

Issue 106 –March 2005

81 Greville Street , Chatswood

Next Meetings –20 March 2005

**NO MEETING IN APRIL**

15 May 2005

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Editor's Note,

Jim Mooney writes, commenting on the Mike King article *Consciousness and the Prior Given of Space and Light* in the last Nowletter:

Regarding Mike King's mention that stable planetary orbits are only possible in three dimensional space, a theoretical physicist discussing string theory with me mentioned that knots are only possible in three dimensional space. Given that life molecules are complex knotted and folded structures, this means life itself is only possible in three dimensional space - something perhaps even more anthropic than planetary orbits.

At the Harding meeting in February Dave Knowles introduced us to Phenomenology and its impact on his life. When he talked to me about it in the past I was always struck by the similarities with headlessness and the fruits of the experiments. I thought this would be of interest to Nowletter readers and persuaded Dave to reformat for inclusion in this issue. One of the associated areas we touched on at the meeting was our interest in Bohmian Dialogue and I see a very clear connection between what David Bohm was asking us to consider and what the transpersonal Phenomenologists are pointing to. So, I include an article by Don Factor, which he wrote some time ago, summarizing Bohm on aspects of his work which I think are closely related to what Dave covers in his article, in particular, embodiment and the meaning of meaning. .

**Dialogue Meetings – Third Sunday of the month (NO MEETING IN APRIL)**

**Harding Meetings – Approximately bi-monthly, by notification of date and programme**

**Krishnamurti NSW Gathering – 13 to 15 May – Contact details on page 7**

**The Nowletter appears between 10 and 12 times every year and is a vehicle for news and views about awakening to what is really going on. Contributions from readers are considered the most valuable content so please think about letting me have your thoughts, experiences, discoveries and any responses to what you read here.**

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## **The Fascination and Frustrations of Phenomenology**

*Following up on a Dialogue conversation, a contribution for the NowLetter  
and notes for a workshop, from Dave Knowles*

This is not so much a report on a rich and productive personal methodology as a tale of my attempts to approach phenomenology in that light. As I was making notes for this workshop, I called them “The Fascination and Frustrations of Phenomenology” Besides its nice alliteration it expresses how much the subject has intrigued me and drawn me back to yet another tussle with it despite the frustration I have encountered in trying to make it a personal tool. I’ll try to make this exploration as interesting as possible however and draw in the other disciplines and studies I have encountered on the way that have helped to propel me on my search. How and why I got hooked on that search is interesting for me to look over retroactively and I hope it will have at least some interest for you. In many ways this personal approach to the subject is in the true spirit of phenomenology! I’m happy for you to interrupt me and challenge me during this as I am hoping that your input may give further stimulus to my quest. [Likewise: any response to these notes from Nowletter readers is welcome.]

### **Introduction**

When I look back I think it was Francisco Varela who first convinced me (in *The Embodied Mind*) that Phenomenology was something worth looking into. Varela was giving an introduction to Cognitive Science and Human Experience in his widely praised book. I had already been hooked on his outlook and style by articles in the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* and found *The Embodied Mind* richly suggestive in its explorations of a science of consciousness. Varela ended up recommending a three-pronged approach: cognitive science itself combined with Buddhist mindfulness/awareness training and the embodied phenomenological insights of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who Varela was obviously inspired by. This whole approach spoke to me strongly because I was already strongly attracted to the Gurdjieff Work in mindfulness and was trying to wake fully into a vivid perception of the world by practising the Gurdjieff technique of “self-remembering.” In this quest I did not need convincing of the importance of embodiment as many of my pleasures in life came from my physical fitness as a racing and touring cyclist in a beautiful part of England: The Peak District. Long days spent cycling vigorously over the moors and descending helter-skelter into the valleys transported me into another state: one where I felt intensely awake to the beauty I moved through and the world seemed revealed in epiphanic richness to me as the perspectives shifted with my movement through the world. Compared to this, normal life did seem more like a “waking sleep” as Gurdjieff stated and the vigorous use of the body to waken into an intense tasting of the world out there was a marvellous discovery which I employed as much as possible and relished.

