke of the challenge to be met in

dialogue between the faiths – of openness to one another, of the willingness to learn from one another and to teach one another, and of the creative transformation that can result when the riches of another tradition can pass over into another cultural world. On this point the Khentin Tai Situpa went so far as to suggest that the only way for us really to understand the essential meaning of our own religion, now, is through the proper understanding of everything else. The need for the removal of racial and cultural boundaries that do not exist in reality, for sharing what we have with others and for respectfully listening to one another is of paramount importance at this time.

COMPASSION THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

On the main subject of compassion through understanding, the speakers displayed such a breadth and variety of knowledge that it would be impossible to do justice to all the papers in a brief article such as this.

One aspect which was considered was the nature of understanding or knowledge, which, it was felt, has many different levels. Superficially, it could be understood to be basic, factual information. Even this could be helpful, as through modern communication systems such as television it is now possible to actually see what is happening in other places in the world. But there are deeper levels of knowledge, one of which was referred to as 'right knowledge' or wisdom. At another level, there is what was referred to as 'right-mindedness'. Mr Sharma, in his remarks about the Hindu tradition, talked about knowledge as knowing our real self, or our oneness with Brahman (the Truth behind the universe). At yet another level, it was spoken of as the degree where Absolute Reality, Absolute Truth, however we define it, takes up into itself the level of knowledge.

In looking at compassion, Bishop Michael Hare Duke talked about the 'circles' of compassion, which he saw as three; the first being compassion towards ourselves; the second being towards others, which begins with our families and friends but ultimately extends to the whole earth; the third is towards the natural world – something which many speakers explored. Also discussed was the way in which compassion is exercised; it must

involve our mind and our reason if it is to result in effective action and not remain simply sentimentality; it must involve our emotions, or our passion; and ultimately it must involve the surrender of our will to the need of compassion, so that our involvement is constant and not sporadic.

It was agreed that the relationship between compassion and understanding could seem a complex one, and some papers emphasised one over the other. Some brought out the view that we approach the subject of compassion through understanding from different angles because we each bring to it a different world view. For example some share the world-view of reincarnation, while others believe we are born and live only once. Some rely on grace from a personal God,



while others have neither word nor concept for God in their language and place more emphasis on human effort. A difference was also drawn between images: between the image of Christ dying in agony on the cross, and a Buddha enlightened with seraphic calm exercising the *mudras* towards the world. These indicate different perspectives towards the questions of suffering and compassion and understanding.

But other papers stressed the underlying unity behind all our traditions, our thoughts and our theories. Of these, Dr Whaling mentioned three speakers in particular – Dom Sylvester, Peter Young and the Khentin Tai Situpa – who spoke of knowledge and compassion from the highest degree, from the point of view of the Absolute Reality. Peter Young, speak-

ing not from any one faith but from a school which is concerned with those teachings which relate particularly to the Unity of Existence, stressed that there is an underlying, essential unity behind all the religions. This unity is mysterious and unnameable, yet it is at the heart of all religions and ultimately is categorised by compassion; indeed, in some ways, it *is* compassion.

This same truth was implied by the Khentin Tai Situpa, whose exposition of the nature of Ultimate Truth and Relative Truth within the context of Buddhism was equally applicable to the wider ecumenism, whilst Dom Sylvester, in his profound exploration of the four journeys of the mind, traced the metaphysical and mystical similarities between the Tibetan and the Christian traditions. Extracts from these three papers follow, whilst the full symposium proceedings will eventually be available as a book.

SUMMARY

Dr Whaling concluded his summary by saying that in the course of the symposium there had been a meeting of minds. There had sometimes been a clash of minds, but also a meeting of minds, persons and spirits. However, more than that, he felt that the purpose and significance of the conference was not just that it helped the participants individually to deepen their own knowledge and understanding but that, as Dom Sylvester said, it was itself part and indication of a wider change that is actually taking place at the moment.

In speaking of this wider meaning Dr Whaling quoted President Munroe of the United States who, at the beginning of the last century, said "We call a new world into being to redress the balance of the old world." In some ways, he felt that this conference too was trying to say that it wanted to call into being a new, integral, humane, global world in order to integrate the partialities of the old world which it hopes and thinks is passing away. The meeting and talking together at this conference cannot be entirely accredited to the volition of its participants; rather we are all being urged by the very situation in which we live to come together more to talk to, understand and cooperate with one another. Dr Whaling could only see this process as growing. He foresaw that in years to come the meanings brought out at

the Samyé Symposium, which has now been proposed as an annual event, would have a deepening effect. The successful completion of this, the first such event, marked not so much an end, therefore, as a beginning.

FROM THE SPEAKERS' comments in the public session, it became obvious that the symposium had been a beneficial experience, an inspiration even, for all concerned; not only for those like Dr Tartaglia who spoke as one 'coming to Buddhism for the first time' but also for others like Dr Whaling and dom Sylvester, who regularly attend such functions as part of their professional duties. Both these latter commented on the unique atmosphere that had prevailed during the proceedings, and dom Sylvester had no hesitation in attributing this to the fact that the conference had taken place at Samyé Ling. If one considers the quality of the hosts, then one can perhaps see why.

It is one of the teachings of Buddha to respect other people's religions as one's own and not to presume or judge what one does not fully understand. Consequently, Buddhists are naturally tolerant of other religious points of view. This tolerance and respect has been tried and tested by the recent history of the Tibetan people. Their expulsion from their homeland at the hands of the Chinese has not automatically engendered in them a hatred of their aggressors, as it would so easily have done in many; instead they take a more philosophical view which has enabled them to make benefit out of adversity, and to find positive purpose in what others would consider disaster.

What this positive purpose is can perhaps be illustrated by a conversation recounted in his closing address by the Khentin Tai Situpa. This took place between himself and his late master, the 16th Karmapa, whilst they were walking on the roof of the monastery where he trained. As they were looking at his master's birds, of which he had many hundreds, he had asked him "What would be the most dangerous thing for the future of mankind". The 16th Karmapa replied "Misunderstanding. Lack of understanding. That makes the wrong view, which stays inside you. That is the most dangerous thing." This warning made a great impression on the young student. From then on, he resolved never to be satisfied with what he knew already but always to strive to know

more. For example, shortly afterwards, in an effort to deepen his understanding of Christianity, he acquired a Bible which he read from cover to cover seven or eight times. Yet even now he does not consider himself knowledgeable enough about Christianity to draw comparisons with Buddhism. Further, such is his wisdom that he does not consider his knowledge even of Buddhist sayings to be complete, as not until enlightenment can there be

real confidence in knowledge.

In so far as these qualities of humility with regard to one's own learning, however relatively great, combined with a genuine desire to know more of Truth from whatever quarter it may appear, were present in the participants in the symposium, they lent dignity to the gathering and elevated its meaning to the level of its subject, compassion through understanding.

UNIVERSAL COMPASSION AND THE WISDOM OF SELFLESSNESS

by the Khentin Tai Situpa

HAVING LISTENED with much interest to the learned and sincerely-motivated papers that we have been given yesterday and today, I feel that the most relevant contribution that I can bring to our thoughts this afternoon is to talk a little about some key points, taught to me by my own masters, that are related to compassion. I am afraid my own knowledge of other faiths is not well-grounded enough for me to be able to discuss them on their behalf in relation to the Buddhist ideals which I have come to know through my own upbringing. All I can say, in all sincerity, is that as a Buddhist I do have profound respect for, and appreciation of, the other great spiritual traditions of our world. The little that I now know about the world's major denominations confirms this.

The first topic I would like to share with you concerns the two facets of truth – ultimate truth and relative truth. In fact, the whole of the Buddha's teaching can be presented in terms of these two, when they are properly understood.

ULTIMATE TRUTH

There is no need for us to be at all concerned about the ultimate truth, which deals with the absolute character of all phenomena. That total perfection, which is the true nature of everything and which can never be deluded by relative purity or impurity, is the changeless perfection underlying everything else. Whatever its compassion or wisdom, it is as it is. No



matter what names we give it, it is certainly beyond description. That is absolute truth. All the things that concern our present topic are to do with the relative truth.

RELATIVE TRUTH

In the relative truth, things exist with their very specific character and qualities – in a world, in millions of worlds, where everything depends on something else for its existence. The way all our phenomenal experiences are generated and appear to us is discussed in Buddhism through the topic of interdependent origination, or one might say interdependent manifestation. All the time things are interacting with each other and producing results

which in turn interact, one with another, to produce more results – causes and effects; karma. Let us say, in simple terms, the vast arrays of mind and matter constantly shaping each other – relative truth.

These two facets of truth can never be separated. The ultimate truth is, by its very name and nature, the ultimate character of all those relative events. The relative truth is a true analysis of the relative way the ultimate seems to manifest.

UTTER PURITY

As we try to cultivate compassion and understanding in the world of relative truth, the most important thing to aim for is utter purity – in motivation and in conduct. When there is that total sincerity or utter purity of motivation, it will influence the purity of the action or conduct that it leads to. Likewise pure conduct will create a healthy, stimulating climate for purity of motivation. This is a vital point. If we take faith and compassion as examples, we can readily see that those who already have genuine faith or compassion act as sources of inspiration for others. We witness their strength, their purity, and respect them greatly.

I think that a constant, sincere, personal involvement in the question of compassion will bear fruit. The purity of mind behind that involvement is something very important indeed. There is very little space for sticky sentiment in that development of compassion: for me, these seem

too much of a luxury. They are beside the point. When your son is drowning in a river, there is no time to stop and be sentimental. You have to do something straightaway – stretch out a helping hand, not linger in emotions. In Buddhist terms this means working as best one can within oneself and in the world too, in response to the real need that is there. It is indeed necessary for all to be genuinely concerned about the very real issues confronting us today and to put dedicated effort into finding solutions. As they do this, they should know that there is no problem to which there is no solution; no question to which there is not an answer.

COMPASSION AND WISDOM

From a Buddhist point of view the most vital thing, in terms of a personal contribution to the well-being of others, is to improve one's own mind and to create conditions, set up the systems, in which future generations can improve their minds. Once the mind is OK then everything else will be OK too. In fact, when we get compassion totally right – when it becomes the transcendent perfection of compassion – it will be something very resplendent: the indivisible union of two things, *universal compassion* and *the wisdom of selflessness*. Universal compassion in the sense that there are no limits, no restrictions in terms of a particular focus; that is one thing. The other is the wisdom of selflessness, of no-self; but

not in the sense of some sort of cosmic vacuum or mere negation. Because of understanding the lucid, enlightened nature of everything – we call it the *buddha* nature: the peace and wisdom and potential which is the true way things are – then normal beliefs of self and ego are automatically known to be mistakes, illusions, delusions.

When there is this fusion of universal compassion and the wisdom of selflessness, there will automatically be unlimited, spontaneous activity to help everyone. In technical terms this means that the enlightened mind – *buddha* – compassionately and spontaneously manifests to those with very clear minds (the *bodhisattvas* of the ten levels) as the *sambhogakaya* and it manifests to those with relatively impure minds as the *nirmanakaya*: an example of which would be the life of Buddha Sakyamuni over 2,500 years ago.

How do we get to that magnificence of compassion which combines these two qualities of universality and wisdom? By training ourselves again and again. By getting ourselves used to these virtues, they eventually become a natural reflex, part of the way we are. Especially by training ourselves to have the 'good heart' – the mind sincerely dedicated to enlightenment for everyone: *bodhicitta* – then everything we do becomes an expression of heartfelt prayer for everyone's wellbeing. Activity becomes prayer. The four infinite virtues (love, compassion, joy and impartiality) are very important here, particularly the one which is sometimes number four: infinite impartiality. This is not mere indifference. In actual practice it is number one, not number four, because when we have transcended partiality, then love, compassion and joy will be healthy – truly universal rather than limited qualities confined to our pet interests.

I WOULD LIKE TO comment on one or two other points which seem relevant to our thoughts of the past few days. One is to do with the Buddhist attitude to the unavoidable upsets that happen. One can accept them not simply by cultivating an art of being passive, but because one knows those things for what they are – products: the relative results happening now due to past relative causes. That sort of knowledge helps us to know what can – and cannot – be done in the situation,



The Buddha of Compassion. From a Thangka in the Samyé Temple

whatever it may be. Sometimes we can act wisely and reduce the damage. Sometimes no matter what one does, it will not change things much. What happened to us as a Tibetan nation is surely the outcome of many former actions. Furthermore, we know that anyway all those things are only part of the relative play of existence, and on an ultimate level there is nothing to worry about. Let us not forget that the ultimate is not something abstract, far away – it is the very ultimate nature of those relative, sometimes painful, situations. The relative is the relative way that that ultimate is.

Therefore someone with a major difficulty such as AIDS can understand that it is their body that is sick and will die, and not their mind. Mind never dies. Mind can be made better. Knowing this, in confidence, the suffering and pain will be much less.

PEACE

In the relatively-real world mankind's future must be striven for with humane passion and persistence. Its elusiveness cannot be an excuse for inaction. At this time, it is very important to bring together outstanding individuals from different fields to lead humanity in the vital mission of creating a better future.

Despite the inevitable frustrations in this quest, we have cause for hope. There is, in these troubled times which grow ever more troubled, an enormous call from people of every country for peace, harmony, prosperity, security and above all, justice. Their heartfelt quest is increasingly seeking expression.

Peace, in general, is not simply the avoidance of war. The foundations of peace rest in the well-being of people. The tools for engineering this peace are there, at our disposition, on so many levels. To use them properly we must approach peace in very practical terms. Technological, material advance is a tool to be applied with purpose. This can be done. If man is capable of going to the moon, he is capable of the more sober task of material and human regeneration.

Regeneration: perhaps this word sums up what is needed to avert the destruction of our planet. It is the answer to a world where deepening poverty exists side by side with chronic boredom leading to drug abuse; a world where endemic famine is met with sporadic charity; where the pol-

lution of our oceans and destruction of rain forests seem insoluble problems.

We need to serve as both a model and an

inspiration – to become beacons of encouragement for all those who, in relative isolation, feel the concern that we feel.. •

ON COMPASSION

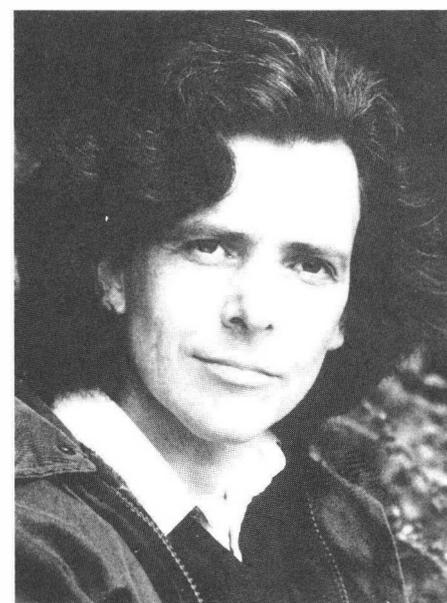
by Peter Young

FIRSTLY, I feel I ought to explain the hat I am wearing at this gathering, because in a certain sense I do not fit the set to which all here apparently belong. Overtly, all here belong to different faiths or religious traditions, and have been invited from that tradition. I have been invited not from a tradition but from a non-sectarian school at which are studied those teachings, from various different traditions, which relate particularly to the Unity of Existence.

Our studies are for those who want to know their essential nature. This does not necessitate a transference from the tradition which they have adopted, but rather that they come to a real appreciation of the essential matter underlying all traditions and approaches to Truth. From that vantage point, that is, from the viewpoint of the essential Unity of Existence, it is possible to have a genuine understanding of all the different expressions as so many different varieties of appreciation and worship of that ultimate Reality which is named by all yet in Itself is beyond all name.

This vantage point is that of understanding, or gnosis, wherein the light of understanding, no longer obscured by the claims of self-hood, illuminates the meanings inherent in the object of attention. Thus I am extremely happy with the subject of this symposium, Compassion, this being literally of the Essence, and with its qualificative 'through understanding'. This qualificative must pitch the discussion to a level beyond ignorance, beyond disparate viewpoints, to a level of comprehension which is quintessential, as held by the very best of those who know.

Compassion is a quality of Existence, from among the infinite number of qualities of Existence, yet which transcends or 'goes beyond' all other qualities. There is not an atom in all the infinite universes of interior and exterior manifestation which does not owe its appearance to Compas-



sion. This Compassion, then, is identical with the first cause of things, and consequently, since the consequence is no more than the appearance of the cause, within the appearance of things is the Compassion which gave it its own nature, its appearance.

Since this is the case, that Compassion is a quality inherent to Existence Itself, then this inevitably has consequence for us who perhaps aspire to enlightenment, Buddha-nature, or that perfection which is 'even as your Father in heaven is perfect'. Clearly such ideas as trying to be a better person, trying to improve the world, though they may do to begin with, are in reality no more than different disguises of oneself. This self, though no longer selfish, yet conceives and endeavours to put into effect those actions one has deemed in one's infinite wisdom to be beneficial to mankind and the rest of creation. This is not compassion through understanding, but ignorance.

Compassion, on the contrary, necessarily entails knowledge and insight into the cause of things, since the cause of things is Compassion, which, being a quality of Existence, is nothing other than Mind, and Mind is Consciousness.

HOW THEN IS COMPASSION to be approached by one admittedly in a state of ignorance and far removed in one's consciousness at least from the degree of Compassion belonging to the Self of Compassion, the origin and matrix of all existence? Certainly, since Compassion is no other than that infinity which is bounded by no bounds and named by no name, then it cannot be approached through being compassionate. This would not only presume that infinity could be arrived at by the addition of degrees of compassion to oneself, but also that one was capable of being compassionate, even in a degree. If one admits that Compassion is no other than the infinite Essence, then this compassion is itself infinite and absolute and therefore is itself the only active compassion in all compassioning.

Yet this quality of compassion is interior to every atom of existence, and manifested in every moment, if we had the eyes to see, and actively and consciously manifested in the great Saints. How? And how in this degree of ignorance are we to speak of Compassion according to its highest level, wherein Compassion knows itself absolutely as the very Self of Compassion.

Without doubt, humility is a beginning. To know that one has no access to this realm from one's own volition is to know something true and valuable, since one is then in alignment with the order of things. In other words, as many of the great saints have said in different ways, "To know that one is already powerless to know is already knowledge". This is a starting point.

And humility has many degrees, necessitating for the veracious the putting aside of the various layers of ego by which one says "I am, I do, I" in favour of an affirmation of another kind more appropriate to the real order of things, more tasteful, more in alignment with the Self of Compassion, with a pronoun not of the first person but of the second or third – 'Thou' or 'He, She or It'. For surely, only that which is really the First Person rightly employs this pronoun.

So through the affirmation of the Reality as the Existence, and the giving back of one's notional existence to the Existence, which in reality it never left, one is left not as another, (since other would need its own existence to be 'other'), not, again, as the origin, matrix and Self of Compassion (which would be madness), but as no

other than that Self.

Then, if a man knows beyond doubt that he has no existence of his own, but that existence is one, so that existence belongs only to the Existence Itself, then that man is perfect, and can be of service to the Self of Compassion as a channel, and be compassionate in knowing the source of that compassion...

THE QUALITY OF COMPASSION

The quality of compassion is that which allows for the full expression and expansive dilation of the potentiality contained in the essential sheerness of the complete non-manifestation. It has been likened to the breath, an expansive movement outpouring from the centre, giving birth to sound as it resonates through the places of potential speech or song, and where there is sound, invisible light increase becomes visible as it resonates with the frequency

This quality of compassion is interior to every atom of existence and manifested in every moment, if we had the eye to see...

that the place of potentiality bestows.

This macro-Compassion gives birth to all existences, since it is quite literally the breath of life, the breath of existence. Nevertheless it is a quality so essential that it is hidden to view, and that is necessarily so since all that there is to view is by virtue of it. That is why it is only the most perfect of the perfect men who are realised in this degree. It is said to be too vast for this lower world, for only those who are perfectly receptive to its infinite fullness manifest it completely. But one must not forget that it is the matrix and materia of everything, just as the breath is this for the voice. Nonetheless, breath without voice would not be discernible, except to itself.

Fortunately for us, the reality loves to be known and we are not left in total ignorance, never being able to discern the underlying yet all-pervasive Compassion, its vastness because of our narrowness, its fineness and generosity because

of our dim vision, hard hearts and crass exteriors. There is, intruding constantly into this already compassionated macrocosm, the universe, and microcosm, the human being, an additional, special, so to speak, compassion with a cutting edge which slices through the Gordian knot of ignorance, blindness and other self-willed powers of the ego, together with the conditioning of the conditions of this world. This allows us the opportunity of perceiving our choice – which is our birthright – of whether to delve deeper, be released from our self-tyranny and come to know ourselves as we are known in our origin by that which in reality is us.

This Sword of Compassion can take many forms – indeed since all is manifested in the Breath of Compassion anything at all can be its agent, wittingly or not. But there is, of course, a great difference between the witting agent and the unwitting, since the witting agent is necessarily the Perfect Man, who knows that he is nothing but the outward aspect of the total self of Compassion. He knows with the certainty of truth by virtue of what he is compassionate, and by virtue of what he is. Rather, perhaps, his certainty of knowledge is reality's own knowledge that its own perfect image is nothing but itself.

If this perfect man is given a job to do, imposed on him by his interior, it may be that he is literally Compassion to the universes, both generally – being identical in consciousness to his own nature – and specifically as the cutting edge of Compassion in helping others to know.

As Portia is caused to say in the 'Merchant of Venice'

*"The quality of Mercy is not strained.
It droppeth as the gentle rain from
heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice
blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that
takes..."*

And so with Compassion, since mercy is one of the meanings of Compassion, emanating from that degree of benevolence which is Sheer Beauty. It is really twice blessed since compassion in its highest primordial degree first compassions its own complete reflection, which was its own potentiality. This potentiality then witnesses, and thereby compassions, the unitative compassion in knowing it as one, and compassions all its inherent

potentialities and manifest states as being of and for the love of Beauty for Itself.

In this paper there has been attempt to set forth what is really a matter of beautiful simplicity, of simple Beauty, and I hope that you will recognise the identity of the meaning with that alluded to within your own traditions. I have endeavoured to refrain from technical terms proper

only to particular traditions. If we understand from the outset that reality is one, what difference can it possibly make whether we name it Compassion or God? Though of course degrees of essential manifestation may yet be distinguished, there is total essential equivalence between these names.

I believe that it is to this level of mean-

ing that this symposium is addressed, a level which is precisely beyond religion, a level at which the meaning of Man is known by Mind Itself. If this is the case, the honour is ours and the responsibility also to recognise this compassionate educative movement as it moves, be receptive to its intentions and serve it to the limit of our ability.

COMPASSION THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

by dom Sylvester Houédard

THOUGH SAMYÉ in Tibet was founded by Guru Rinpoche or Padma Sambhava of the Old Translation School, and Samyé in Scotland is in the Kagyu tradition of the New Translation School, which also includes not only the Sakya but also the Gelukpa to which the Dalai Lama belongs, with respect to unselfish compassion, the desire to benefit all others, there is, as Akong Rinpoche told me once, no difference between the schools. It was not, however, till after meeting Sogyal Rinpoche of the Dzogchen tradition, when he arrived in Britain to found the London Rigpa Centre, that I came to realise how important had been the development in Tibet (over the last 100 years) of their own ecumenical movement, called 'no boundary' or *rimed*.

To its central question: "Where do the four schools come down to 'the same thing'?", the Dalai Lama says he has devoted much 'one-pointedness of mind'. He establishes that it must be at the level of our innate wisdom of great bliss and, without deciding whether it is an affirming negative or a non-affirming negative, concludes that it is the fundamental mind of clear light (*gnyug ma lhan cig skyes pa'i 'od-gsel*), also called *rigpa* or basic mind (*sems nyid*), which in our Latin monastic terminology is generally *apex* or *acies mentis*, but also variously called *nous* in Greek; inmost soul; the summit or highest point of the mind; ground or *abyss* of the mind, (*abyssus* or *abdytum mentis*, in Dietrich of Frieberg; *scintilla animæ* or *ratio superior* in Eckhart); the 'naked mind' in plain Middle English, purity of

mind (*puritas cordis*) in John Cassian, but represented by heart *or* by mind in Hebrew and Arabic; very often it is referred to by heart *and* mind; or more specifically, heart-OF-the-mind or circumcised mind or the heart-of-the-heart, (*lubb-u-Lubb*, kernel of the kernel), even *sirru-s-Sirr* (the mystery of the mystery). The list of synonyms could be very greatly extended in every language but *apex mentis*, basic mind and heart of the mind seem the most convenient and the least ambiguous.

If the schools of Buddha in Tibet and the families of Abraham have this in common, it seems obviously the best place to begin, especially since here, in our Western monastic tradition, we come to understand what true **compassion** is, and here that compassion itself shews us what **understanding** is.

Mind as subject can never be an object to itself, any more than eye can see eye or fist grasp fist. Mind alone (*sems nyid*), without an object, is not even subject but 'the mere factor of luminosity in all knowing', and as that light by which all knowing is possible, it cannot itself be known. Of the fact that it is auto-luminous at its base or apex where it is naked, ordinary mind (*sems*) can be **aware**, though this base, apex or nakedness can never **appear**, never be an object that is **known**. This luminous stillness of mind at heart, centre, base or apex where it is not and cannot be self-regarding, where it is naked, pure, uncircumcised, is known by ordinary mind, *sems*, with absolute certitude as unknowable and invisible. Actually aware of it or not, this auto-luminos-



ity is given in every act of knowing and has been so for all our life. It is the natural basis of faith – as the evidence and certitude of things unseen. In the West, its invisibility to itself is an image of the invisibility of God; as Drukpa Kunley said in 15th century Tibet: "the nature of Mind is self-evident; ... although self-evident, it needs recognition". Mind here, with a capital M, is how the translators of 'The Divine Madman' distinguish *sems-nyid* from *sems*.

Discussing 'compassion through understanding' at this level, it becomes the level at which one begins to answer the questions put to the Benedictines by the Dalai Lama when he met us in the Jerusalem Chamber in Westminster Abbey, as to what we mean by the two terms, God and Creation. It also answers the question Akong Rinpoche put to me about Eckhart's term 'godhead'; and also the question asked me by Geshe Wangyal about what it is we are saved *from* in Catholic theology.

The starting point is that all three members of the triple family of Abraham, our father in faith, al-Khalil, the friend of God, have one thing in common with all the families of Buddha: the denial that

there is any 'third thing' in our composition other than body and mind.

THE FOUR JOURNEYS OF MIND AND THE TWO TRUTHS

When Augustine talks (in effect) of the four journeys of mind, the first is outward to things apprehended as beings and taken as they appear: on this journey, particle physics would seem unable to get beyond the point where mind begins to interfere with the results. The second journey is inward to mind and this is the one that mostly concerns this Paper, though on it mind cannot be 'taken as it appears', since it cannot appear. The third and fourth are up to God and back to where things are now seen as becomings and not beings, back to the world where, as Augustine says "words again have beginnings and endings".

Through this Augustine gave the latin west its most fruitful introduction to: 1) our understanding of everything as empty of *aseitas*, (empty of what tibetans call *svabhavasiddhi*); 2) our understanding of createdness as emptiness or *sunyata*; 3) our understanding of the two truths: the truth that things truly are, and the truth that they truly are but only by way of becoming.

St Thomas Aquinas approaches this understanding by establishing the real distinction between essence and *esse* (between the nature or **what** a thing is, and the fact **that** it is). This Aquinas does mostly in terms of the first journey. (1) My approach on the second journey may be less scholastic, but more patristic, more monastic and more helpful ecumenically, as from it we see the need for journeys three and four: the necessity to unite inner with outer, (*batin* with *zahir*,) hearing the word with doing the word, contemplation with action, Mary with Martha, Wisdom with Compassion.

COMPASSION AND THE SECOND JOURNEY OF MIND

The starting point is simple, again is common to Buddha and Abraham, but is known best to westerners from Jerome, Eckhart and Ibn 'Arabi, who devote more attention to it than Aquinas. The future does not yet exist and the past no longer exists, but **will be** and **was** meet in the **nunc**, the **now**, of *apex mentis* or *sems nyid*. If there were even a tiny gap between

will be and **was** we could say **am** or **is**, but no gap exists between future and past - they touch each other and so no one can say "**I am**" or "**It is**". For Abraham this means, in monotheistic terms, that God alone truly **is** and God alone can say "**I am**" and of God alone can we say "**He-She-It is**". Of ourselves all we can say is that, though we are and things are, this is only by way of becoming. Other than saying "**God is**" and "**We become**", it is still grammatically possible (and is convenient if less accurate) to say God is **Being** and we are **becomings**, but we can never say "God is *a* being" and even less "God is the *supreme* being": if we use the word *kunchog* to represent the word 'God' (since there isn't any other in Tibetan) we have to be careful and avoid leading Tibetans into this trap.

Within the limitations of human language based on the conventional truths of the first journey, and within the limitations that Augustine defines in a paradox:

... *compassion is proper to
God alone and is, above all,
what shows his omnipotence*

"To say God is unnameable is to name him The Unnameable", it is better to name God with a verb than with a noun and (ever since Victorinus (240-304)) to use the infinitive *esse* or 'to be'. If Tibetans lack a noun to represent 'God' it may even be a blessing, since they must have the verbs 'to be' and 'to become'.

To speak about the **nunc** or **now** we should be clear about the distinction between **inner time** and **clock time** (George Melhuish prefers 'basic time' and 'standard time'). The second is based on the first so it cannot be used to measure the first. Guru Rimpoche Padma Sambhava, the founder of Samyé in Tibet, is perfectly aware of the distinction in his book 'Knowing the mind... seeing its nakedness' where he says: "Ordinarily, in the NOW, Mind is comprehended by its own time". Jung never understood what monastic theology means by *apex mentis* and admits his confusion in the 1951 introduction to the translation by Evans-Wentz, where he actually says (p.lix):

"The Mind's 'own time' is very difficult to interpret". One has sometimes to warn people these days that the unconscious and subconscious are all parts of the mind or *sems* and are not the same as naked mind, *apex mentis* or *sems nyid*.

Ibn 'Arabi has the most succinct statement of this importance of **now** in the continuum of mind's own time as the meeting point of future and past, an importance that Eckhart brings out when he comments on what God says in the Book of Wisdom by Jesus son of Sirach: They shall eat me and hunger (Ecclesiasticus 24.21). The instant that **will be** becomes **is**, and the instant that **is** becomes **was**, are one and the same identical instant. As luminous isness (*istikheit* in Eckhart) flows into the **nunc** of mind, it is perpetually and instantaneously annihilated. It is not that we do not receive isness, but that we retain it for zero time and do so perpetually. When mind, as Lama Yeshe says somewhere, tries to seize **ego** it snatches at something that already has entered the dead past. Unlike the **nunc** of *apex mentis* which is an instant of zero duration (like a geometric point of zero extension), *mens* or ordinary mind can deal only with moments which are short periods of time. Each, however short, is a continuum and like any continuum, though not infinitely divided can be divided to infinity. At *apex mentis* we remain perpetually in that **nunc** of zero duration though of course with ordinary mind we can stray outside by anticipating or recalling. Three things follow:

- a) Perpetually receiving isness we avoid the extreme of nihilism, retaining it for zero time, we avoid the extreme of eternalism, and this is our western presentation of the *madhyamika* or middle way.
- b) Since everything subject to time is a receiver of isness everything is empty of **unreceived isness** and this (which is what we mean by creation) is our western awareness of *sunyata*.
- c) Since unreceived isness can nowhere be met, its nature is totally inconceivable. Negatively, we name it as that of which everything is empty. Being that of which everything is empty, God is known negatively only, and this is our Western path of **cognising emptiness**.

By knowing himself (and being his own knowledge of himself), **pure isness** or

actus purus knows the truth he is (since he is the truth he knows) and in this knowledge the Word or Logos knows the truth of every possible degree of participation in the truth (namely that it is a true possibility). And in the instantaneous **nunc** of eternity he knows every possible emptiness that exists by the way of becoming in the whole of time through its reception, out of **compassion**, of that luminous self-gift of **isness** by which it is an actual emptiness or createdness.

By explaining compassion as the self-gift of isness that perfects every intelligent emptiness insofar as it acts with compassion, we have the best approach (though not yet a proper answer) to both of the Dalai Lama's questions.

Anyone who cognises his *own* emptiness 'knows God as *his* Lord' (Ibn 'Arabi), since the emptiness of one person is not the emptiness of another person. Though absolute nothingness (which alone could be called 'other than God') never has been the case and never can be the case, were we to imagine it as knowing its own emptiness then it alone could have negative knowledge of God in himself, knowledge of that which Eckhart calls 'godhead'. Of this no intelligent emptiness can have negative knowledge and of this God alone has positive knowledge, since he himself is that knowledge of himself.

As St Bernard says, knowing compassion through knowing his own emptiness, the monk knows it his duty to shew compassion. However, what the Rabbi of (I think it was Lwow) says about prayer is true here: if you pray because it is your duty, you aren't fulfilling your duty to pray. Or as St Anthony said, if you know that you are praying, then you are not. Perfect compassion is selfless, not self-regarding, and this is shewn only, as St Benedict says, at the twelfth degree of emptiness, effortlessly and naturally (*sine ullo labore et velut naturaliter*), the identical words used in Dzogchen by (I seem to remember) Long-Ch'en Rab-Jampa.

Since the continuum of mind is perpetually open to that influx of ESSE or isness, compassion gives time its 'arrow' (touse a term from particle physics) so we always 'face' the incoming flow (at the *lubh-u-Lubh* or heart of mind we always live facing God): so we live facing the future, away from the ego that Lama

Yeshe says inhabits the dead past, unable to re-live the past or go backwards in time. Mind, as George Melhuish says, is ever in the process of self-modification, of what Rahner calls self-transcendence, of what Paul and Gregory of Nyssa called 'epectasy'. Mind ever receiving isness, perfection of mind is its perpetual reception, not a state of having totally received it, which is impossible. God dwells in inaccessible light not because we approach him eternally without ever getting there, we never get there because he is approaching us perpetually.

Perpetual creation means that we are in immediate perpetual direct touch with God, though His presence within us perpetually persists for zero time: as Augustine says, "He is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves", we are immediately aware of *him* in the **NUNC** but of *ourselves* only as already in the past. As



Catholic Service in the Samyé Temple

Allah says in the Quran, "He is closer to us than our jugular vein". Hence though we know *that* God is, we cannot know *what* he is, though we very well know what God is not.

Augustine and Aquinas called the **nunc** in which we remain perpetually for all interior time **nunc fluens** and the **nunc** in which God eternally is without past or future the **nunc stans**. The nunc fluens of becoming is privative infinity, the nunc stans of being negative infinity: the common nunc where the two infinities touch and are 'one spirit' *unus spiritus* (2) is thus a gulf between creator and creation that we never cross, since becoming can never become the Unbecome. The hardened heart, uncircumcised mind or static ego which we add to creation is alone that which can hide the point where the two are in touch and does so in every act of self-centered pride, every assertion of I AM by

which we make ourselves seconds beside Allah, and this is supreme idolatry or *shirk*. Yet the compassion by which we are at all (by way of becoming) is the same compassion that forgives even *shirk*, providing that the compassion we receive is the compassion we shew others. Told to 'be merciful as I am merciful' we pray 'forgive, as we forgive'. Our compassion for *others* is never other than participation in God's compassion for *us*: as Aquinas says, compassion is proper to God alone and is, above all, what shows his omnipotence, even though *agape* or selfless love which **unites** us to God (because it excludes the ego we insert) is greater in us than unselfish compassion which makes us **like** God. Since grace is never other than that compassionate self-gift of isness or God, first grace (by which the possibility exists of receiving sanctifying grace) means that compassion, as Aquinas says, is the 'first root' of all God's works: both the work of creation and the work of redemption or salvation. God as self-gift is thus present (as Ibn 'Arabi says 'whole and entire') in everything that exists by way of becoming, since to receive isness is to be empty of unreceived isness.

The second half of this talk covers:

a) The two names revealed at Sinai: 'I am' and 'Compassion compassioning' (Bism Allah).

b) The two names John (YEHOHANAN (He is has compassion') and Jesus (YEHOSHUA 'He is saves')

c) Double causality, efficient and efficacious: i) the movement of stale isness (past to present to future) (Aristotle) and ii) the influx of fresh isness as future becomes present (Ibn 'Arabi, Aquinas, Eckhart).

d) The apparent contradiction between egoless compassion and 'loving one's neighbour as oneself'.

(1) Interest in the real distinction is still alive: see recent articles in 'New Blackfriars' June 1988 by Montague Brown: and 'Connaissance de Religions', March 1988 by Jean Borella. The latter also has an excellent article by Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch on Islamic Cosmology.

(2) 1 Co. 6.17: not one thing, unum.

Photographs of Temple on page 12, the Buddha of Compassion and Peter Young by John Farnham. Others courtesy of Samyé Ling Tibetan Centre.

ALL THINGS GO IN PAIRS

Biblical Wisdom and Dynamic Balance

By George Pattison



THE BIBLE contains a group of writings known to scholars as the 'Wisdom' literature. This comprises the books Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Songs and a number of psalms. In addition the apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon belong to this tradition of writing. These works are by no means uniform in either quality or teaching. Job comprises a series of anguished dialogues on the question of suffering, Ecclesiastes begins with a sustained lament over the meaninglessness of life, whilst the Song of Songs celebrates the erotic love of man and woman and Proverbs offers long lists of often extremely trite exhortations to work hard and amass wealth. But for all these differences the 'Wisdom' literature does constitute a distinct group of writings with its own vocabulary and its own theological themes. Of all biblical writings Wisdom is perhaps least concerned exclusively with the history and destiny of the Chosen People, and it is interesting that there are many close parallels to Wisdom throughout the ancient Near East. It is an international literature, whose truth is not confined to any one religious community. Sadly it has been largely neglected by twentieth century Christian theologians who have preferred to focus on those parts of the Bible which

portray God in more active, personal and historical terms – emphases which are not predominant in Wisdom. However, I believe that Wisdom is now about to come into its own, especially with regard to the quest for an ecologically-oriented theology and spirituality expressing the coherency of divinity, humanity and the non-human creation. The vision of Wisdom is a vision which draws the cosmic dimension into the very heart of humanity's religious adventure.