### **Starting with Phenomenology**

From what I could deduce of Varela’s debt to Merleau-Ponty, it seemed to be to fully acknowledge the living in our body and enjoying the fruits of our senses in such away that the world became more vividly alive and enjoyable to us and freighted with previously unappreciated significance. This seemed to me very similar to my feelings after a long day in the saddle moving through the Peak District. So I wanted more ways to explore this “waking-up” besides cycling and any other way I could think of to make myself susceptible to epiphanies. As Merleau-Ponty was one of the key figures of the philosophical movement of Phenomenology, I thought it would well repay my time to investigate this discipline further. I considered I could approach Phenomenology as a scientific discipline, get the textbooks, study the methodology and attain the fruits with considerably less effort. Hah! – dreamer! Initial exposure to its central injunction (that of the phenomenological epoché) to set the common-sense view of the world aside, “bracket it” and see the world afresh made sense to me and became connected in my mind with other ways in which the world, by various accidents made itself fresh to my vision and gave me the feeling I had been given a privileged view “behind the scenes” so to speak. These I styled to myself as “epiphanies” and I collected them for a while.

### **Epiphanies**

I was introduced to epiphanies by my reading of James Joyce. As Harry Levin puts it:

In *Stephen Hero*, too, Joyce explains his conception of art as an ‘epiphany’, a sudden illumination if not a divine revelation, a slight but definite insight into other lives, a fragmentary clue to the meaning of life as a whole.

A couple of examples:

Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs.

What spectacle confronted them when they, first the host, then the guest, emerged silently, doubly dark, from obscurity by a passage from the rere of the house into the penumbra of the garden?

The heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit.

But they can be highly personal experiences which may say nothing to others. I think of a tree blazing in its treeness against an autumn sky or some of the lyrics of Bob Dylan, e.g.:

My best friend said, "Now didn't I warn ya,  
Brighton girls are like the moon,  
Brighton girls are like the moon."

At dawn my lover comes to me  
To tell me of her dreams  
With no attempt to shovel the glimpse  
Into the ditch of what each one means

And from Nikos Kazantzakis, this beauty:

I said to the almond tree  
"Sister, speak to me of God"  
and the almond tree blossomed

So I found epiphanies wherever I could: in the natural world by accidents of perspective, or mood, or bodily state, in literature, in music, particularly Bob Dylan, in various experiences usually involving adventure or at least stepping outside of the mundane.

### **Back to the Phenomenological "Promise"**

I thought, with a handy philosophical methodology at my disposal I could shift aside the veils of the world that would somehow enable me to enjoy a transcendental view of the world, indeed the phenomenological epoché was also known as the "transcendental reduction". I guess I viewed this as living in a continually induced epiphany – another way of responding to Gurdjieff's injunction to "wake up."

I had picked up enough hints to the phenomenological method that its injunction to bracket or set aside the common view of the world (the natural attitude) such that one could "get back to the things themselves" by adopting the phenomenological attitude made sense to me in the light of my other experiences. It would surely now be just a matter of deeper reading and more structured practice and a new richer state of consciousness and vision would be mine for the taking.

Now for the sad bit.

So I plunged into the Cambridge Companion to Husserl only to fairly quickly find that whatever attracted me to Husserl's ideas was not thought important enough to explore by the academic philosophers who contributed to the Companion. In fact it was worse than that, their dense explanations were difficult or impossible to follow and seemed to bear no relation to what had attracted me in the first place. I closed the book in frustration. Other books I explored occasionally revealed other "hints and guesses" but without giving me the technique I was looking for. By some accident I came across an extremely helpful journal article by Fred Hanna in the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology that gave some background into this major difficulty and which seemed to leave Hanna in the same position as me: frustrated in the attempted development of a promisingly rich methodology. Let me quote from one of Fred's e-mails to me:

Please allow me to be candid, Dave. The esoteric, ivory tower ambience that is associated with academic phenomenology has grown wearisome to me and it seems that most professional philosophers want little to do with phenomenology being associated with mysticism or anything transpersonal such as Hinduism, or Buddhism. It is as if associating Husserl with such subjects somehow cheapens phenomenology. Thus, I would have to say, with some sadness, that the line of inquiry begun in this article and the one below--i.e., elucidating the phenomenological method in a transpersonal context--appears to have died on the vine.

You can see from this that both Fred & I had latched onto the assumption that phenomenological method promised to be yet another transpersonal discipline in the repertoire that Wilber promoted so well in his books, though Wilber himself makes scant reference to it (in *Eye to Eye*) and then not in any promotional way. He certainly does not pick up on Husserl's discussion of the transcendent. Fred's statement of the assumption was:

The purpose of Husserl's phenomenology was to experientially investigate the essence of any and all phenomena and to disclose the mysteries of consciousness and being. As a result of this method, both Husserl and Heidegger were spontaneously delivered into realms that are clearly transpersonal in nature

Not clear to phenomenologists however. They have enough difficulty describing the three reductions that are the heart of the phenomenological method. First there is the psychological reduction or epoché which brackets the natural attitude. Then the eidetic reduction with its imaginative variations to render clearer the essence of what we perceive. And finally the transcendental reduction, the most mysterious of all which reveals for us consciousness itself and the operation of the transcendental ego. That was easy to say but Husserl spent his whole life trying to clarify his methods.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty says this in his introduction to *The Phenomenology of Perception*:

The best formulation of the reduction is probably that given by Eugen Fink, Husserl's assistant, when he spoke of 'wonder' in the face of the world. Reflection does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical.

This description is one of the most appealing and suggestive to me and renews the attractiveness of the carrot held out in front of me and urges on my attempts to better come to grips with a phenomenological method.

One would think Ken Wilber would have something helpful to add to this but my survey failed to show up anything that helped my quest.

Jean Gebser in his *The Ever-Present Origin* seems to touch many times on something analogous to the phenomenological view but again there is more an accumulation of richly suggestive observations than any discussion of a clear method and also when we go to Gebser we have to deal with his idiosyncratic vocabulary. He asks:

"This brings us to the turn toward the whole and diaphaneity in recent philosophy. Where are we to find such aperspectival indications in philosophy? First in Heidegger's changed position, and second in certain results of Husserl's phenomenology. Besides Bergson, Husserl is undoubtedly the most decisive thinker of the preceding generation. The phenomenological philosophy founded by Husserl ... proceeds descriptively, and its essential object consists of the essential interconnections which are gradually envisaged via intuition."

This suggests to me that Gebser's "concretion of spirituality" and "waring" are connected with Husserl's transcendental phenomenology in some way.

According to Gebser, transparency (diaphaneity) is the form of manifestation (epiphany) of the spiritual.

Integral reality is the world's transparency, a perceiving of the world as truth: a mutual perceiving and imparting of truth of the world and of man and of all that transluces both.

There is no direct connection with or elaboration of Husserl's views in Gebser, just the feeling of a parallel path with occasionally glimpsed insights that support the ongoing quest.

I turn now to some more comments about phenomenology from other sources which have given me some more clues.

One of Husserl's trusted students, Fink says:

Every exposition of the phenomenological reduction is in a unique way false.

Natanson, a praised biographer of Husserl, has these quotes:

There have been almost as many interpretations of the phenomenological reduction as there have been expositions. ... we may recognise three large claims that have been made about the reduction: it is ambiguous; it is philosophically obscure; and it is ultimately unattainable. It may well be, of course, that only the most diligent travellers will persist, but then phenomenology is not for everybody.