IN HIS HIGHLY influential book 'The Tao of Physics' (1) Fritjof Capra expounded the concept of 'dynamic balance' which he regarded as a common feature of the world views of modern science and oriental mysticism. The Judeo-Christian tradition and its scriptures are conspicuously absent from his discussion and it is clear that he does not regard them as having much to contribute to the mutual fructification of science and religion. Wisdom, however, offers an almost perfect expression of the idea of dynamic balance as Capra explains it: a dynamically conceived union of opposites in which the tensions and contradictions of life find their resolution; above all the contradiction between spiritual and material which pervades the Western tradition and which is built in to the very

fabric of Cartesian mechanistic science. From the standpoint advocated by Capra, such contraries lose their character of irreconcilable opposition and are understood relativistically instead.

It might be appropriate therefore to start with the paradoxical fact that, more than any other books in the Bible, the Wisdom books (or some of them) give free voice to expressions of pessimism and despair. Thus the story of Job, stripped overnight of all his good fortunes and struck down by sickness, provides a platform from which to mount all manner of angry and bitter complaints against God's apparent injustice and cruelty. "Why should the sufferer be born to see the light? Why is life given to men who find it so bitter?" (Job 3.20) asks Job himself. Similarly Ecclesiastes opens with the lament "Emptiness, emptiness, says the Speaker, all is empty..." and proceeds to enumerate examples of the futility and wretchedness of human existence. Our problems are compounded, he observes, by the fact that we never even learn from our mistakes: "What has happened will happen again, and what has been done will be done again, and there is nothing new under the sun." (Eccl. 1.9). Both writers are relentless in exposing the banal optimism of conventional religion with its assurance that despite appear-

ances everything will turn out alright in the end. They certainly did not have to wait for Karl Marx to see through the facade of a religion which functions as opium for the people!

But their radical rejection of all compromise solutions does not lead them to blank despair. It is because they reject the possibility of any single 'answer' to the questions they raise that they remain open and ready for a total affirmation of life in its many-levelled, many-dimensional reality. Just as in Buddhism it is precisely the Void which manifests itself as the mother of all beings, so it is these 'negative' writers who offer us the most poetic, most all-embracing affirmation of the beauty of the created order in the whole Bible. The same Job who pleaded for death and who declared that "no man knows the way" to Wisdom is eventually the recipient of an awesome vision of God's power pervading and ordering creation. This power wisely governs and unifies the stars, the "foundations of the earth", the oceans, the sun, the rain, the mating and hunting habits of wild beasts, the behaviour of the ostrich and the armour of the crocodile. (Job chs. 38-41).

WHAT JOB'S SUFFERING forces him to abandon is the kind of man-centred outlook which forgets that our communion with God occurs uniquely in the context of a diverse and richly-structured cosmos. C. G. Jung's jibe that the God-figure in Job is merely showing off his power in a rather adolescent, macho way misses the point. The point is that God's speeches literally put Job in his place: the place of creation, at once infinitely humbling and infinitely beautiful; a balance wonderfully caught in Rilke's line, 'beauty's nothing but the beginning of terror we're still just able to bear.' (Duino Elegies 1.4.) Through this showing Job ceases to assert his rights and acknowledges his belonging in an order whose beginning and end his own thought cannot embrace.

Similarly the pessimism of Ecclesiastes prepares the ground for the utterly dialectical poem of chapter three:

*For everything its season, and for every activity under heaven its time:
a time to be born and a time to die;
a time to plant and a time to uproot;
a time to kill and a time to heal;
a time to pull down and a time to build up;*

*a time to weep and a time to laugh;
a time for mourning and a time for dancing...*

There is no more perfect expression of the principle of dynamic balance in any literature. It means that we cannot grasp the ways of God by one-sidedly abstracting one set of qualities and calling them 'divine'. The true God overflows all attempts to limit and define Him: He is in death as well as in birth, and in dancing as well as in mourning. The chief task of spirituality then emerges as the ability to know the 'times', since truth is not true apart from the processes and circumstances in which it comes to be true; and so learning the truth necessarily involves becoming sensitive to these processes and circumstances. The complementarity proclaimed in the great poem of Ecclesiastes is defined as the very law of God's Wisdom by the later writer Ecclesiasticus (Jesus ben Sirach):

*All things go in pairs, one the opposite of the other;
He has made nothing incomplete
One thing supplements the virtues of another.
Who could ever contemplate his glory enough?*

Ecclus. 42.24-5.

God's glory is shown in the fabric of creation, a fabric woven together from a multiplicity of 'opposites'. Things are what they are in this created universe not by embodying abstract essences, but by their participation in the processes of mutual limitation and mutual illumination which characterize all things.

It is by applying this principle of mutual limitation and illumination that we can grasp the inner unity of this curiously diverse Wisdom literature. Thus we are able to see the place of the very down-to-earth Wisdom of the Book of Proverbs, which seems at times to be totally preoccupied with household and business affairs. Whether or not we agree with any particular proverbs, the book as a whole is showing that all this ("the daily round, the common task") is a sphere in which to live out our service of God. Similarly the Song of Songs reminds us that human sexuality is not alien to religion, not merely in terms of procreation but in its passion, beauty and delight as well. Unfortunately, many Jewish and Christian commentators have insisted on treating this lovely erotic

poem as some kind of allegory. This misses the truth that it is precisely in its sensuousness that it celebrates the unity of the divine and the human – not by being reduced to a symbol or figure of some kind of 'other-worldly' reality.



WISDOM IS DESCRIBED in Proverbs, ch.8, as the first of God's creatures, His companion in creation:

*Then I was at his side each day,
his darling and delight,
playing in his presence continually,
playing on the earth, when he had finished it,
while my delight was in mankind.*

Prov. 8.30-31.

There is nowhere and nothing where Wisdom does not play and, as the theme of dynamic balance shows, her favourite game (like all children) is hide-and-seek, concealing herself under a contrary exterior the better to provoke our wonderment. Now we find her in death, now in life; now in the most profound metaphysical speculations, now in the running of a house or the conducting of business. She is always on the move and we must move to keep with her. In fact she seems to be everywhere at once!

Later Wisdom literature adapted the biblical image of Wisdom to the Stoic idea of the Logos permeating and uniting the world, and Marcus Aurelius' view of the cosmos as 'the primordial city and commonwealth' aptly sums up the Wisdom vision of a creation held together not merely by the power of the divine 'fiat' but by the fine tuning and mutual adjustment of its every member.

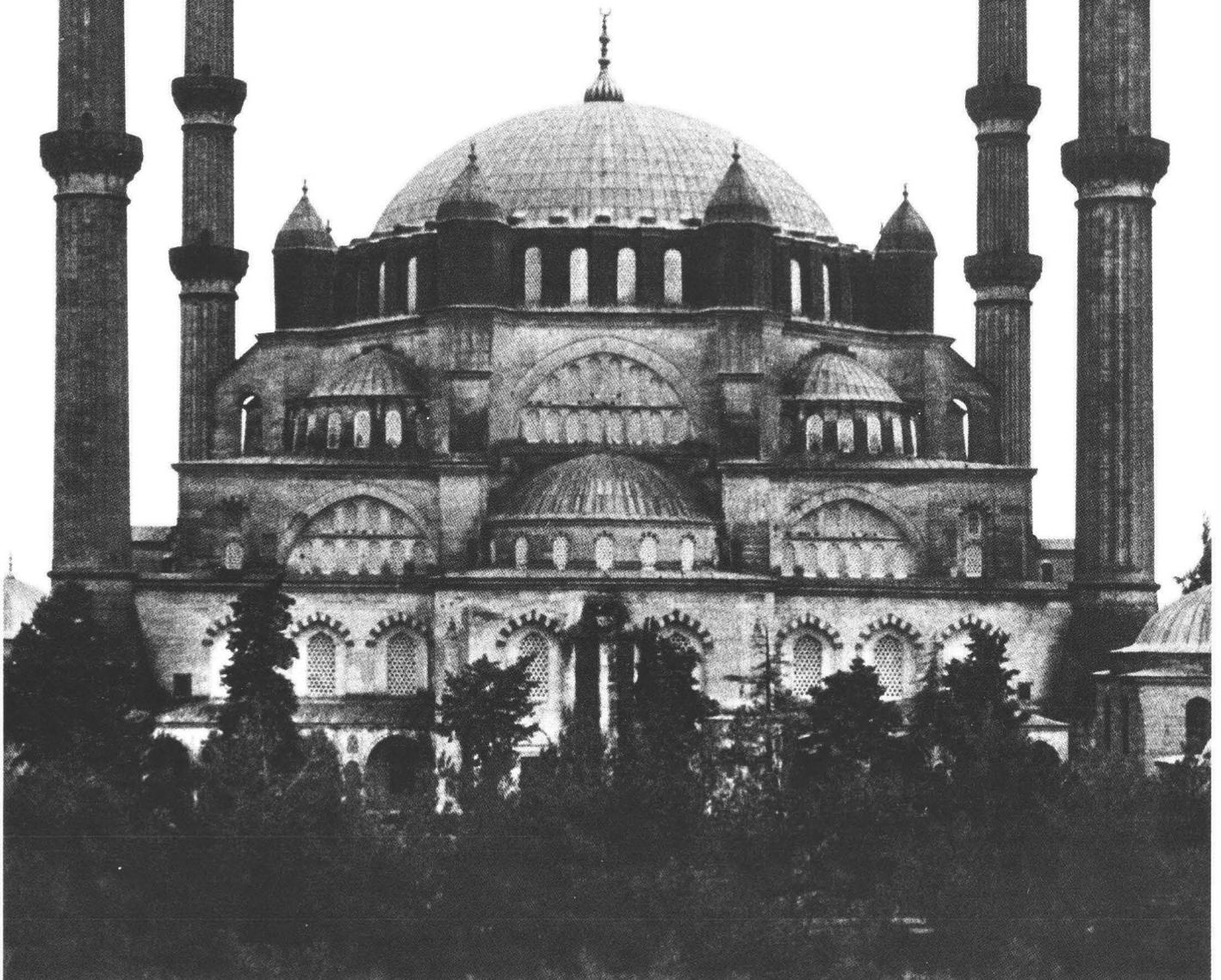
I have, of course, only touched on this rich literature. But I shall feel that I have done enough if I have encouraged anyone to re-read it, or – what would be even better – to discover it for the first time.

(1) *Flamingo* 1975.

Drawings by Eric Gill, from his illustrations for the 'Song of Songs'.

A TRIBUTE TO **SINAN**

Peter Yiangou and Keith
Critchlow remember the great
Ottoman architect, who died
400 years ago this year.



SINAN AND THE GREAT MOSQUE AT EDIRNE

by Peter Yiangou

THE GOLDEN ERA of Ottoman achievement was in the latter half of the 16th century under the rule of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. With the fall of Constantinople, on that historic day in May 1453 when the invincible walls of antiquity had crumbled and fallen under the assault of modern cannon, the final chapter of the Byzantine Empire had closed. After more than 1100 years of continuous Christian civilisation which had achieved a level of sophistication barely comprehensible to feudal western Europe, the mantle was passed to the rising Ottomans. Within 100 years they had rebuilt the Empire and its magnificent capital on the Bosphorus and established a unique civilisation that only now beginning to be appreciated.

Sinan Aga, the greatest architect of the era, left a striking legacy of this golden age. His series of great mosques – the Shezadeh, the Mihrimah, the Atik Valide and the Sülemaniye in Istanbul and his masterpiece, the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne – not to mention the smaller masterpieces such as the Sokullu Mehmet Pasha in Istanbul and the numerous bridges, aqueducts and palaces, can still be seen today almost as he left them. His achievement rivals or surpasses that of Christopher Wren or Michaelangelo, but until recently his work has been little known or appreciated outside Turkey. The acknowledgement given him by the Royal Institute of British Architects and British Museum, both of whom have mounted exhibitions during this anniversary year, is therefore to be applauded.

ARCHITECT OF THE EMPIRE

It is generally accepted that Sinan was born around 1490, to a Greek family from the Karaman district. As happened to many talented Greek boys of his time, he was recruited into the Janissaries, the elite administrative and military corps fiercely loyal to the Sultan. He became a Moslem and a soldier, learning the skills of carpentry and masonry. Whilst in the military he learned the skills of siegecraft, building bridges, pontoons, defensive walls and towers. His prowess earned him rapid promotion, and did not escape the notice

of the Sultan himself. When he was 47 his military career came to an end. The imperial Architect died, and Sinan was appointed in his place.

His extraordinary career was to continue for another 50 years, during which time he held the title of Architect of the Abode of Felicity. According to Godfrey Goodwin, the acknowledged authority on the period, 'he extended the powers conferred on him with this office until he became far more than a Clerk of Works and senior engineer in Constantinople. He transformed the office to that of Architect of the Empire and himself into an officer of the state superior to his minister, the *Sehir-emini*.' (1)

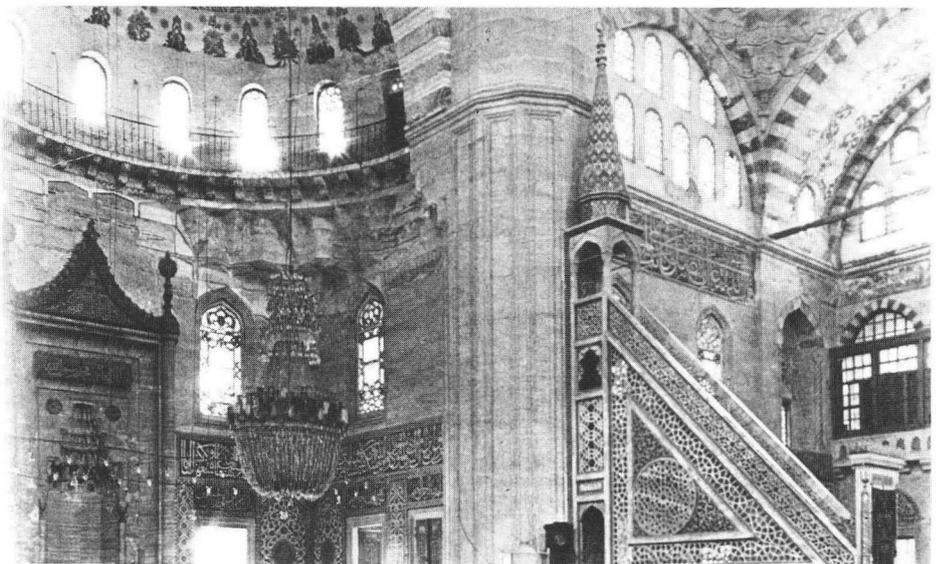
Although born of the conquered Greeks and a slave, he achieved high rank and responsibility in Ottoman society, sharing in and contributing to its Golden Age. Despite the intrigues of the Court and the Sultan's wife Roxelane, where too much success was often rewarded with an early death, he survived a long and distinguished career. He was not an architect or engineer as understood today and had the responsibility for all public buildings and services in the Empire. Hundreds of mosques, palaces, schools, bridges, aqueducts, water cisterns, sewage systems, soup kitchens, caravanserais, public baths etc all over the Empire have been attributed to him, and it is likely that he never saw many of them, given the numbers and

vast distances involved. He was the civil servant *par excellence*. Many of his 'engineering' works are worthy of mention in their own right, but he is best known for his innovative treatment of the domed mosque, and its development into a revolutionary new form, best expressed in the Selimiye mosque at Edirne, built for the Süleyman's successor, Selim II.

In Sinan's buildings architecture and engineering were expressed as one. It is said that he was appalled at how easily many mosques were damaged by earthquakes, and he set about devising structural techniques both to make the mosques more earthquake-proof and also to detect latent damage. In many of his mosques, on either side of the mihrab, two narrow columns can be found set into recesses - these turn freely if the structure is sound, but jam solid if it is not.

THE SELIMIYE MOSQUE

The pinnacle of grandeur in Byzantine church architecture had been reached in the 7th Century in the Hagia (pronounced 'Aya') Sophia and its interior remains one of the astonishing achievements of any culture (although insufficient thought was given to supporting the largest dome the world had seen). It reflects the complex Byzantine mind, the preoccupation with light and shadow, and one can still imagine the ceramic mosaic icons coming to life in reflected candle-light through a haze of frankincense. This achievement was finally surpassed in the Ottoman vernacular in the construction of the Selimiye mosque. Unlike the Hagia Sophia



Left, the Selimiye at Edirne. Above, the interior. Photograph by Michael Thompson.

where the lateral thrust of the dome was underestimated, and which required extensive propping in later centuries with massive and clumsy buttresses, in the Selimiye the supporting mechanisms blend effortlessly into a unified structure, soaring yet solid. So successful is Sinan's technique that it requires a deliberate effort of analysis to work out how the structure stays up.

The interior of the Selimiye mosque is the triumph of Light. Eight mighty columns, ingeniously buttressed at gallery level with linking arches, soar up to the heavenly sphere of the dome. The columns are almost entirely free from ornament, other than fluting. Their honey-coloured stone glows in the light so that they appear simultaneously massive and ethereal. With the exception of the frieze of calligraphy at the level of the flying buttress, the tiles, produced at the famous workshops at Iznik, are confined to the lower levels.

In contrast to most other domed mosques – where orifices for natural light compete with masonry for structural stability resulting often in gloomy interiors – here there is light everywhere. Sinan has succeeded in allowing natural light to enter at almost every level and the effect is literally dazzling. From the windows in the base of the dome, to the two levels of supporting arches, along the galleries, even down to ground level, light floods in. The internal structural members are arranged so as not to impede the free flow of light from all directions and to all parts of the interior.

There is no other building of this genre that can compare with this achievement. It conveys a sense of complete freedom, but it is not empty space. As with other great architecture, the contained space refracts selected qualities which in combination create a unique atmosphere. This is achieved through the mathematics embodied in the design, which in turn reflects divine principles. This example of the complete integration of form and the space it contains brings to mind the saying of Osman Fazli, the 17th Century sheikh who enjoined his students to "leave all the space to God." It is in this way, perhaps, that sacred architecture reflects the divine in the human.

Great innovators usually break the rules, and often upset the establishment. Sinan was no exception. It is recorded that when the Sülemaniye was nearing com-

pletion, Sinan was found by a court official sitting in the centre of the mosque, smoking a hubble-bubble. The outraged official reported this to the Sultan and Sinan was immediately summoned to a likely execution for daring to desecrate a holy place. He was reprieved after explaining that he was simply testing the acoustics of the dome with the bubbling sounds of his 'equipment'.

Sinan was also responsible for the re-

building of four aqueducts to the capital. Water was scarce in the rapidly expanding city, and after he had completed the water supply to his own house, lavishly supplying his own fountain and gardens, he was charged with fraudulently appropriating water. He was acquitted of this charge too, and lived on to the ripe age of 97. He died, still working, on 17th July 1588.

(1) 'A History of Ottoman Architecture'. Thames and Hudson, 1971

SINAN — HOMAGE TO A MASTER GEOMETER

by Keith Critchlow

IT COULDEASILY be misleading to talk of Sinan as the engineer (he certainly did not design engines) who was promoted to architect. These are contemporary terms and hide architectural prejudices that persist and came out of the industrial revolution with the introduction of iron and steel into construction. No such divisions existed or exist in the Islamic tradition, as the highest office is as a *Mohandis* which translates as 'Geometer'. It is important to recall that the builders of Christendom's great cathedrals attained to their highest degree as 'Master of the Compass'. Palladio himself was of such a tradition, having come out of an apprenticeship in stone cutting like Sinan. Sinan, it seems, was also a master carpenter. Yet the hidden aspect of these masters of raised and poised stone was the secret, yet to be recovered, of how pure geometry informed and inspired their great constructive accomplishments. Hence the term 'geomosophy', meaning 'wisdom of geometry'.