It might also be remembered that disadvantages sometimes carry with them unexpected resources. The philosophical obscurity of the reduction demands of the inquirer that he perform the reduction as *his*, that *he* orient himself within its confines. The turn to *self-responsibility* is a gift of what otherwise might be considered philosophical isolation. Within the orientation he must find for himself, the investigator is free to further, if not complete, the transformation of phenomenological reduction into philosophy.

One could take these as essentially pessimistic comments, yet the second quote to me reinforces the way I find myself struggling with phenomenology and honours it in some way.

Merleau-Ponty with his:

The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction. This is why Husserl is constantly re-examining the possibility of the reduction.

Offers a reason why Husserl himself was seemingly never satisfied with his explanations but kept writing new introductions to phenomenology throughout his life.

So for me it comes to seem that Phenomenology is my koan that I am destined to struggle with and continually re-address in the terms that currently make sense to me until I can tease out for myself something that I can move forward with; as Rilke suggested – live the question as deeply as possible – and take the opportunities offered to work with a community like you for mutual inspiration.

A favourite quote from Hemingway (another revealer of epiphanies for me) came to mind here as someone who had come to the end of an exposition which he had wished could have exposed much more than he felt it had:

If I could have made this enough of a book it would have had everything in it. ... It would have had the change when you leave the green country behind at Alsasua; it would have had Burgos far across the plain, and eating the cheese later up in the room; ... it should have had the taste of horchata, ice-cold horchata, and the new-washed streets in the sun, and the melons and the beads of cool on the outside of the pitchers of beer; ...

What else should it contain about a country you love very much? Rafael says things are very changed and he won't go to Pamplona any more. ... I know things change now and I do not care. It's all been changed for me. Let it all change. We'll all be gone before it's changed too much and if no deluge comes when we are gone it will still rain in summer in the north and hawks will nest in the Cathedral at Santiago and in La Granja, where we practised with the cape on the long gravelled paths between the shadows; it makes no difference if the fountains play or not. We never will ride back from Toledo in the dark, washing the dust out with Fundador, nor will there be that week of what happened in the night in that July in Madrid. We've seen it all go and we'll watch it go again. The great thing is to last and get your work done and see and hear and learn and understand; and write when there is something that you know; and not before; and not too damned much after. Let those who want to save the world if you can get to see it clear and as a whole. Then any part you make will represent the whole if it's made truly. The thing to do is

work and learn to make it. No. It is not enough of a book, but still there were a few things to be said. There were a few practical things to be said.

And finally from T. S. Eliot:

These are only hints and guesses,  
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest  
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.  
The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.

But there's more – the fear that Dylan may be talking of us in our attempt to fathom the mystery:

You've been with the professors  
And they've all liked your looks  
With great lawyers you have  
Discussed lepers and crooks  
You've been through all of  
F. Scott Fitzgerald's books  
You're very well read  
It's well known

Because something is happening here  
But you don't know what it is  
Do you, Mister Jones?

But that's a negative note on which to end – the positive, for me is the constant cross-reference between my glimmers of what the epoche is and all the other hints & guesses I've referred to – epiphany, the Gurdjieff Work, headlessness, poetry, literature, and song, the writings of Traherne and Gebser, the mystery of our embodied-ness. And the opportunity to bounce these ideas around with yourselves. Cheers!

*Dave Knowles*

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### **Krishnamurti – Sydney Gathering**

Krishnamurti Australia will hold a gathering in May 2005 to discuss Krishnamurti's teachings. We have rented the whole of the Pittwater youth hostel for Friday 13<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005. We have the hostel till mid-afternoon Sunday. It is also possible to extend the stay either before or after the gathering. The youth hostel has an idyllic setting in bushland at Pittwater in northern Sydney. It provides comfortable accommodation without being luxurious. We will self cater. The youth hostel is reached by ferry/water taxi from Church Point to Hall's Wharf. Church point can be reached by bus from Manly or Sydney. Details on the hostel are available at [www.yha.com.au](http://www.yha.com.au). This includes a locality map and Ferry timetable. Activities will include a video session followed by large and small group discussion.

**Where:** Pittwater Youth Hostel overlooking Morning Bay on Pittwater's western shore. Arrive by ferry/water taxi from Church Point to Hall's Wharf. Last ferry 6.15 pm after this a water taxi may be available.

**How to get there:**

**Bus:** DIRECT BUS SERVICE

E86 City to Church Point (Weekdays only) 156 Manly to Church Point.  
L88/L90 City to Narrabeen/Mona Vale change to 156 to Church Point.

**Other:** 15 minute ferry from Church Point to Halls Wharf and 10 minute walk uphill to YHA or arrive by foot/mountain bike via Towlers Bay Track. Help with the walk is available on request. More details from Leon on 02 62316738 or Donald 02 99991706.

**Food:** We will expect people to bring their own food especially any special dietary requirements. We will supply the bulk items like rice, sugar, milk and expect people to bring the rest. We will take turns at cooking and meal preparation and suggest to people if they want to prepare one meal before hand and freeze it we can then reduce cooking times considerably. Full catering details will be forwarded on enrolment.

**Cost: \$60 for the gathering plus food.** Payment by the middle of April if possible. It is possible to come just for the day, cost is \$20.00 per day.

**What to bring:** Bring bed sheets, pillow cases, and towels, other bedding provided.

**To enrol or for further information contact:**

**Leon Horsnell, 54 Michie St Wanniasa ACT 2903 phone 02 62316738 or 0418627196  
email [leon@pcug.org.au](mailto:leon@pcug.org.au) or Donald Ingram Smith 02 99991706.**

*A registration form can be downloaded from:*

**<http://www.krishnamurtiaustralia.org/text/pitwatergathering.htm>**

**A SUMMARY OF DAVID BOHM'S PAPER ENTITLED 'SOMA-SIGNIFICANCE: A NEW NOTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PHYSICAL AND THE MENTAL' by Donald Factor**

Bohm introduces the word, 'soma-significance', to replace 'psychosomatic': a term which, he suggests, implies a dualism, two separate entities - mind and body -which interact. This, he proposes, introduces a split or fragmentation between the physical and the mental that does not properly correspond to the actual state of affairs. In his approach, 'soma', which means body or matter, is connected with 'significance' or meaning. (i.e. the meaning of matter.) Meaning is given the key role, rather than mind or matter as distinct entities. The notion of soma-significance, then, provides a bridge between mind and matter. It relates, simply, to two aspects of one over-all field of reality, to be distinguished only for the purposes of thought.

Meaning, he suggests, is primary, and is fundamentally undefinable. At least explicitly; although we know, tacitly, what we mean when we consider meaning, and this will unfold and change as we consider it. Meaning, and the idea of the implicate order are, thus, closely related. The implicate order can be seen as a way of illustrating how meaning is organized. But, as with the whole idea of the enfolding-unfolding orders of the universe, unbroken wholeness provides the essential perspective.

He further suggests two more aspects: manifest and subtle, which are closely related to soma and significance. but which are clearly relative, since what is manifest on one level may be subtle on another. The flow between various levels of subtle and manifest can be described as the apprehension of the meanings of meaning, a process which, he suggests, may lead on to a grasp of very subtle meanings in a flash of insight.

The emphasis need not only be from the direction of the mental or 'significance' realm, where each physical (somatic) configuration has a significance. They can be approached from the physical side too, here termed 'signa-somatic', where the total physical response of a human being can be seen to be profoundly and actively affected by what physical forms mean to that person. For example, if a shadow means an assailant rather than just a shadow, both mind and the chemistry of the body will respond accordingly. But in this view, nothing exists in this process except as a two-way movement between the aspects of soma and significance, as well as between levels that are relatively subtle and those that are relatively manifest.

Ultimately, this process extends even into the environment, linking up the whole of society in one vast web extending even to man's relationship with nature and with the cosmos. All of this flows back and forth between what it means to us, and, possibly, what we may mean to it.