Sinan was also concerned with the philosophy of number – arithmosophy, as Henri Corbin has called it; his first

'cathedral' mosque, the Shezadeh in Istanbul built in memory of the favourite son of Süleyman the Magnificent, for instance, seems to be based on magic squares. We do not know anything of his schools of thought, but in general we do know that of the four elements of the scholastic Quadrivium (Arts of the Objective Study of the Created Order) – Arithmetic, Geometry, Harmony and Astronomy – the first two are considered the nearest to the language of God. (Fig. 1) When we look at buildings by people like him, we are reminded, as architects, that buildings should be more than a housing for the physical body. Our first responsibility is to build temples – places, whether they be bridges, garages or mosques, which reflect the primacy of wholeness



The Shezadeh in Istanbul

QUADRIVIUM

Arts of the Objective Study of
the Created Order

Arithmetic – Pure Number

Geometry – Number in Space

Harmony – Number in Time

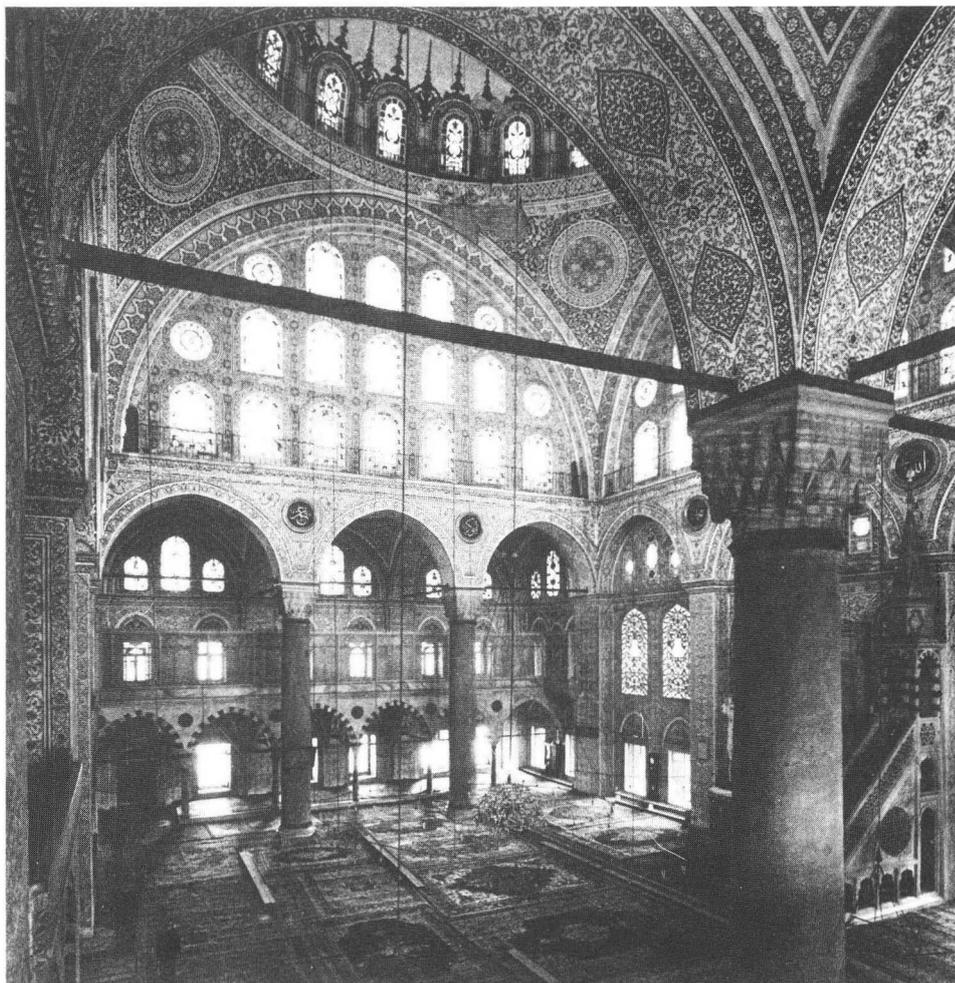
*Astronomy – Number in
Space and Time*

and integrality, which is the sacred. If it is not helping wholeness, then what is a building doing?

SINAN CAN PERHAPS be called the 'Builder of Unity'. It has been said that his mosques are simply 'reproductions' of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, but this is to misunderstand his achievement. This was superlative, in that he took the symbol of the principle of Unity and perfected it. The Hagia Sophia was obviously a revelation to the person who built it. Sinan was probably the one man it affected completely, right through his soul and who realised its meaning; and he underwent a humbling of his ego throughout his life in order to perfect what had been commenced there.

Henri Corbin, in his recent book 'Temple and Contemplation' (1) tells us that the original meaning of 'Temple' is the community of people in worship. It was only later that it became a building. In Islam, faith gathers the congregation, architecture shelters it. In Sinan's mosques, the quality of the interior space where the people gather to pray is such as to enhance the ability to feel, even before sacredness, the complete unity. This is something which can only be properly understood by visiting them; it is not enough to look at pictures in a book.

In the Selimiye at Edirne, the four minarets perhaps represent the ultimate reduction of the perfect material of the cube of the Ka'ba, and the space and the dome inside are like the spiritual breath which has inflated matter into a sphere. It is as if the soul, when in matter, is at its most perfect when it is totally inflated; and indeed, Plato said that the soul is a sphere. In the Sülemaniye in Is-



The Mihrimah, Istanbul

tanbul, you feel instinctively that the building is yourself. There is a series of partial spheres, which are preparations for the final sphere of the great dome, as if to say that we see ourselves as partial before we know ourselves as complete. As you look up, the dome seems to move away rather than towards you, and as you appreciate this you fill up with breath yourself. It is as if the huge elevation causes you to take extra breath into your lungs, creating a simple psychological symbol of the mystery it embodies – the Breath as Spirit, Self.

Sinan achieved a unity unlike the Gothic, which did not concern itself with integrating the outer and the inner form - the outside of Chartres Cathedral, for instance, can hardly be described as expressing the interior form. With Sinan, the outside mirrors the inside as closely as possible; the two aspects express the same principle and appear as an integral composition.

He was also very good at showing the inside columns which support the climactic dome. The strength of these columns, though they are covered with delicious tiles and made beautifully ephemeral, is made

very clear and he made no attempt to disguise them. A very important feature of Islamic architecture is the exact poise between the forces going up and the forces coming down, being symbolic of aspiration and grace respectively. This creates the best sort of lightness; Gothic architecture perhaps shoots up too much and Greek bears down too much. In the great mosque of Süleyman in Istanbul, the balance of the Islamic is beautifully illustrated by the way the gallery balances and harmonises the huge buttress projecting outwards.

When the Italian ambassadors walked into the Sülemaniye, they were amazed at the quality of majesty, of light and colour, it conveyed. It is extraordinary that the great tile-making school at Iznik perfected its art for the interior surface, at the same time as Sinan perfected the outer form. This is what makes a great civilisation – artistic perfections coming together and reinforcing each other. In the Sülemaniye, the tiles on the columns are like waves of grace; the plant form moves upwards and the waves of grace flow

THE GEOMETRY OF THE SÜLEMANIYE

Drawings by Keith Critchlow

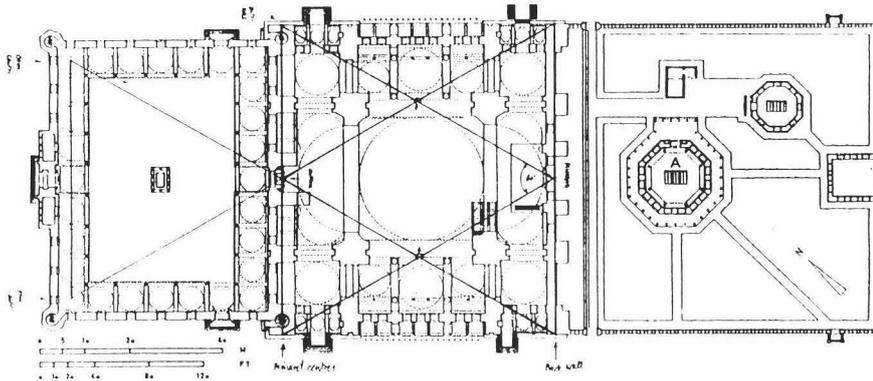


FIGURE 2

PLAN

The geometric analysis shows the proportions of the plan to be based on harmonic equilateral triangles. The interface between inner (the mosque) and outer (the courtyard) takes place at the threshold and culminates at the point of the mihrab which indicates the direction of Mecca. It is from here that the prayers of the imam resonate to all corners of the edifice.

FIGURE 3

LONGITUDINAL SECTION

The proportions of the 8 minarets of the courtyard are generated by a double square rising up from the courtyard and determining the harmonic flow of the minaret balconies in a $\sqrt{2}$ proportion.

The elevational section of the mosque appears to be derived from a heptagon whose base lies between the great pillars supporting the central vault.

The double square thus determines the courtyard, symbol of the exterior, and the 7-fold figure is indicative of the interior – the receptive heart.

That which unites the proportions of 4 and 7 is the 3-fold symmetry, which repeated three times to make 9 represents the perfect man.

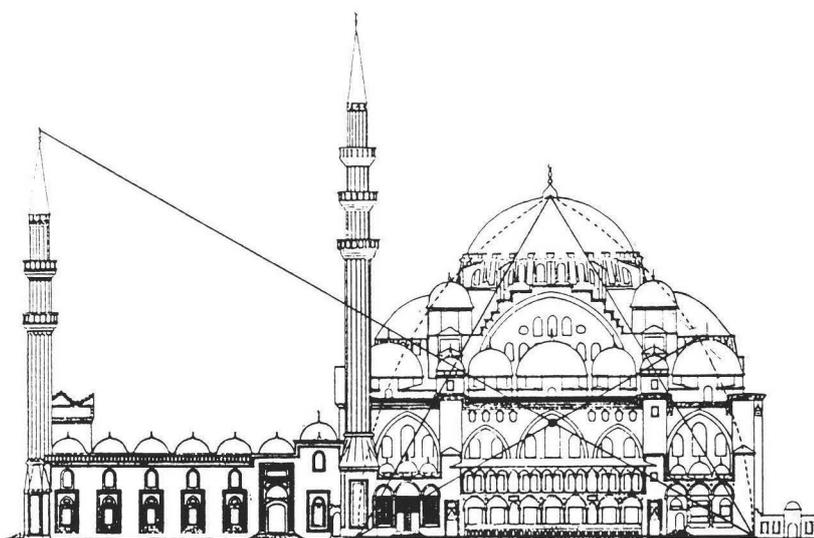
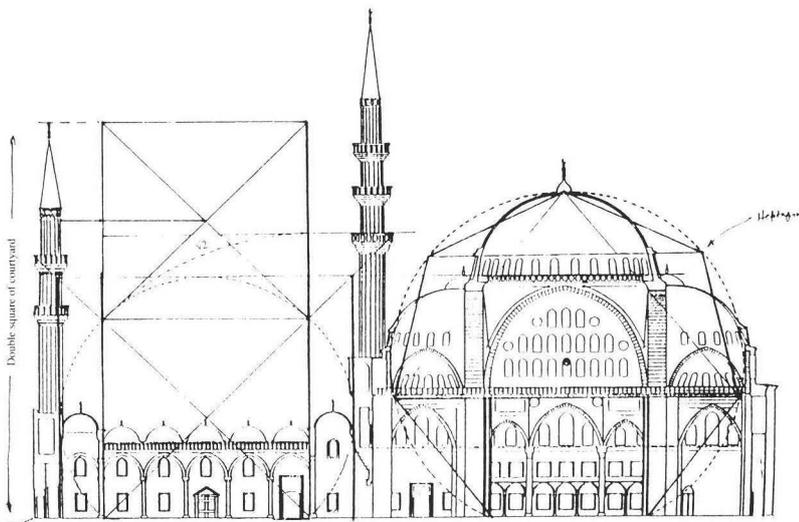


FIGURE 4

LONGITUDINAL SECTION

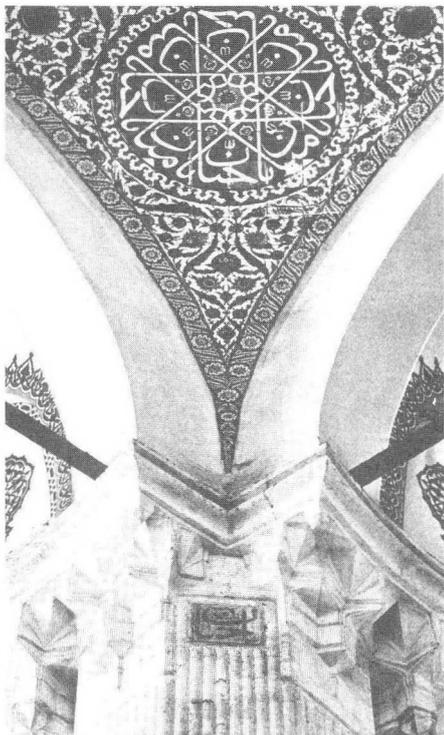
Here the generative triangle of the plan (see figure 2) is mirrored in the vertical plane. The triangle is the symbol of expression within the unicity and thus lies within the spheres of the cascading domes. The triangle is also the resolution of the physical forces and provides the means whereby the thrusts of the dome are transmitted to the earth.

The pinnacles of the minarets are harmonically proportioned through the extended axes of the central triangle.

downwards and gently penetrate.

The effect of light on these tiles is to reverse the patterns. On the tomato-red ones, for instance, the glaze was put on very thickly; consequently, when the light catches it does something completely different from the other colours, because it is in relief— at a certain point it goes into negative; dark colours become light and vice versa. This is a wonderful shock to the system, symbolising the reciprocity of heaven and earth. Earth is a mirror image of heaven and heaven the image of earth, and certain things which are standards on earth seem to be mirror images of those in heaven. The tile-makers knew these perceptual metaphors, as the interiors bear witness to the sensitive eye.

The acoustics of the mosques are also important and deeply symbolic, as is indicated by the story of hubble-bubble in the Sülemaniye. So are the geometries, as shown in Diagrams 2-4. Each of the sacred alphabets, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, has its own numerical value per letter. This is a deep study, but is a method of transferring revealed literature into numerical values and dimensions. The Shezadeh is based on a 4-fold symmetry, but also contains immensely adventurous 6-fold and 8-fold symmetries. The design is clearly deliberate, to demonstrate the sacredness of number; the number 6 representing creation and the number 8 the bearers of the Throne,



Tiles in the Sokullu Mehmet Pasha, Istanbul

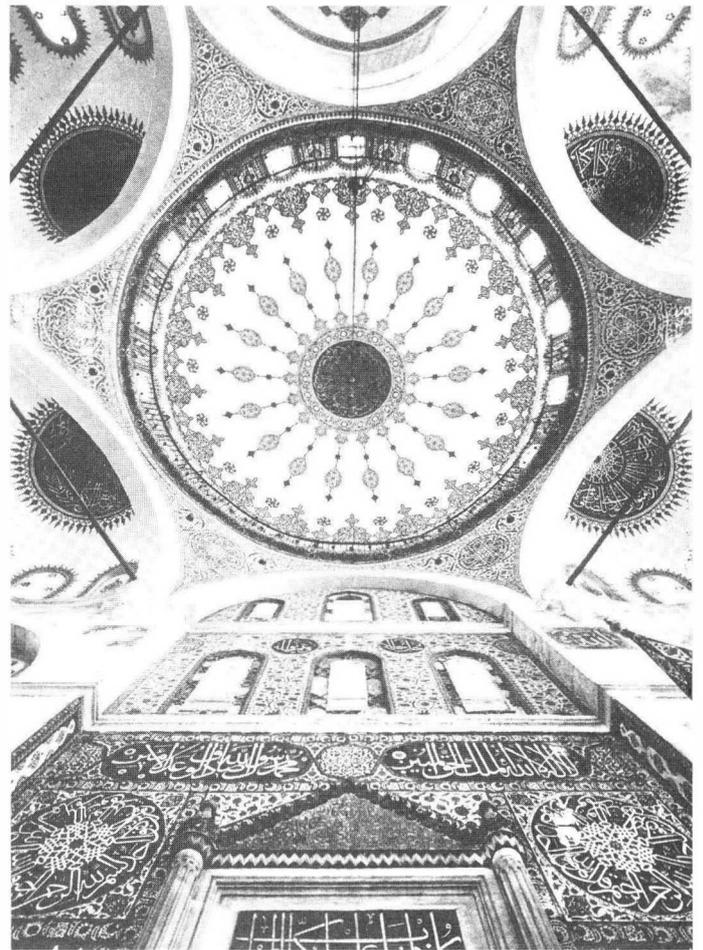
The Sokullu Mehmet Pasha in Istanbul

the intermediaries between humanity and the heavenly intelligences. Henri Corbin says that the whole point of the temple is that it is open to direct communication by the angelic intelligences when certain men are sufficiently purified. Sinan, it seems, was one of these men. He had to go through fifty years of purification before he started to design mosques and the Shezadeh is an indication that when he began he had already achieved that elevation which allowed him to acknowledge the profundity

of the form and its significance; an elevation which resides in putting the personal ego in the right place and acknowledging the ego of the One Reality.

Even at this level, he later described the Shezadeh as the work of 'an apprentice'. The Sülemaniye, he said, was built when he was 'a good workman', the Selimiye when he was 'a master'. From our point of view, of course, they are all works of 'a master'.

There is a tendency for modern researchers to look at the vocabulary of Sinan's buildings, rather than how they were proportioned. This is a shame, because whilst modern architecture does not need to copy the specific forms, it is important that it understands the spirit behind them. Sinan's architectural vocabulary was true for the time and the place in which he lived, but his geometric intervals and proportions are concerned with the timeless. He groups the elements of a building together so they harmonise with the eye, giving to it an 'eyeful' in the same way that poetry is an 'earful'. The eye and the soul become completely light when it recognises something it can easily grasp – this is what the symmetry of



flowers, for instance, does for us. It reminds the soul that the soul is mathematics (which is something which very few people who have studied Plato have faced up to). Sinan, through his architecture, reminds us of what we essentially are – intrinsically perfect.

Traditional psychology could be said to begin from the premise of perfection which is inherent, intrinsic and regainable; 'modern' psychology was founded in the pathological and only few modern scholars have seen the light of psychosynthesis or the normality of *anthropos* in all people.

Architectural form reflects the world view or world picture of the architect. To fully understand Sinan we would need to know the basic tenets of his faith and the revelation which inspired him and which he chose to 'house'. Nevertheless, the unity, clarity, light, space, rhythm, periodicities, poise, integrity of his form all point to the goal – the unity of ourselves with our universe, creative creation and creator, a profound simplicity, hardwon.

(1) 'Temple and Contemplation' by Henri Corbin. Kegan Paul, London, 1985.