Out of this, there arises the notion of intention, which we sense as a feeling of being ready to act in a certain way. In other words, intention unfolds out of meaning. But most of that meaning remains implicit; we cannot possibly describe more than a small part of the total significance we sense at a given moment. So, meaning and intention are seen to be inseparably related as two sides of one activity.

Intentions are commonly thought of as being conscious and deliberate, but, in fact, one's ability to consciously choose or determine one's intentions is very limited. One's intentions are discovered by reflectively observing one's own action. In action, what is implicit in what one means, is revealed more fully. One *only* perceives intentions, not the thing in itself. Thus, intention and action are constantly changing in the act of revealing a fuller perception of the implications of its meaning.

In terms of the implicate or enfolded order it becomes possible to look at the various levels of meaning enfolding each other, and having a significant bearing on each other. Meaning, then, is seen as a constantly extending and actualizing structure -it is never complete or fixed. The implication is that meaning is a dynamic principle capable of an indefinite extension to ever – greater levels of subtlety, as well as comprehensiveness. But this can only take place, in human experience, when new meanings are being perceived freshly from moment to moment. Memory, being some kind of a recording, has a kind of stable quality which cannot transform the structure in any fundamental way, and which only has a limited capacity to adapt to new situations. It can only reorganise existing meanings.

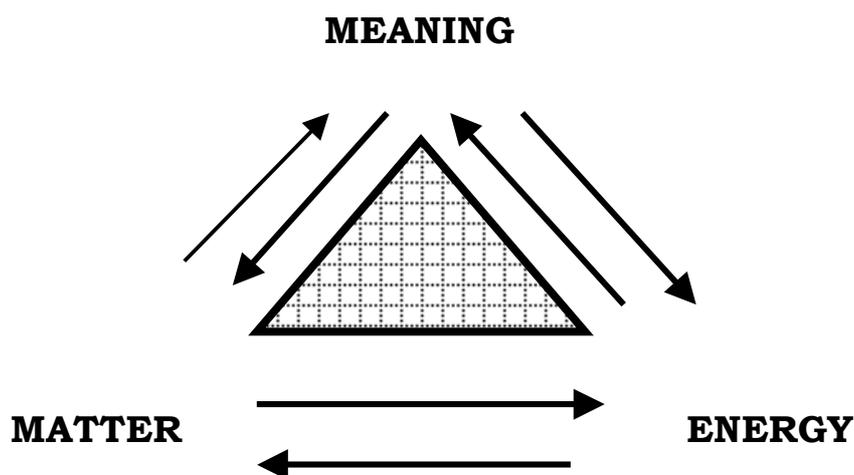
Although it might seem at first sight that somewhere there is a bottom level of meaning, or objective reality, it would appear, upon further consideration, that within any concrete meaning there is always an inherent ambiguity. Any truly 'bottom level' would, necessarily, have to be unambiguous. It would, simply, have to just 'be there', completely independent of what it might mean to us. But even in the realm of science there would appear to be a tight bond between, so-called, fundamental particles or fields, and higher, more complex levels that are more clearly dependent on meaning. Quantum mechanics, for example, is only able to deal with the probabilities of certain events in certain situations; it can say nothing about the behaviour of an individual particle, nor can it even provide an unambiguous concept or picture of what sort of process is supposed to take place in such a measurement. Further, it also implies that no bottom-level of unambiguous reality is possible. So, quantum mechanics, along with the whole field of meaning (and of any consideration of reality) appears to be dependent on a larger context.

Content, according to the dictionary, is the essential meaning - such as in the content of a book. But any specifiable content is abstracted from a wider context which is so closely connected with it that its meaning cannot be properly defined without it; and that context can further be seen as content in terms of a wider context, and so on. So whether a form seen in the night means a 'shadow' or an 'assailant' will depend on such things as what one has heard about prowlers, or, possibly, what one has had to eat or drink, etc. It can be seen, then, that human beings in any given situation contribute to both the content and the context, and that there is, inevitably, an ever more subtle interplay between content and context in any set of meanings. These two aspects, then, are very similar to soma and significance, and to the subtle and the manifest.

Implied in all of this, is the notion that every feature of the universe is not only dependent on its context, but that its grosser aspects are dependent on subtler levels that are closely analogous to soma-significant and signa-somatic activity. This view further implies that everything, including ourselves, *is* a generalized kind of meaning. Consciousness, along with all of nature, shares a basic over-all process which is an extension of soma-significance. In other words, it might be said that without meaning there would be no consciousness. Therefore, essentially, it is more consistent to say that this meaning is independent of man, rather than that there is an unambiguous 'bottom level' where these considerations have no place.

In principle, it is possible in this way to encompass both the outward universe of matter, and the inward universe of mind. In this approach three basic aspects arise:

Soma, or matter, Significance, or meaning, and Energy.



From the point of view of the implicate order, energy and matter are imbued with a certain kind of significance, which gives form to their over-all activity, and to the matter which arises in this activity. The energy of mind, and of the material substance of the brain, are also imbued with a kind of significance which gives form to their over-all activity, and to the material structures that arise therein. So, quite generally, we may say that energy enfolds matter and meaning, while matter enfolds energy and meaning.

And the way we find out about matter and energy is by seeing what it means. Thus, meaning enfold matter and energy, and through this mutual enfoldment, the whole notion obtains unity

But this symmetry of meaning is not yet complete, because the entire field, as illustrated, must also enfold itself in meaning. In other words, there is the meaning of meaning. Meaning refers to itself directly while matter and energy can only obtain their self-reference indirectly (i.e. by referring to one another, and through meaning.) Therefore, the way is opened to seeing the possibility of a generalised kind of intelligence which can comprehend a whole, including itself, and which is independent of man.

Meaning, though, has always been considered as peculiar to our own minds, and not as a proper part of the objective universe. However, we have seen that whatever meanings we have in 'our minds' are inseparable from the totality of our somatic structures, and, therefore, from what we are. These meanings, though, can be seen to depend on the whole set of meanings operative within us. They have their origins in society as a whole, and are in turn, dependent upon a larger context, and so on. So, if there is a generalized kind of meaning intrinsic to the whole universe, including our own bodies and minds, then the way is opened for an understanding of the whole as self-referent through its meaning for itself.

From this sort of perspective, one can then see that changing meaning can change human lives, along with the whole world. Any transformation in consciousness requires a change in meaning. Each change in meaning becomes, in fact, a change in being. And these changes are not only in the aspect of significance, but also in the aspect of soma. Each perception of a new meaning by human beings, changes the over-all reality in which they live and have their existence, sometimes in a far-reaching way. This implies that such reality can never be complete; that meaning is a dynamic principle that has a fundamental role to play in what life actually is. Without this, as soon as one says that a thought corresponds to an object, he has a division - the thought and the object. What is needed is a view in which the thought itself is part of reality.

If we extend this idea of meaning to the cosmos as a whole, we can see that, although human meanings make a certain contribution; the notion of generalised soma-significance implies that the cosmos itself is actively ordered according to a kind of 'objective' meaning in which the whole organises the parts. Meaning is a dynamic factor that contributes actively to reality. Out of this, human beings, along with everything else, unfold. And, as happens with the action of human beings, new meanings may emerge in this over-all order as part of a process of creative unfoldment of generalised meaning.