REVIEWS

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME

From the Big Bang to Black Holes

by Stephen Hawking

Bantam, 1988 H/back. 198pp.
£14.95

Jane Clark

"I decided to try and write a popular book about space and time after I gave the Loeb lectures at Harvard in 1982. There were already a considerable number of books about the early universe and black holes... However, I felt that none of them really addressed the questions that had first led me to do research in cosmology and quantum theory: Where did the universe come from? How and why did it begin? Will it come to an end, and if so, how? These are questions that are of interest to us all."

SO BEGINS this short but dense book by one of the leading lights of physics. Hawking has dramatically demonstrated just how much these questions "are of interest to us all" by selling more than 200,000 copies in the UK and in America since June, taking it to the top of best-seller lists and astonishing the publishing world.

One must say first that its success is deserved. It is not a perfect book, nor a careful one; on the contrary, it is idiosyncratic and full of assertions that one suspects that many physicists will feel are unsubstantiated. There is also much that it leaves out. But it is nevertheless a clear and understandable exposition of current cosmology by one of the few people who can claim to really understand it; it is lively and provocative, and even if you do not agree with his standpoint, it keeps your attention from beginning to end.

HAWKING HIMSELF is currently Lucasian Professor of Physics at Cambridge University, a chair once held by Isaac Newton,

and he has been personally instrumental in many of the discoveries he describes. The title is characteristically witty and precise; on the one hand, the book traces the history of ideas about time from antiquity to the present day. On the other, it attempts to trace the history of time cosmologically, from its 'beginning' when the universe was created, to its end at 'the big crunch' or within a singularity like a black hole.

This second task would not have been conceivable a hundred years ago; in the Newtonian universe, time was an absolute, therefore without beginning or end, and physics contented itself with monitoring the laws of a universe whose origins fell beyond its scope. It was only with Einstein's development of the Theory of Relativity in the first decades of this century that time was brought into the domain of relativity, on a par with the three dimensions of space – a revolutionary step whose original discovery Hawking attributes to St Augustine (p8). Then with Hubble's discovery in the 1920's that the universe was expanding, and the consequent implication – verified by Hawking in the late 60's – that it had begun at some definite point of infinite density, it began to seem that the beginnings of the universe and its initial conditions could, after all, be discussed within physics.

Hawking ably traces these developments in the first chapters of the book, on the way giving excellent expositions of relativity theory, quantum mechanics and the world of elementary particles. From Chapter 6, 'Black Holes', we enter the era of his own work,

and the pace of the story increases, becoming in places as gripping and dramatic as a novel. We are given two figures with whom to identify; there is our hero, Hawking himself, pushing back the frontiers of knowledge as he travels from America to Russia to Cambridge, lecturing and talking to other scientists; discovering the properties of black holes as he struggles into bed – "My disability makes this rather a slow process, so I had plenty of time".

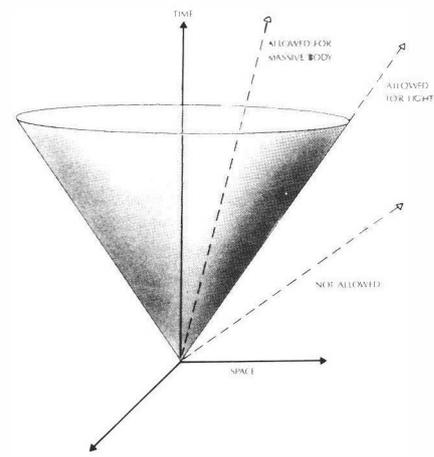
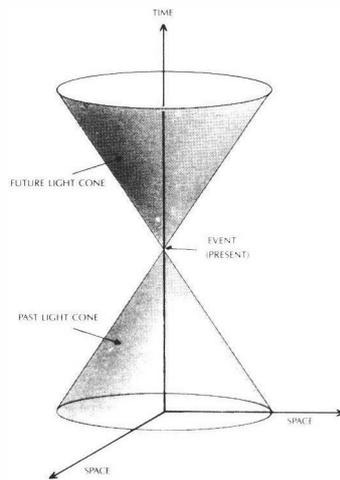
And there is a poor astronaut being sucked into a black hole. We are introduced to him in Chapter 6 as he slips over the 'event horizon' of a collapsing star, desperately signalling to his companions on the space-ship – "they would have to wait only slightly more than a second between the astronaut's 10:59:58 signal and the one he sent when his watch read 10:59:59, but they would have to wait for forever for the 11:00 signal". While they are protected by 'the weak cosmic censorship hypothesis', (which apparently prevents the awesome power of the black hole from seeping into ordinary space/time; "God hates a naked singularity" explains Hawking), for our astronaut time – and indeed all the laws of the universe – comes to an end as he enters an infinite gravitational field which stretches him out "like spaghetti."

IN CHAPTER 7 he is offered some consolation; Hawking and his long-time collaborator, the mathematician Roger Penrose, discover that in some black holes the matter so absorbed is re-emitted in the form of heat – "One such black hole could run ten large power

stations, if only we could harness its power". (p108) (However, there are difficulties in doing so, it having the mass of a mountain and being a million millionth of an inch in size). In Chapter 8, our astronaut seems to suffer a reprieve; Hawking has changed his mind about singularities. As one approaches a point of infinite density, he now proposes, the universe becomes so small that quantum mechanical effects cannot be ignored. Taking them into account, his calculations show that all the singularities disappear; in this situation, there are no boundaries in space-time, no edge where the laws of physics break down. The universe "...would be neither created nor destroyed. It would just BE".

However, hope is short lived; Hawking goes on to explain that the techniques he has used, developed by Richard Feynman, involve using 'imaginary time' – a mathematical device in which the time co-ordinates are converted into imaginary numbers. "When one goes back to the real time in which we live", he explains, "there will still appear to be singularities. The poor astronaut who falls into a black hole will still come to a sticky end; only if he lived in imaginary time would he encounter no singularities" (p139).

Without pausing to examine this extraordinary state of affairs, we abandon the unfortunate chap to his fate and move on to consider the arrow of time, on which Hawking has some fascinating ideas, and the development of a unified theory of physics. This latter would combine the partial theories of quantum mechanics and relativity into a single theory of quantum



gravitation. This would give us, for the first time in human history, a complete physical model of the universe which in principle includes everything. This is a project close to Hawking's heart. Aware of at least some of the arguments which deny the possibility of such a thing *per se* – and admitting that its mathematical complexity might be so great that it would not be able to predict even one single event with accuracy – he feels that it is nevertheless possible and achievable this century.

ALL THIS IS GREAT fun, and also ample, nourishing food for thought. For this is not merely a book about physics. As Hawking's opening remarks would indicate, it is a book which begs us to examine our ideas about the nature and the purpose of the universe in which we live, and almost every chapter, and in some places every paragraph, raises a fundamental question. Hawking himself takes a provocative approach, asking questions but providing few answers, and one can see why this book has aroused the special ire of some theologians and metaphysicians. But if one suspends arguing with him – which perhaps involves dropping the assumption that one already knows the answers to his questions – then what emerges is that these discoveries defy attempts to explain them within the terms of any existing ideas, religious, philosophical or whatever. The 'Big Bang', for instance, involves acceptance of a host of ideas of space and time that give no comfort to those who wish to make of it a simplistic 'proof' of the Judeo/Christian vision of creation – even less so do Hawking's latest proposals. As he asks on page 141, "If the universe is really completely self-contained, having no boundary or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end. ... What place, then, for a creator?"

On the other hand, the classically atheistic stance, or the 'scientific' viewpoint of those who wish to see themselves as products of chance in a meaningless universe, are also undermined. Discoveries such as the extraordinary 'fine-tuning' of physical constants required to bring the universe into being, and the essential intercon-

nectedness of all phenomena which quantum mechanics implies, are almost irrefutable indications of universal purpose. Hawking himself, for instance, states a dislike for 'The Anthropic Principle', a scientific hypothesis which suggests that this purpose involves man as a conscious witness, but nevertheless is forced to invoke it over and over again.

HAWKING RIGHTLY perceives, then, that the discoveries of modern cosmology challenge our accepted models of the universe, and that what is needed now is something new and fresh which penetrates more deeply into the nature of reality. Perhaps unexpectedly, he sees the establishment of a unified theory of physics as the first step in this greater task of reaching "a complete understanding of the events around us, and of our own existence". He argues that science has moved so fast over the past 100 years that non-scientists have been unable to keep up. A unified theory should, in time, be understandable by everyone, and then we can all of us, scientists, theologians, philosophers and ordinary people, discuss these matters together.

The writing of this book is clearly a part of his genuine desire for this sort of general discussion to begin; like a man who alone sees a beautiful thing – and there is no doubt that this new universe of ours has a beauty which touches all who look upon it – he longs to talk of its meaning. "What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe?", he asks. "Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing? Is the unified theory so compelling that it brings about its own existence? Or does it need a creator ...?" (p174)

But this is not to say that his answers, or in many cases even his questions, are satisfactory. With unconscious arrogance, he seems unaware of the fact that these matters have been debated by the greatest of human beings for centuries; the only theologian he quotes is St Augustine (several times) and he seems, on the whole, to have taken religious explanations of reality, and particularly the idea of God the Creator, at their

most literal and naive level. This could, of course, be part of his attempt to provoke response in the reader. But he is also self-contradictory, and squanders some of the things he sees. To take just one of several possible examples, on this matter of imaginary and real time he says on page 139:

"In real time, the universe has a beginning and an end at singularities which form a boundary to space-time and at which the laws of science break down. But in imaginary time, there are no singularities and boundaries. So maybe what we call imaginary time is more basic, and what we call real time is just an idea we invent to help us describe what we think the universe is like".

This is thought-provoking stuff, but he refuses the challenge, going on:

"But according to the approach I described in Chapter 1, a scientific theory is just a mathematical model we make to describe our observations; it exists only in our minds. So it is meaningless to ask: which is real, 'real' or 'imaginary' time? It is simply a matter of which is the more useful description".

Here Hawking reveals that he wishes both to have his cake and eat it too. If the fact that physics 'exists only in our minds' trivialises it to the point where we need not take the dilemmas it poses seriously, then clearly it can say nothing of significance to us about the nature of the universe, let alone about God. If, on the other hand, he wishes to assert that the products of our reason correspond in some way to an external reality, then he must be honest and pursue the paradox he has unearthed here. The very least implication of this is that there are different levels of being, each of which has its own 'time' and rationality – a view which is also strongly implied by many recent discoveries within quantum mechanics such as non-locality but which Hawking himself does not draw out in this book.

IT IS WITHIN the esoteric, rather than in the exoteric, aspects of the great traditions that discussion of

reality as multi-faceted and paradoxical has occurred, and many people suggest that it is to these that we must now turn if we are to decipher the meanings of the new science. One feels that Hawking is not amongst them; indeed, he is on record as regarding the application of mystical ideas to physics as a 'cop-out'. But there is no evidence in this book that he has ever studied any of the great works of wisdom in depth or that he has understood their purpose, which is not to supply an 'answer' in the way that a particular discipline such as physics understands the word. Being concerned with an unlimited and ultimately unknowable reality – which cannot, therefore, be limited to any one form or theory – spiritual wisdom can indicate the level of penetration and commitment now required if we are to understand, but it cannot replace physics, nor absolve us from the task of working out the meanings of the things which are shown to us in the image of our own era.

Where the perennial wisdom and the unified physics which Hawking espouses find common ground is in the assertion of unity as a fundamental premise and one of the most fascinating aspects of 'A Brief History of Time' is how often Hawking stumbles across an idea which is startlingly familiar to students of mysticism. An important example occurs in the first chapter, when he discovers that:

"...there is a fundamental paradox in the search for a completely unified theory. The ideas about scientific theories outlined above assume that we are rational beings who are free to observe the universe as we want and to draw logical conclusions from what we see. In such a scheme it is reasonable to suppose that we might progress ever closer towards the laws that govern our universe. Yet if there really is a complete unified theory, it would also presumably determine our actions. And so the theory itself would determine the outcome of our search for it! And why should it determine that we come to the right conclusions from the evidence? Might it not equally well determine that we

draw the wrong conclusions? Or no conclusion at all?" (p12)

His own answer to this, in terms of Darwinian selection, is hopelessly inadequate, and does no justice to his own strongly held and obviously passionately felt intuition that this unified theory does, indeed, wish us to come to the right conclusions. Clearly aware of the inadequacy, he drops the pretence and asserts, "Humanity's deepest desire for knowledge is justification enough for our continuing quest". In the perennial wisdom, however, such questions can be considered at their most essential level, which then allows their meaning to appear with complete rationality at all other levels. Ibn 'Arabi's cosmology, for example, tells us that the *raison d'être* of the universe and of ourselves is the one reality's desire to know itself objectively, a wisdom embodied in the *hadith qudsi* "I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I created the universes that I might be known". It is this that both motivates our search for meanings and creates the possibility of success at every degree.

Taking this perspective, Hawking's assertion that it is physics which is leading the way to a new vision appears as too self-centred. It would be better to see that we are all caught up in a process in which reality, the unified theory, God or whatever we wish to name it, is revealing itself in a new way, determining its own search in us, and of this physics is just one aspect. There are other things happening in the world – and also other aspects of ourselves – which are equally important if its purpose is to be fulfilled. The value of this slim book, interesting and enjoyable as it is, ultimately depends on how it contributes to this wider vision; whether, in challenging conventional ideas of our origin and destination, it leads us further into the impoverishment of pure materialism, or whether it brings us closer to the immeasurable richness of a fully integrated and unifying perspective which includes all levels of our being.

Jane Clark studied engineering and physics and is currently editor of BESHARA.

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

by Rupert Sheldrake
Collins, London, 1988
H/back, 391pp, £15

Richard Twinch

THE LONG-AWAITED publication of Rupert Sheldrake's 'The Presence of the Past' earlier this year has caused as much furore in the scientific and popular press as did his previous best-selling work 'A New Science of Life' (1), despite the lapse of 7 years. Indeed, the collection of reviews would make an interesting volume in itself!

The degree of interest shows that his hypothesis of 'Formative Causation' is one that will not go away, much to the frustration of the scientific establishment. Its increasing penetration into day-to-day thought, not just of scientists but of lay people, is witness both to the power of the ideas and to the effectiveness of the hypothesis, which proposes that repetition should perpetuate and evolve the concept. Sheldrake introduces the theme in his first paragraph:

"This book explores the possibility that memory is inherent in nature. It suggests that natural systems, such as termite colonies, or pigeons, or orchid plants, or insulin molecules, inherit a collective memory from all previous things of their kind, however far away they were and however long ago they existed. Because of this cumulative memory, through repetition the nature of things becomes increasingly habitual. Things are as they are because they were as they were."

The hypothesis is concerned with answering questions concerning 'morphogenesis', which means literally 'the coming into being of form' (from the Greek words *morphe*, form, and *genesis*, coming into being). The term is often used to describe how a plant, animal or man develops from the seed or egg, and it remains one of the great unexplained puzzles of biol-

ogy. Sheldrake, in common with many scientists, views all organisms as organised 'systems'. These include such diverse phenomena as atoms, social groupings and galaxies. Sheldrake has coined the term 'morphic unit' to describe such systems since Formative Causation proposes that, at all levels of complexity, they are organised by 'morphic fields'.

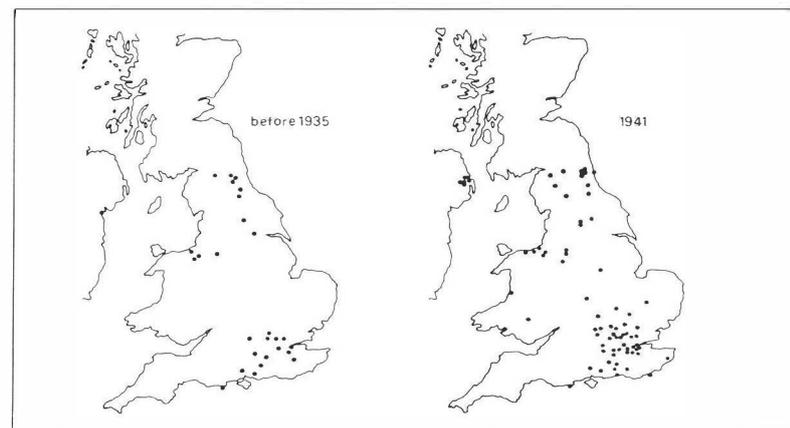
Fields have the property of being all-pervasive regions of influence which are nevertheless indivisible (as in a magnet), a property which recommends them to those with a penchant for holistic explanations. The existence of fields governing form have been fairly widely proposed within biology, and especially within embryology, since the 1920's. However, Sheldrake's 'morphic fields' have spectacularly different properties from the other fields currently recognised by physics (gravitational, electro-magnetic and the many quantum fields). Firstly, he proposes that the fields themselves contain **memory** which both effects and is effected by events (i.e. the natural systems themselves); secondly, that the fields are non-energetic and lie **outside** the scope of relativity. As such, they can influence events across time and space instantaneously, whereas Einstein's theory of relativity specifies that nothing (ie. no energetic transfer from A to B) can go faster than the speed of light. These two special properties of morphic fields are summed up in what Sheldrake terms 'morphic resonance'. He says in the glossary:

"Through morphic resonance, formative causal influences

pass through or across both space and time, and these influences are assumed not to fall off with distances in space or time, but they come only from the past. The greater the degree of similarity, the greater the degree of morphic resonance. In general, morphic units closely resemble themselves in the past and are subject to self-resonance from their own past states."

Implicit in the theory is that once a new habit is established, it will transmit itself to others of its species (and/or closely related species) across time and space. Blue-tits drinking the cream from milk bottles provides a delightful and well-documented example of such influences at work, as Sheldrake recounts in Chapter 9, 'Animal Memory'. This endearing (if unhygienic) habit began with the arrival of foil topped bottles during the 1920's. It was interrupted during the second World War, when such bottles were not available, but after the war there was a resurgence of the habit. During this time several generations of blue-tit would have died out, thus preventing 'direct' transmission of learning by example, which is the conventional explanation. The rapid re-establishment of such habits, of which there are many examples in this book, provide anecdotal evidence for his ideas.

Sheldrake himself well acknowledges that his hypothesis may take many years to develop into an accurate predictive (and *ergo* scientific) tool, a process that he parallels with the development of electro-magnetic theory from



Distribution of recorded opening of milk bottles by tits between 1935

Faraday to quantised electro-magnetism. A feature of his enquiry is the clarity of the fundamental questions he poses. For example

“If we are to persist with the legal metaphor, it might be appropriate to suppose that the evolving world is governed by a system of natural common law, rather than by a preformed legal system established at the outset, like a universal code.

But then who or what corresponds to the judicial system that establishes the precedents? And who or what framed the constitution of the Big Bang in the first place? And by what power or authority are they maintained? These questions arise inevitably, because they are implicit in the metaphor of the law. Laws imply law-givers, and they are maintained by the power of authority. If we drop the idea that the laws of nature are framed and maintained by God, then we must ask: what makes them up and how are they sustained?” (p12)

IF WE RAN A category of recommended books, ‘Presence of the Past’ would appear on the ‘not to be missed’ category, since whether you are a historian, scientist, free thinker or aspiring mystic (in the proper sense), as an analysis of current thinking and as a source of ideas, it is excellent. One strong feature is the illustrations, which graphically explain some of the complex discussion in the text itself (there is also a thorough glossary, index, notes and references). One such illustration

on page 111 shows precisely where Sheldrake situates his own ideas, both in relation to the mechanistic paradigm and to historical precedents. What becomes increasingly clear is that they do not lie ‘outside’ science, since such views have a substantial genealogy stemming from Greek philosophy. This proposed both the Platonic and Aristotelian paradigms: the former asserts the primacy of eternal ideas (the transcendent), and the latter stresses the natural as the abode of the real (the immanent). Indeed a large proportion of the book is an excellent historical critique of ‘mechanistic’ science, and an outline of the historical foundation of Formative Causation which is described as a natural development of 19th Century/early 20th Century thought.

Despite the media and scientific community’s attempts to brand Sheldrake as the ‘wild’ man of 20th Century science, this book reveals him as an essentially thoughtful and rational academic with a precise and witty analytical mind. I rather suspect that the irrational rage of some scientists of the mechanistic persuasion – who assert the self-existence of the material world, subject only to blind eternal laws – has more to do with the ‘Emperor’s Clothes’ syndrome exposed in all its nakedness by Sheldrake’s boyish perceptions and analysis, than by the unreasonableness of the hypothesis itself!

One of the chief objections to Sheldrake’s theories from his colleagues, even from such notable scientists of the ‘new’ paradigm as Brian Goodwin (2) and Paul

Davies (3), is his assertion that as morphic fields transmit information, not energy, they need not conform to relativity theory. Goodwin and Davies’ objections are not at all along ‘reductionist versus holist’ lines; they agree with the hypothesis of morphogenetic fields, which they see as “exercising an influence on the self-organising property of the developing organism”, but feel that they should have a place within existing scientific theory. Goodwin has stated his conviction (4) that to introduce non-energetic fields into science posits an ontological duality, which he is “totally opposed to”. Unity in his opinion should be a “single seamless continuity and if we call it energy in one area then we must call it energy in another.”

Sheldrake’s reply is that the scientific duality of energetic fields and mathematically ordered laws of nature contains a greater duality than the ideas he is proposing. He considers that “integration occurs by a higher level whole that embraces these apparent dualities.” How wonderful to have a dialogue where scientists vie each for a more universal viewpoint! This surely bodes well for the future.

MUCH TO HIS credit Sheldrake excludes no possibility, or area from general evolution and thus life. The ‘newness’ of such ideas and the difficulty of replication within a strict scientific sense (for repetition inevitably changes the conditions under which the next experiment takes place) makes the theory difficult to verify, though much of the book is taken up with details of potential experiments

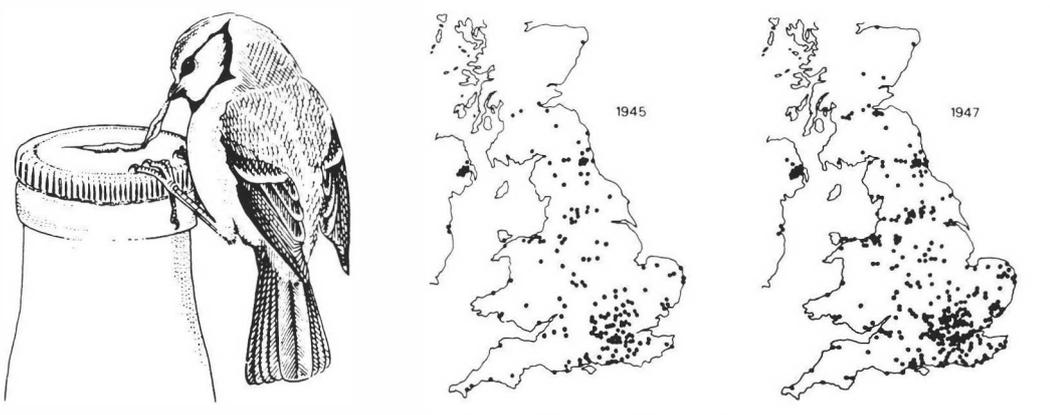
that will prove or otherwise disprove it.

The fact that it is testable makes it scientific. To date such experiments have proved inconclusive, but to dismiss the theory merely because it does not fulfil the criteria set by mechanistic science would be to diminish the scope of the ideas themselves. It is a science of uniqueness and individuality, that must of itself evolve and is of great value to those wishing to understand themselves more fully. The description of the past being ‘rolled up’ with the present, rather than communicating with it from afar, is akin to Isaac Newton’s intuition expressed in the words (quoted by Sheldrake on page 29)

“He (God) endures forever and is everywhere present; and by existing always and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space”.

My only quibble with the book is with how the ideas are expressed. The sweep is so broad that it can encourage misinterpretation. Within biology in particular, and within science in general, Sheldrake is on home ground and argues persuasively. It is when he wanders into other areas such as sociology, magic and anthropology etc. that the arguments lose force and become dissipated. By doing this he unnecessarily exposes himself and adds fuel to the fire of those who hang on to the established mechanistic paradigm. The universality of the ideas will naturally penetrate other disciplines as intelligent people are attracted by them. Universality lies not in endless correlation of apparently diverse phenomena (which characterises a ‘populist’ approach to these matters) but as the expression of the unity which encompasses all ‘things’. Comparison is the poor relation when compared with the universal vision which combines between intuition and reason and perceives each ‘morphic unit’ as a unique expression of the indivisible whole.

SHELDRAKE ADMITS that his hypothesis of formative causation is limited to the evolution of forms once they have come into existence. The original creative im-



and 1947. From the monthly magazine ‘British Birds’.

pulse is left open to many interpretations. One such interpretation (the so-called 'bottom-up' approach) is that of creativity welling up from within matter itself and another (the 'top-down' approach) sees creativity as stemming from a higher level field. The concept of a 'morphic unit' also includes the concept of a nested hierarchy of fields within a universal field, which would tie in with the intuition of many physicists seeking the 'universal field theory'. Sheldrake is quick to admit that the intellect, in contemplation of such vastness, soon reaches its limit and enters the world view traditionally described by metaphysics. He concludes his excellent chapter on 'Creativity Within a Living World' with the following words:

"In all these traditions, we sooner or later arrive at the limits of conceptual thought, and also at a recognition of these limits. Only faith, love, mystical insight, contemplation, enlightenment, or the grace of God can take us beyond them".

When questioned recently (4) on whether creativity arose by submission to a higher reality, Sheldrake's answer was a resounding and simple "Yes". With these words he firmly situates himself within the perennial tradition where God and Nature, the transcendent and the immanent, science and art, reason and intuition are not seen as separate entities but as complementary points

of view accessible through concordance and submission. The question of habits is critical, for if nature is habitual we must change our own divisive habits of thought to concord with the reality as it is rather than as we see it. Sheldrake says at the end of the epilogue:

"At present the question is open. It is possible that we do, after all, live in an amnesic world which is governed by eternal laws. But it is also possible that memory is inherent in nature; and if we find that we are indeed living in such a world, we shall have to change our way of thinking entirely. We shall sooner or later have to give up many of our old habits of thought and adopt new ones:

habits that are better adapted to life in a world that is living in the presence of the past - and also is living in the presence of the future, and open to continuing creation."

(1) *Longman, 1981*

(2) *Professor of Biology at the Open University. See Beshara 4 'Rumbling the Replicator'.*

(3) *Professor of Theoretical Physics, University of Newcastle and author of many books, including 'The Cosmic Blueprint'. Heinemann, 1988.*

(4) *Wrekin Trust Conference "Scientists & Mystics" April 1988.*

Richard Twinch trained as an architect at Clare College Cambridge. He now runs his own computer software company and is computer correspondent for Building Design.

THE WORKS OF CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

Damburst of Dreams

1981. Pan 1988

P/Back, 128pp, £2.99

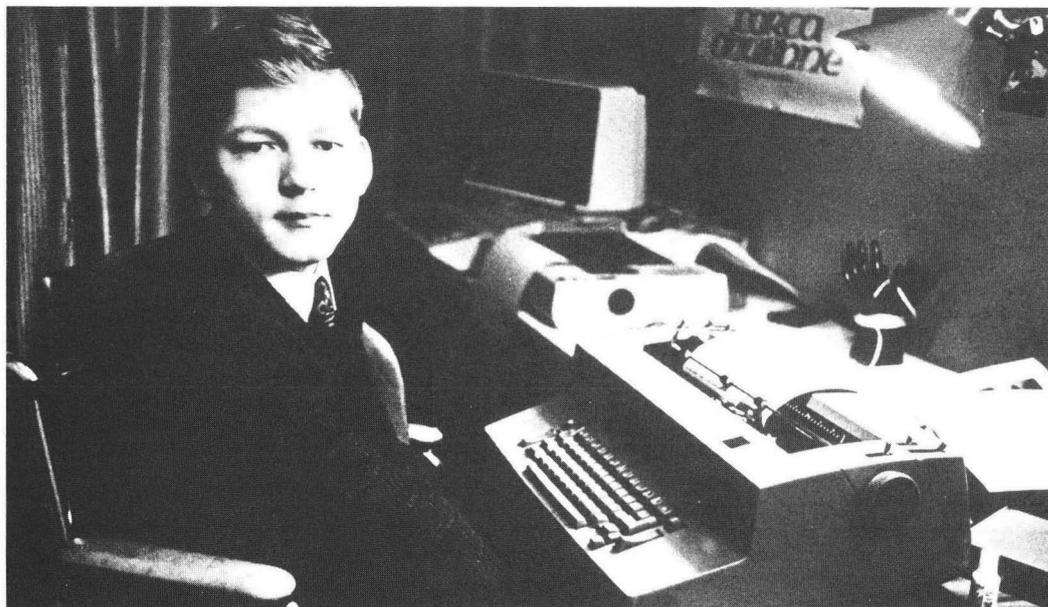
Under The Eye of the Clock

1987. Pan, 1988

P/Back, 207pp, £2.99

Martha Chamberlin

WHEN ASKED if they would publish Christopher Nolan's work, Weidenfeld's found the word 'privilege' appearing quite naturally in their vocabulary, and it is without doubt such to read him. His two little books, 'Dam-Burst of Dreams' and 'Under the Eye of the Clock', which won last year's Whitbread 'Book of the Year' Award, afford an introduction to a boy (he is now only twenty-two years old) of generous nature; he reveals a lovely interior largeness as he writes about himself in unique autobiographical prose. One speaks of interior largeness because of the extreme constriction of the outward form - that is, Nolan has been physically unable since birth, and it is an inability nearly complete, as the reader will discover below. Yet the circumstances of his life, far from dis-



abling his grateful sense of beauty, manifest it as he self-reflects the question, "how can that which is hidden inside become manifest so that its reality be known?" It is a matter of a belletristic treasure trapped inside the author's own body.

If interiorly he is engaged in intense, silently articulate observation, outwardly Christopher Nolan appears marked by such casual meaninglessness as is imposed by the dominion of involute limbs - utter philistines, loosely, painlessly flailing in random patterns; they cannot know the precise order of the mind they hide. Careless, they ruin all efforts at eating, talk-

ing, page turning; they prevent, obstruct, negate. But in the interior, memory holds observed beauty, waiting for safe passage.

This passage is manifestly Mercy's doing; there is no illusion that it is anything else, since here the identity of the Actor is undisguised by the imaginations of personal ability which plague most of mankind in their own way. Mercy manifests his words: he becomes just able to type. In these writings Christopher fashions himself Joseph Meehan, his mother Bernadette is named Nora.

"Balls of fiery frantic despair struck Joseph's every attempt

to type. First his left hand failed, then his right, attempts with both feet achieved nothing... Eva and Catherine designed a chin-stick, assuming that Joseph might manage to type with chin. Another disappointment dimmed their hopes. At each staff meeting failure was reported to Dr. Barry, but he lovingly would not accept defeat where Joseph was concerned... As a last hope, a Unicorn-like head piece was designed for Joseph, in vain hope that he might manage somehow to type with his head. Moves to practise placing the typing stick on the correct letter

always met with constant, cal-
lous, milling defeating
spasms... ”

He nearly gives up the attempt:

“ New lasting despair gripped Joseph and hastened his desire to commit suicide, but even that form of escape was denied him. A paper-thin balance between total rejection of God and acceptance of God’s will somehow still existed in Joseph’s mind. It was on a vesper too long to describe that Joseph Meehan finally dozed off to sleep. He had gone to bed at his usual hour but stayed awake praying and begging God to have pity on him. Morning was breaking before sleep came – listlessly lying limp he felt the touch of a kiss on his cheek. He swiftly opened his eyes and glanced all about the room – nobody was there! Mied, Joseph slipped into sleep again. All Joseph’s longings lost lustre as glorious sleep took over his consciousness. Life always anchors lost lonely ambitions and soon it more than mastered dead dreams for Joseph. Mindful of his frantic despair, Joseph dreamed that he was dead. Mankind’s corpse immortalizes God’s image left with the world’s dark doubters and in his acute dreams, Joseph dreamt that night that he saw God and His Blessed Mother. They were dressed as modern man giving a handsomeness to their hair style. All was sweetness, serenity, answering Joseph’s enquiring gaze.

Casting honest aching eyes downwards Joseph saw a grey typewriter sitting on the floor...” *Damburst*, pp17,18

Slowly, with helpful Lioriesal tablets and patiently helped practice, Joseph’s spasms cease to disarrange his poetry. He begins to write, the poem now well known:

I LEARN TO BOW

**Polarized I was paralysed,
Plausibility palated,
People realized totally,
Woefully once I totally
Opened their eyes.**

Damburst p20

This event appears near the end of the autobiographical piece, ‘A Mammy Encomium’, in ‘Dam-Burst of Dreams’, which was published in 1981 and was an immediate success. The story continues as the whole of ‘Under the Eye of the Clock’.

COMPASSION having ‘cabled’ him to word-life and possibility undreamt of by any but himself, Joseph finds himself accepted by the Mount Temple Comprehensive School in Dublin. Again the circumstance, a single disabled boy among hundreds of normal children, is as if arranged to manifest a certain perception or taste, in this case in the minds of the able-bodied students. If compassion and imagination were wedded in a single word, perhaps that word would point to the meaning of this sense, which when present affords vision of a thing along with affirmation of the Truth inherent in it. It is that compassionate imagination which, when faced with illusion, sees Truth – some of Joseph’s classmates and teachers do see, if only briefly, the boy himself, undemeaned, unnegated. Joseph celebrates such sight:

“... Jim Casey asked and answered questions that he felt might be racing through Joseph’s mind. The boy was flummoxed by the teacher’s imagination and as he listened he hurrahed silently, for Mount Temple was going to answer his dreams.”

Under The Eye p34

and waits for its appearance in others:

“...Carefully he noted students burgeoning grasp of gesticulated communication, hackneyed imagination trod new terrain...”

Under The Eye p45.

He is well practiced in the art of eliciting insight. Craftily “he stole yesses from them before they ebbed notional no.”

By his presence alone in such a school Joseph obliges either the appearance of this sense or its marked absence ; but by virtue of this predicament there is magnifi-

cation of what is ever, secretly required where Truth is the aim – that is, to see beyond the form, since form need not veil. It does not in itself create distance from truth or reality; it does not in itself institute a universe of exiles. Through this consideration one is reminded that Joseph, though at times severely lonely, does not consider himself alien, exile, or anything of the sort. Rather, he eloquently, easefully delights in worldly beauty, as in the passage below. On holiday with his family, he revels in Derravaragh:

“Rambling through glistening orchids, gentians, meadowsweet and wild rock roses cloned from breeze-blown, bird-couriered seed, the family stepped on scattered floral carpets strewn here and there among the rocks. Joseph festered hymns of wonder at beauty born from limestone. He rode his human beast of burden and gazed down into wells of verdant flower-cushioned greenery...”

Under The Eye p103.

and likes lurking behind the science building at Mount Temple:

“... they repeated the operation, but this time, Paul held Joseph’s nose and now, fag in his mouth, his mouth held tightly closed and with Paul squeezing his nose, they all shouted ‘PULL,’ and what else could he do but pull. He was fit to burst for want of breath, so that when he pulled he pulled with every ounce of his strength. Smoke gushed down his gullet into his lungs, his stomach and his bladder, and after what seemed an age it belched back in a coughing fit surely meant to signal death. The boys stood aghast, mouths open in anticipation as he coughed and couldn’t stop, for now he was laughing not only at himself but at the terrified expressions on his experimenters’ faces. Eventually he stopped choking and to a man they told him, ‘Ya bleedin’ well nearly choked, you’ll not frighten us like that again...’

Under The Eye pp165,66

IT IS TRUE THAT Nolan slips sometimes into a somewhat wincing sentimentality, but outgrowth is no doubt possible for such a young man. The short writings – poems, stories, letters, and two stunning surreal plays – all written between the ages of eleven and fourteen, and which comprise the second two-thirds of Dam-Burst, show great promise. For the moment, though, it is enough to mark real pleasure in reading him, and to recommend him to readers of BESHARA, especially now that both books are available in marvelously priced paper-back editions.

Yet despite all success, *Under the Eye of the Clock* ends sadly. Joseph, having gained admittance to Trinity College, Dublin, and having struggled manfully for a year to meet deadlines, argues with himself:

“... think, think of the hours trying to finish the damn essays, and you locked rigid not able to bow an inch to save your life; but didn’t you manage: didn’t you have your essay next day to throw on the table: it might be slim in volume but you had it, that’s the important thing – you bested your body. But really how long would you need to study? Well you could manage one subject each year so you’re talking about eight years – eight – great God you’d be fit for the bughouse, eight years Meehan – Meehan you’re mad, mad now to be considering it, mad you are with no shadow of a doubt – but, no butting. Forget about it. Just heed your better sense – that’s if you have a better sense or any sense at all.”

Under The Eye pp205, 206

He decides not to go on reading for the offered degree, morosely claiming “urtication his final destination.” No one, however, will believe Joseph’s future nest is in the nettle patch, so many times has he been bodily lifted from despair; faithfully unbelieving we await the next chapter.

Martha Chamberlin is currently a supervisor at the Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education at Chisholme House.

THE GLOBAL SITUATION

The Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential Edited by The Union of International Associations

K.G. Saur Ltd. London, 1987.
H/Back. £123

Green Pages

by John Elkington, Tom Burke and Julia Hailes

Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1988.

P/back, 256pp. £14.95

The Green Consumer Guide by John Elkington and Julia Hailes

Gollanz, London, 1988
P/Back. 342pp. £3.95

The Awakening Earth by Peter Russell

Arkana, London, 1988.
P/back, 228pp. £4.95

Ted Pawloff

THESE FOUR BOOKS are all concerned in particular ways with what is referred to in the weightiest of them (*The Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* literally weighs in at just over 7lbs!) as the "global problematic". The *Encyclopedia*, which runs to 1200 pages of exceedingly small type, lists around 24,500 entries linked by over 49,000 cross references. It is divided into two sections, one covering 'World Problems' and the other on 'Human Potential' including sections on 'Communications', 'Human Development', 'Integrative Knowledge', and 'Human Values'. At the back of the book, the reader will find an alphabetical index of around 75,000 items, but within sections, except where the editors experiment with a structural presentation, the entries are entirely random. A probably unintentional consequence of this is that the book has tremendous entertainment value due to the incongruity of entries gathered together on one page – an effect reinforced by the stilted language in which they are couched.

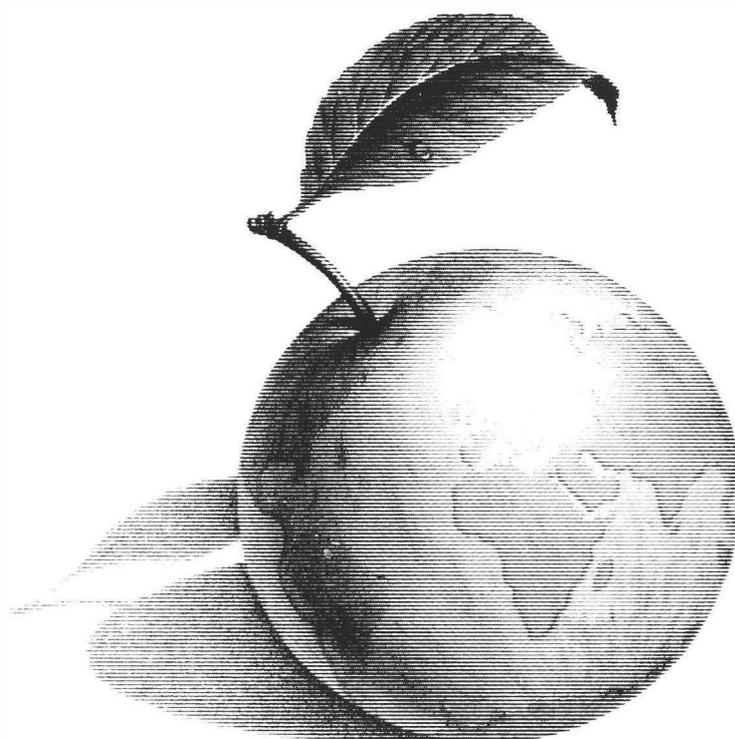
However, a perusal of the quotations inside the title page begins to reveal a purpose in the randomness; they include passages from Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu and the Sanskrit aphorism 'Neti Neti' (not this, not that). The entries have been gleaned or requested from over 18,000 international organisations listed in the companion three volume 'Yearbook of International Organisations'. The 'strategic assumptions' listed in the introduction make it clear that the editors are attempting to address themselves to the problem of the relative ineffectiveness of this multitude of organisations in the face of the problems and questions they exist to tackle. Thus, they assert that "the ultimate question is how to inter-relate inherently incompatible answers without producing yet another answer in a process which has proved unable to transcend itself".

This understanding of the need for self-transcendence, however it may be conceived, is perhaps one of the reasons for the profusion of concepts borrowed from various spiritual ways in the section entitled 'Human Development Concepts'. Equally, some of the experimental attempts the editors make to relate and structure the data are based on 'patterns of change' derived from the I Ching and Lama Anagarika Govinda's work.

One might view this massive work as a symptom of the beginnings of self-reflection by the international community, and this may in the long run be more important than the book itself. Certainly, if the spirit and intention which gave rise to the encyclopedia were to enter the life and practice of that community, much good could ensue.

'GREEN PAGES', subtitled 'The Business of Saving the World', is also concerned with "telling it how it is" by allowing conflicting opinions and interests to find expression. It introduces itself as being "designed as a first-stop information source on the rapidly growing environment business" and "aims to help build bridges between business, public sector and environmental interests".

The book consists of sections



covering topics such as Markets, Energy, Pollution and Waste, and Money. Each section consists of an overview presentation spiked with 'boxes' on specific projects or initiatives and 'perspectives' by various individuals prominent in a particular field.

No doubt the book provides a useful overview, and it has the merit of bringing together proponents of polarised points of view in a constructive way. But I found it seriously constrained by its manner of approach; so much so that one wonders whether it might not contain the possibility of misleading. To give an example: there is constant reference to the 'greening of Europe' which is identified with increasing market opportunities to sell: eg. devices such as pollution control systems. In some places it is admitted that such production must remain entirely unproductive in the sense that it is merely an attempt to prevent further deterioration of a seriously threatened environment. But the evident inference that industry and the market system as we know them (whether centrally managed or not) are essentially unsustainable is far from clearly drawn in all its implications. There is a hint at this inherent self-contradiction (though usually in a vague, concluding paragraph sort of manner) in the occasional acknowledge-

ment of the over-riding necessity for fundamental changes in the legal framework and political dynamics. But these perceptions are generally obscured by an apparently uncritical enthusiasm for 'green capitalism'.

In short, there is a failure to deal with the essentials; only one paragraph in the whole book (in Max Nicholson's 'perspective' p162-3) properly echoes the need for what Schumacher called in 'Small is Beautiful' (1) 'metaphysical reconstruction'. If this is not undertaken, the criteria for deciding what is 'green' – and so related to the programme of 'saving the world' as announced in the subtitle – are bound to remain muddied. For our actions spring from our actual (as sometimes opposed to the professed) values; and this is defined by our total vision of reality. The vision which gave rise to the problems all these books try to address cannot be expected to be large enough to encompass their solutions. The key is a universal vision reflecting the real order of existence, so that all our actions find alignment with it. This in turn is the basis for discrimination, which in several respects 'Green Pages' lacks.

'The Green Consumer Guide', by part of the same team, is a far more useful book. It consists of a short introduction entitled 'Cost-

ing the Earth' which summarises the gravity of the environmental crisis in some practical detail. This is followed by sections with such homely titles as 'The Hardware and DIY Store', 'The Garden Centre', 'The Chemist', 'The Supermarket', etc. These outline some of the choices each consumer faces, giving details of both products and the environmental record of major companies, plus lists of useful addresses for further information. What is more, future editions are promised so that we can expect the information to be kept up to date. The best praise one can find for this work is to say that everyone should have it and use it.

'THE AWAKENING EARTH', subtitled 'The Global Brain', is one of a whole crop of New Age works whose thrust is to demonstrate that mankind and the planet as a whole are undergoing an evolutionary transformation of major significance. Peter Russell deftly and usefully summarises various facets and expressions of the paradigm shift in the work of people like Ilya Prigogine, Teilhard de Chardin, David Bohm, Sri Aurobindo, James Lovelock and others to underpin his own exposition of universal evolution. He considers the planetary spearhead of this evolution to be 'self-reflective consciousness' as embodied in mankind.

Russell speaks with great sincerity and clearly grasps that the core of the matter is spiritual. The questionable part is the conclusion, where cosmological metaphor (the theory of cyclical cosmic evolution) is mixed up with metaphysical reality. Thus it is implied that Ultimate Reality ('Brahman') is dependent upon attaining enlightenment by recurrent cosmic incarnation. Clearly, Ultimate Reality cannot be dependent upon anything but itself, nor can its self-manifestation, being no other than itself, add to or subtract from what it is. The essential error of making that which is self-subsistent subject to temporality is reflected in all forms of reductionism, which consists in explaining phenomena not by their reality but by a lower or partial aspect.

Some parts of this book reflect this error; for instance, in Chapter

3, Russell considers the concept of the 'great chain of being' which he considers both historically (ie in terms of evolution) and as a revelation of higher orders of significance, from particles to atoms, cells and organisms to the brain and eventually to 'planetary society'. All this is considered in quantitative terms, Russell showing that the order of magnitude 10^{10} is highly significant as being associated with discontinuities where a higher order of significance is manifested. For example, he maintains that the brain becomes an instrument of self-reflective awareness when it consists, as it does in human beings, of approximately that number of cells. Now there is nothing wrong with looking for such patterns as numerical analysis will yield, as this demonstrates the underlying order and harmony of phenomena. But it is also insufficient and it would be better to explain the various levels of the 'chain of being' in their own terms, thereby doing justice to the unique meaning and significance each reveals as they evolve from energy to solid (mineral), vegetative, animal and human existence. Recent examples of such an approach can be found in Schumacher's 'A Guide for the Perplexed' (2) and most penetratingly, in J. G. Bennett's 'Spiritual Psychology' and 'The Dramatic Universe' (3). In fact, as the latter deals with the whole question of universal evolution in such a profound and rigorous way (especially in Volume 4 on 'History'), it seems strange that his work does not even figure in the bibliography of 'The Awakening Earth', nor is it referred to in many other recent works on the subject.

One's reservations about 'The Awakening Earth' are perhaps best summarised in the subtitle, 'The Global Brain', for, if the earth is (as indeed it is) awakening, then surely it must be to the fact that it is far more than a brain, global or otherwise.

What unites all these books is that they are a response to the need for a global vision and a universal perspective, although they approach it from radically different angles. When service to such a vision is undertaken, then necessarily the partiality of the approach is thrown into relief. But this reali-

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sation of partiality is nothing less than the refining of the intention, through which complete alignment with the reality of the vision can come about. It is in this sense that these books, in their content and in their aspiration, reflect the current global situation.

1) Originally published 1973. Now available as a Sphere paperback, 1988.

2) Originally published 1978. Now available only as a hardback, Cape 1984.

3) Hodder and Stroughton 1956.

Ted Pawloff was educated in France, Austria and UK. He is a Director of Beshara Press.

MANY FAITHS, ONE NATION

A Guide to the Major Faiths and Denominations in Australia.

By Dr Ian Gillman

William Collins, Sydney, 1988
Pback, 416pp, A\$19.95

Catherine Lovell

MANY FAITHS. One Nation' explores the role of religion in Australian society, past and present, and looks at its possible role in the next fifty years. In so doing, it highlights a trend towards shared experience and cooperation between religious groups. The author, Dr Ian Gillman, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland and an ordained minister of the Uniting Church in Australia. He has written the book as part of the Inter-faith programme celebrating the Bicentennial of European settlement.

In its opening section, 'Religion in Australian Life – an Exploration', Dr Gillman looks at different aspects of religion and finds that whilst some – such as the common attitude to religion amongst Australians – have not changed much; others – like respect for Aboriginal religion and culture, and the attitude of many

Australians towards the environment – have changed a great deal.

Religious convictions have never loomed very large in the Australian ethos. Very interesting is Dr Gillman's contention that, for European settlers in Australia, religion equalled morality and that the same thing today underlies the basic belief structure of many Australians. For most, a practical test of conduct is more important than the stating of a key belief, and interest lies more in what a religious body "does" in society than in what its members actually believe and practice. The set of beliefs and

reminded that one's heart will always be where one's riches are. (Luke 18).

After discussing the relationships between the churches and the civil authorities; the theological antipathies between Protestants and Catholics and other more recent arguments between Christian groups; and the rivalry between groups based on clashes of social and economic interests, Dr Gillman goes on to show how these positions have changed greatly today. Australia now finds herself in the same position as Indonesia who, with many more ethnic

widespread changes such as have taken place since World War 2 will not continue, but holds out hopes that a majority of Australians will learn tolerance of other viewpoints. On the subject of recognition of Aboriginal religion and culture he quotes a Catholic priest writing in 1978: "the turmoil and frustration she (the local church) feels in the presence of these poor ones can be seen as providential, a sign of the times... In them she can recognise her own spiritual poverty and be open to enrichment from the *anawin* (the poor ones). The Aboriginal people may yet be our saviours."

The rest of the book comprises a section in which various expert contributors present an overview of 32 religious groups which are to be found in all state capital cities and/or which had, have and most likely will have, a discernible impact on Australian life. These include Aboriginal religions, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, Baha'is and Sikhs. The author also examines 14 more groups including The Children of God, Zoroastrians and Chinese religions. Finally he discusses some interdenominational and ecumenical groups, gives some basic statistics, and gives a basic statement of belief of seven of the great religious traditions so that comparison can be made.

Dr Gillman believes this book to be a good, all-round reference book suitable for students of religion at all levels. More than that, in this Bicentennial attempt to come to grips with a great diversity of faiths and beliefs in one country, the book allows its reader to see that what is called for, from all who have a spiritual dimension in their lives, is mutual understanding, tolerance and cooperation springing from a knowledge that all ways lead to God.

This expression of unity in diversity is to be found increasingly in the eastern hemisphere, as exemplified in the experience of Australia and Indonesia. May the example be followed in other parts of the planet Earth which rejoices in Unity.

Catherine Lovell is a teacher of Japanese, Indonesian and Malaysian Studies



Schoolchildren in Melbourne. Courtesy of the Australian Bicentennial Authority.

values producing the most acceptable conduct are represented for most by the Good Samaritan of the New Testament, and by the Golden Rule: "Never let down your mate".

As for the attitude towards the environment, during the last two decades many religious groups have begun to lay renewed emphasis on the fact that humanity has a role of stewardship over this planet, its mineral resources, its plants and its other living creatures. However, Dr Gillman points out that this newly emerging sensitivity is greatly in conflict with the older attitude that extolled devotion to economic progress, laid stress on the work ethic and regarded material prosperity as a sign of Divine approval for the believer's course of action. He concluded that many church members will need to be

groups, languages and religions than Australia, adopted at the time of independence in 1947 the national motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*", meaning Unity in Diversity. Dr Gillman insists that the establishment churches in Australia today, many of which have a multicultural membership and a variety of languages in which worship is conducted, must champion the causes of the other faiths whose beliefs are challenged by secular laws. Some examples of this are Hindu and Muslim burial customs and Aboriginal tribal concepts of justice.

Finally, in his exploration of religious life in Australia, the author attempts to look fifty years into the future to see what part religion is likely to play in the lives of Australians. He believes that

THE CONFUCIAN WAY

The Confucian Way
by Li Fu Chen

KPI Paperbacks, London, 1987.
P/Back, 614pp, £7.95

The Analects of Confucius

Translated by Arthur Waley
Unwin Hyman, London 1988 (re-
issue)

P/back, 268pp, £6.95

by Martin Notcutt



CONFUCIUS (master K'ung) lived from 551-479BC, and was contemporary with Lao Tzu, to whom is attributed the great mystical work, the Tao Te Ching. They lived at a time of great change in China, and their teaching had an enormous impact on the emerging society.

Among other things, Confucius reformed the existing magical and utilitarian cult of ancestor worship. Although he always portrayed himself as a traditionalist, he transformed the sacrificial rites for the dead by purging them of fear and infusing them with moral significance through ideas such as filial piety, and deep respect and remembrance. In a world ruled by violent and arbitrary feudal princes, he held up before people the idea of the perfectibility of man.

In 136BC, less than a century after the unification of China under centralised rule, Confucianism was declared the state religion. From that time on, with only temporary lapses, it remained the official doctrine of Imperial China.

Confucius did not write anything himself, but his teachings were collected by his grandson and passed down by his great disciple Mencius. 'The Great Learning', 'Doctrine of the Mean', the 'Analects' (selected sayings) and the 'Works of Mencius' together constitute what have come to be known as 'The Four Books', which have been a place of recourse for the Chinese for over 1,500 years.

'The Confucian Way' contains the complete text of the 'Four Books', interspersed with com-

mentary. In order to introduce them to a wide audience, however, Li Fu Chen has rearranged the content. He has brought together related portions of each of the books, placing them under the eight subdivisions of 'The Great Learning' which "forms the gate by which the first learners enter into virtue." The translations of the texts themselves have been done by Shi Shun Liu, who has followed the classic translation of James Legge, with minor corrections.

FOR THE WESTERNER encountering these works for the first time, there is certainly a need for a commentary, as 'The Four Books' are very much in the Chinese idiom.

Li Fu Chen is no ordinary scholar. He trained as a mining engineer in the United States, and before the Communist Revolution he held ministerial posts in mainland China. He was later an important figure in the administration and education services in Taiwan. Indeed, he tells us that the first draft of this book was written between 1929 and 1932 because he was seeking to restore self-confidence, dignity and balance to his countrymen, whose respect for traditional values had been shaken by contact with Western societies and civil war. This may give the work a certain sharpness of focus.

The Confucian books have found their interpreters in the past, some influenced by Taoist and Buddhist metaphysics, some of a materialist inclination. Li Fu Chen seems to have put both these interpretations aside, and prefers to explain the books through them-

selves. His commentary has taken a wider readership into account through reference to Christianity and European philosophers. This may be the first major exposition of 'The Four Books' undertaken by a Confucian in this manner.

Despite the complexities, there are also many beautiful simplicities in this teaching. "The disciple Kung-tu said, 'All are equally men, but some are great men and some are little men: how is this?' Mencius replied, 'Those who follow that part of themselves which is great are great men; those who follow that part of themselves which is little are little men.'" (p144).

It seems that Confucius focussed his teaching almost entirely on conduct. The minimum was said about Reality which is the essence of the person, but it was certainly the object to bring the person into harmony with essential being. "Sincerity is the Way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the Way of men".

The teaching of Confucius is often contrasted with that of Lao Tzu. For example, both use the term the Way (Tao), but in Confucius this is described in terms of qualities. Li fu Chen sums it up: "When applied to oneself, the Way is called sincerity. When applied to others, the Way is called benevolence. When applied to affairs, the Way is called the Mean. When its application to oneself, to others and affairs is integrated, the Way is called virtue. When seen routinely in proper speech and conduct, the Way is called propriety." (p581).

For Lao Tzu, whose theme is the essential singleness of being, the Way is the Real itself, permeating and transcending all quality. Even the valued qualities are seen as qualifications or limitations:

"When the great Tao (Way) is forgotten, Kindness and morality arise. When wisdom and intelligence are born, the great pretence begins. When there is no peace within the family, filial piety and devotion arise. When the country is confused and in chaos, Loyal ministers appear."(1)

Despite the opposing manners of expression of these two traditions, one all spirit and one all letter, as it were, they co-existed in

China until the present century. The practice of Taoism as a religion could not, in any event, correspond to the utter simplicity of the Tao Te Ching, and at the level of folk religion, much of the focus was on the placation of nature spirits, divination, etc. Thus it is said that the pragmatic Chinese followed all three paths: Confucianism for everyday life, Taoism for weddings, fortune-telling, medicine and magic; and Buddhism for funerals. Many Taoists at any rate have explained the essential unity of the three ways, and view Taoism and Confucianism as root and branch, recommending the practice of Confucian virtues.

'The Confucian Way' comes with a foreword by Joseph Needham, author of the monumental history of science in China. He relates how he had a friend called Lo Chung Shu, who told him that his two given names, Chung, meaning loyalty and conscientiousness, and Shu, forgiveness and understanding, summed up all the essence of Confucianism.

In addition he says, "... I learnt how extremely numinous the Confucian Temples could be, with the ancient trees in the courtyard, the semi-circular pond and the library building; while in the main hall there was never any image, only an altar with candles and a great inscription which said, "The perfumed throne of the Sage, the Teacher of Ten Thousand Generations". The only clergy were the local officials, who came once a year to celebrate the sage's birthday... Whether or not you would call Confucianism a religion depends on your definition of the word: if, as I would maintain, this is primarily concerned with the 'sense of the holy', then Master K'ung certainly founded a religion."

FIRST PUBLISHED in 1938, Arthur Waley's is still thought of as the best all-round translation of 'The Analects'. It is readable and harmonious and comes with a useful introduction to key terms in the text. To give some examples:

"The Master said, He who by reanimating the Old can gain knowledge of the New is fit to be a teacher". *Book II, v/11 (p20)*.

“Tsu-kung said, Our Master’s views concerning culture and the outward insignia of goodness, we are permitted to hear; but about Man’s nature and the ways of Heaven he will not tell us anything at all”. *Book V, v12 (p110).*

“The Master said, Only one who bursts with eagerness do I instruct; only one who bubbles with excitement do I enlighten. If I hold up one corner and a man cannot come back to me with the other three, I do not continue the lesson.”

Book VII, v8 (p124).

“The Master said, My friends, I know you think there is something I am keeping from you. There is nothing at all that I keep from you. I take no steps about which I do not consult you, my friends. Were it otherwise, I would not be Ch’iu (Confucius).”

Book VII, v23 (p129).

“The Master said, Is Goodness indeed so far away? If we really wanted Goodness, we should find it was at our very side.”

Book VII, v29 (p129).

“The Master said, At fifteen I set my heart upon learning. At thirty, I had planted my feet firm upon the ground. At forty, I no longer suffered from perplexities. At fifty, I knew what were the biddings of heaven. At sixty, I heard them with a docile ear. At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart; for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right.”

Book II, v4 (p88).

1) No 18. From the translation by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, Wildwood House, 1975.

Martin Notcutt grew up in South Africa and came to England in 1972. He is a Trustee of the Beshara Trust and currently works as a company analyst.

ERRATA

We apologise for misprints in the review of TEMENOS 9 in the last of Issue of BESHARA. Poetry was by Olive Fraser and Jeremy Reed, whereas the painter Biren De was not brought up in Bangladesh but taken to India as a child.

ANANDA K COOMARASWAMY,

*Bibliography/Index
Prologos Books, UK
P/Back, £12.50.*

Brian Keeble

IT IS CUSTOMARY, in admiring the edifice, to praise the architect and forget all those whose painstaking labour made it possible. The ‘edifice’ of Ananda K Coomaraswamy’s (1877-1947) learning is very considerable and to be more than admired. But its full extent is partly hidden by the fact that many of its parts are relatively inaccessible. Although he published many books in his lifetime, these constitute only a fraction of his total output – the rest are now only available in the back issues of learned journals and are here listed with that devotion to detail which is the bibliographer’s special vocation. Rama Coomaraswamy and Prologos Books are to be congratulated for their painstaking work in giving us the key to the whole. This modest production belies its appearance; in the right hands it will unlock spiritual riches literally beyond compare.

Coomaraswamy’s scholarship is legendary. Indeed, he has been called one of the greatest intellectuals (‘intellect’ – the habit of first principles) of the modern era – and not without good reason. The scope and penetration of his studies is beyond compare. Altogether his work is a veritable *summa* of the world’s religions and cultures. His formidable powers of understanding were never used for the purpose of anything like a personal theory. In expounding in unparalleled fashion the ‘normal’ and traditional doctrine of art, work and life as an expression of the common metaphysical doctrines of the world’s sacred traditions – the *sophia perennis* in fact – Coomaraswamy handled the diversity of his material as the varying dialects of a single truth. His technique was to demonstrate by cross-referring his sources with relentless exactitude. The result was a form of

scholarship that transcends scholarship and becomes a rhetoric in the best sense, demanding nothing less from the reader, according to his powers, than assent to its thesis; the assimilation of the knower to the to-be-known up to the highest level of reference.

Coomaraswamy’s texts range from the totally erudite, in which the footnotes all but threaten to overwhelm the main text, to those of a more popular and plain exposition. Here is one of the latter, printed on the back cover of this book. It was written in 1942 and is the quintessence of the traditional, universal doctrine of life and art. The reader may rest assured that its author could equally well have – and indeed did – expound the same doctrine in several hundred pages of erudite cross-referenced analysis drawn from universal sources in order to demonstrate its ‘normality’ and, given the reader’s preparedness to understand, validity.

“Things made by art answer to human needs, or else are luxuries. Human needs are the needs of the whole man, who does not live by bread alone. That means to tolerate insignificant ie. meaningless inconveniences, however convenient they may be, is beneath our natural dignity; the whole man needs things well made to serve at one and the same time needs of the active and contemplative life. On the other hand, pleasure taken in things well and truly made is not a need in us, independent of our need for the things themselves, but part of our very nature; pleasure perfects the operation, but is not its end; the purposes of art are wholly utilitarian, in the full sense of the word as it applies to the whole man. We cannot give the name of art to anything irrational”.

It remains only to note that the modern world, with all its man-made ills, is more-or-less the antithesis of this 140 word synopsis.

Brian Keeble is publisher of Golognoza Press books, a writer who has contributed to many journals and a co-founder of TEMENOS.

THE SAMYÉ LING TEMPLE.

Richard Twinch visits a Tibetan Temple in the Scottish Borders.

THE SIGHT OF a golden roof cornered by dragons and pinnacled in triplicate emerging from Scottish pine trees is breathtaking, and no doubt it will become a tourist landmark, not just for those journeying within the Buddhist tradition, but for all those visiting the borders, whose sight-seeing can now include an authentic Tibetan Temple.

For the roof belongs to the Samyé Temple, built at the Samyé-Ling Buddhist centre at Eskdalemuir, and opened on the 8th August this year by David Steele, MP. If one was asked whether it fits into the local vernacular, the answer must surely be ‘not at all’. However the significance of the inauguration of the largest Buddhist temple in Europe is so great that it may be necessary to widen the term ‘local’ to include the whole world.

The authenticity of the Temple arises not so much from the form of the building or the materials used, but from the spirit of the place and the source of inspiration. Both of these are entirely Tibetan, expressed in the excellence of the traditional craftsmanship. During the opening celebration, I stood with a friend who had visited Nepal in the early 70s; before us rose the gold topped, gaudily decorated temple; orange and maroon clad monks were leaning from high balconies to view a wind-swept platform on which Tibetan dancers were performing the story of the first Samyé Temple, which was inaugurated in Tibet 1200 years previously. My friend said he felt as if he had been transported from Scotland to a corner of the Himalayas!

SO WHAT OF THE building itself? I eventually tracked down the architect amidst the 1000 or so people who had come to see the public unveiling by the Khentin Tai Situpa (a patriarch of the Kagyu school) and David Steel –



the latter attired in his privy councillor's uniform with gold and red braid, mirroring the exuberant decoration to the doors of the temple. Peter Labasci, the American architect trained at the Pratt Institute, told me how he had come to Samyé Ling in 1975 and had been involved in the design of the temple and associated college (not yet built) since that date. To begin with, various 'western' designs were put forward, but these were rejected by the abbot of Samyé Ling, the Ven. Akong Rinpoche. They eventually opted for a traditional design and sent off a monk to measure temples in Nepal.

From that point on the 'design' became a matter of compliance with instructions which are continually adjusted and amended. Various suggested features such as saw-tooth windows soon went the way of earlier inventions. In our age of inflated egotism it was refreshing to find an architect willing to be compliant to a spiritual vision and accept, in Peter Labasci's words, that he was "just a minion".

At the lunch I met John Clerk, who is responsible for the Tibetan exhibits at the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington, London. This was his first visit to Samyé Ling, and he was impressed by the quality of craftsmanship, particularly the wood carving and paintings. The monastery is fortunate in having one of the greatest living exponents of Tibetan painting, Sherab Palden Beru, who has supervised all the decoration, and executed some beautiful *Thangkas* (religious paintings now done in acrylic) for the temple.

One of the functions of the building is to act as a home for Tibetans, who were so violently thrust from their Himalayan retreat. In this it has succeeded admirably. Entering the hall of the temple with stocking feet, one is

first struck by the quality of serenity present and then by the magnificence of the decoration. A huge gilded Buddha is placed at one end of the central hall measuring some 12 x 37 metres, in 8 bays. The hall is ablaze with light from the clerestory windows, which are notable for Tibetan decoration set within the double-glazed units. The effect of the myriad golden statuettes surrounding the large Buddha in glass cases, is one of dissolution by light, particularly effective with the sun slating in through the upper windows. I was assured that the decoration of both the Lamas apartments on the floor above, and that of the reliquary chamber on the top (surmounted by the golden roof) were as splendid as the prayer hall.

David Cameron, a civil engineer who has worked as site foreman/clerk of works part time for many years and full time for the last 2 years, described how the building is essentially a simple post and beam construction. This had the benefit of cheapness and simplicity; the latter was especially important since the work force was almost entirely volunteers. The use of western materials to replace traditional materials has on the whole been successful, even the rather wavy lines of the reinforced concrete beams could be seen to reflect the uncertainties of large sections of adzed timber that would have been used in Tibet to support the roof of the long veranda. The use of fibreglass for many of the mouldings was made necessary by the speed of construction as well as cost. John Clerk, an expert in Tibetan metalwork, pointed out that the dragon heads would have been more crisply executed in metal, but were nevertheless very good. Metalwork was used, however, in the construction of the roof pinnacles

and the volunteer workers went out and acquired the skills to make both the curved beaten copper roof and ornamental wrought iron railings as well as the cast marble stairway. A wonderful example to all who are dismayed at the decline of craftsmanship – all that is required is a will to learn and an appreciation of beauty.

One aspect of the building that has not been successful is the use of artificial stone cladding. The local authorities apparently insisted on stone "to match the local buildings", as if a Tibetan temple could in any way be seen as matching a small stone farm-house! The use of decorative features, protruding circles and squares, to mirror the use of projecting timbers is however most successful and works in a way that the whimsical application of past styles to post-modern buildings does not. Michael Graves (the doyen of post-modernism) would not be disappointed with the colour scheme, which is polychromatic almost to a point of excess. Indeed one Tibetan monk was heard to lean over to a Christian monk, and, waving at the temple say "too many colours". But that is how the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism has always approached such matters. This rather amusing incident highlights the fact that the four schools within the Tibetan tradition are distinguished not so much by division of belief as by qualities of taste, emphasis and expression. When such delicate distinctions are all that differentiate the schools, naturally the Tibetans are still finding the schisms within the western religious traditions very hard to understand.

ONE WONDERS HOW such an unusual building could have passed planning and building regulations control. The attitude of the local authorities was very aptly expressed by John Jameson, the Convener of the Regional council, who pointed out that the Borders had from time immemorial been invaded by a succession of warlike peoples, who had eventually been assimilated into the gentle landscape of the Borders. The coming of the Tibetans was likened to another invasion, with the difference that it was peaceful and

brought compassion and understanding rather than violence and death. It was in this spirit that the people of the Borders are coming to accept the arrival of an until-now foreign invasion. There will always remain dissenting voices, but the voices of both the District Convener and that of David Steel reflected the pervasive spirit of conciliation and rapport.

An example of such rapport was found in the building process itself, and in particular the handling of such a complex and delicate matter as the local authority. Brian Brown of the Dumfries Council was full of praise for the workmanship and dedication of the builders. He described the building as "the ultimate in self-build" (the construction was started with only £15, and the shell erected for only £100,000, all from gifts). He went on to explain how a strong bond was formed early on in the process, in which he (on behalf of the local authority) provided detailed advice at every stage of a constantly evolving design.

So how does this building fit in with the development of 20th century architecture, or is it merely a throwback to a previous age? In its execution alone it merits attention, and as an example of self-build it is surely unrivalled. In this age where 'anything goes' and Egyptian columns can nestle alongside Corinthian capitals in wayward eclecticism, the temple at Samyé Ling derives its form from its meaning which lies within a tradition over a millenium old. It has not been invented out of a whim to be different, yet achieves a dazzling freshness and spontaneity whilst respecting traditional forms. For all its magnificence and splendour, the abbot, Akong Rinpoche (who was instrumental in not only inspiring the construction but in its design and construction down to the last detail) reminded those present that "the building is nothing, it is what we learn inside the 'house' that is important and that is compassion".

The Temple can be visited between 3.00 and 4.30pm during the week and between 3 and 5pm at weekends. Samyé Ling is at Eskdalemuir, Dumfriesshire on the B709 between Langholm and St Mary's Loch.

BESHARA TRUST NEWS

BESHARA
FRILFORD

The Beshara Trust
moves into its
new centre in England



THE BESHARA TRUST has now moved to its new premises at Frilford Grange, Frilford, 8 miles S.E. of Oxford.

Frilford Grange will be the centre for the activities of Beshara worldwide, housing the Trust's administration and the offices of this magazine. It is, moreover, a place from which the invitation that Beshara expresses can be widely extended.

As a Beshara centre, Frilford is open always to anyone who wishes to come. Each weekend there is a programme of study and meditation for all who wish to join them. There is also a series of weekend and ten-day courses designed to introduce the ideas which are fundamental to Beshara.

In addition, the seminars which began at Beshara Sherborne in 1985 will be continued and expanded. These seminars have drawn people from many different disciplines – from physics, biology, economics, the arts and the religions – into a context which emphasises the essential unity of all knowledge. Already at Frilford, dom Sylvester Houédard has given a weekend on 'Spiritual Art', concentrating on the works of Thomas Aquinas and Ibn 'Arabi; Kathleen Raine, the poet and Blake scholar, will be discussing 'Poetry as Prophecy' on November 26th, whilst on December 3rd the architect and geometer, Keith Critchlow, will be speaking on 'Theology of Number'. The pro-

gramme for the New Year will be available soon.

FRILFORD GRANGE

The house itself comprises an 18th century grange onto which has been added a 19th century Italianate extension. It is a building which not only possesses grace and beauty, grandeur and homeliness; but also gives the visitor the impression that it is 'neither of the East nor of the West', thus rendering it particularly fitting as a home for Beshara activities.

The house is mentioned by the architectural historian Nicholas Pevsner, who asks of it "why should [it] have been built here?", while John Betjeman (1) felt that it seems "to have been copied exactly from a builder's copy book even down to the planting of trees and arrangement of flower beds..." referring to the tradition whereby a builder, in lieu of employing an architect, would make drawings of beautiful buildings from different parts of the world and use them as the basis for developing his own ideas.

Along the entire front of the house runs a flagstone verandah covered with vines. Passing between two stone urns bearing an Apollo motif one enters the spacious entrance hall. From this open two elegant reception rooms, both of which open back onto the verandah. To one side is a Victorian conservatory which shelters a passion flower climbing to the roof and a mature fig tree covered in fruit. To the

rear, in the older part of the house, is the kitchen area and extensive cellarage. The rest of the accommodation consists of 6 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms, with most of the rooms being spacious and high-ceilinged.

The gardens extend to about 1 acre. They have in the past been well and thoughtfully planted with beautiful trees and shrubs to provide a network of hidden paths enclosing small areas of lawn. To one side is a small lily pond by which stands a fine Judastree. Hidden from view on one such path are a swimming pool and sauna.

The Grange is itself a place with a long and full history. Frilford has been settled since neolithic times, and neolithic and Roman artefacts have been found in the grounds. A manor at Frieliford is recorded in the Domesday book as being a demesne of Abingdon Abbey – some 1200 acres, which along with its various farm implements, thanes, villagers, slaves etc was valued at £6! – and parts of these original buildings are contained in the existing building. By 1350 it had passed into private hands, and the estate was divided up in the 18th century.

Alison Yiangou

(1) *Murray's Berkshire Architectural Guide, 1949*

Our thanks to Mr Jones-Walters for information included in this article.

Photograph by Christopher Ryan.

MEMORIAL FOR BULENT RAUF



Artists impression of the monument. By John Brass

THE MONUMENT for Bulent Rauf, who was for many years consultant to the Beshara Trust until his death in September 1987, is now under construction at Chisholme House in Scotland.

The monument has been designed according to his own wishes, and is to be erected over his place of burial. This he chose to be at the highest point of the Chisholme estate, commanding magnificent views of the place he loved. The vista encompasses the estate, the house and the lake, Chapel Hill and, looking over the estate, the wide sweeps of the moors beyond. A monument built in this place will be clearly visible from both the approach roads to Chisholme.

The monument itself is being cast from reconstituted white marble from the Isle of Skye. It consists of four slender columns 11 ft high supporting a circular entablature 11 ft in diameter. The columns stand on three concentric circular steps which rise out of the hillside, with the grave at the level of the top step. The grave is grassed over and open to the sky – open above and open on all sides – in order that the rain, symbolising the Mercy of God, may pass freely through. The top step bears the inscription, “They are from Him and to Him they return”. It is intended that there will be another inscription on the entablature.

At the time of writing the concrete

foundations for the monument have been completed, and the marble sections are being cast nearby in Kelso. Although a certain amount of polishing will be completed prior to construction, the main task of polishing, largely by hand, will be done from scaffolding after the marble sections have been erected. The final

stage of the work will be the inscriptions. The monument is being funded entirely by donations given to the Bulent Rauf Monument Appeal, which was launched last year.

Beshara Australia



Weekend and ten-day introductory courses are now taking place at the Beshara Centre at Yackandandah, Victoria..

Applications are invited for a proposed six month intensive course starting in April 1989.

There are also evening study groups in Cairns, Sydney and Melbourne.

For further information, please contact:
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Many thanks to all our friends in Beshara who have helped us in our venture to Australia. We hope to see many of you out here at Yackandandah in the near future, as we all join in this global expression which is Beshara.

Richard, Ayesha, Dillon, Simon, Corrina, Ronan and Djemila

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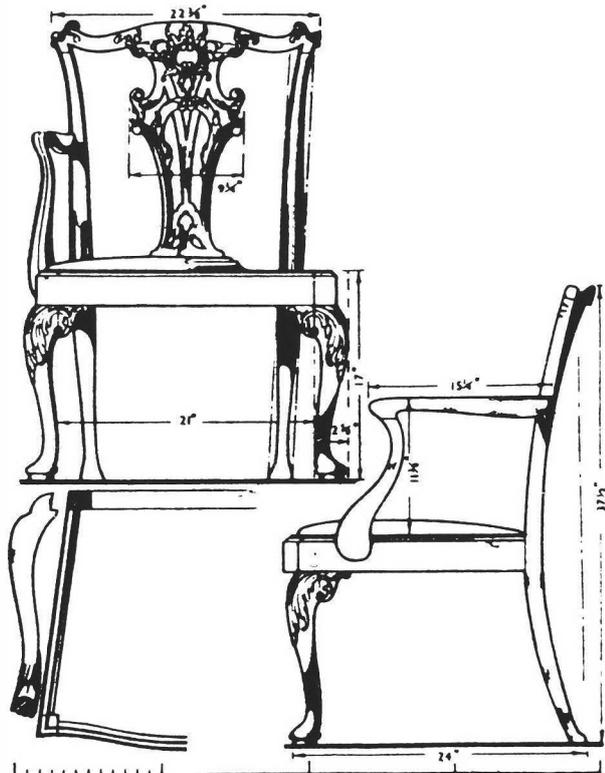
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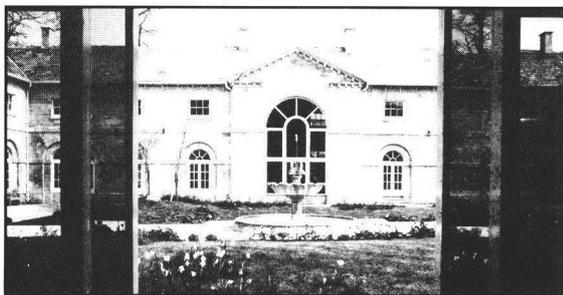
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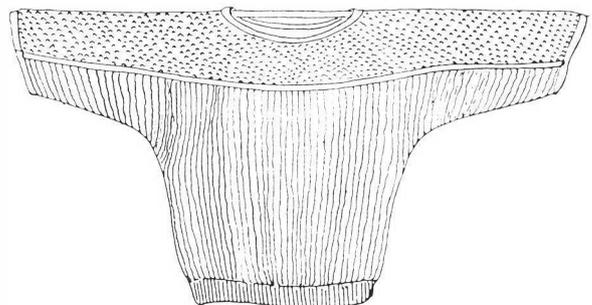
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