If meaning is an active part of reality, independent of human consciousness, then to change our perception of meaning requires energy. Any perception of new meaning constitutes a creative act. But only meaning, it would appear, can arouse energy. This energy can be aroused by our perception of incompleteness or contradiction - when the old meanings no longer cohere. Then, the beginnings of the notion of a new meaning might begin to penetrate a person's intentions. The actions unfolding from these intentions will be aimed at decreasing the discrepancy. Then, often, in a flash that seems to take no time at all, a coherent new whole of meaning appears. And each new meaning makes its contribution, both subtly and manifestly, to reality. The point is, then, that once society, the individual, and their relationships are seen deeply (and intellectual understanding is not enough) to mean something different from what they did before, a fundamental change has already taken place. No planning, no act of will, which arises out of a universe of old meanings, can effect the change.

Our civilization has been suffering from what may be called a failure of meaning, as can be seen by people referring for ages to the meaninglessness of life. Here, meaning, signifies value. In other words, a meaningless life has no value; it is not worth living. But, of course, it is impossible for anything to be totally free of meaning. Each thing *is* its total meaning. The problem has been that the perceived meanings have been very mechanical, and thus, constraining. A new meaning, would be sensed to have a high value that could arouse the energy needed to bring a whole new way of life into being.

Our action toward the rest of the universe is fundamentally the result of the totality of what it means to us. But, here, the suggestion is that everything acts according to a similar principle. Rather than ask, what is the meaning of the universe (in which man, of course, is included)? Or, what is the meaning of life? We have to say that the universe, and life, and humanity, is its meaning. And this meaning is capable of changing. As this meaning changes, so also does the universe and all that is in it. This does not refer only

to the meaning of the universe for us, but more generally to what we have called its 'objective' meaning - its meaning for itself.

For this sort of change to be experienced in human life, a creative perception of new and evermore encompassing meaning is required. One can say that this meaning unfolds from an unlimited, infinite, source. Creativity can be seen as the action of the infinite within the sphere of the finite. But as long as the significance of the finite dominates human consciousness, then human consciousness will actually *be* this finite significance. When mankind truly sees the new meaning - that mankind need not be limited in this way – then we will actually cease to be limited. We will begin to be open to the infinite, and able to act creatively in every phase of life, individually and collectively.

If mankind could sustain a perception signifying that the world is an unbroken whole, with a multiplicity of meanings, some of which are fitting and harmonious, and some of which are not, then a very different state of affairs could unfold. For then there could be an unending creative perception of new meanings that encompass the older ones in broader and more harmonious wholes, which would unfold in a corresponding transformation of the over-all reality that was thus encompassed, and only those meanings which allow changes that tend to bring about this harmony would survive.

*Don Factor 1984.*

### **‘She Who Changes’ Carol Christ in Sydney. From Alan Mann**

After both Catholic and Anglican venues had been denied to her, the ‘heretical’ Dr Carol Christ finally gave her talk at Strathfield Uniting Church on Sunday 12 March. She talked about the background to her latest book *She Who Change: Re-Imagining the Divine in the World*.

What she offers is a feminist version of Process Theology. She explained her insistence on referring to what we understand by the word ‘God’ and the spiritual in feminine terms for two reasons. The first is that it is the only way we can shatter the patriarchal mindset in which the subject has been encased for the last two thousand years. Secondly, it is the feminine which holds and embraces in the physical as well as the spiritual sense. I only have to recall Traherne’s ‘Capacitie’ to see that this is so.

She described the mainstream view of the divine as: omnipotent, omniscient, infallible, perfect (and therefore unchanging), immortal, as a highly questionable specification. She explained how it has become necessary to re-imagine the divine because the mainstream view of the sacred is: dualistic and in insisting on perfection it denies change and is consequently ossified if not quite dead. The belief in an omnipotent deity results in a god more powerful than good, omniscience creates images of a divine encyclopaedia rather than the omni-being which I think is more accurate and infallibility leads to abandonment of our responsibility to the whole of life. Finally, immortality offers us the benefits of the hereafter rather than encouraging us to get to grips with the possibility of ‘Heaven Now’. Hence the ecological mess we have landed ourselves in.

She sums up her understanding of the divine as ‘She in whom we live and move and have our co-creative being’.

I didn’t know what to expect and I thought the emphasis on the Goddess rather than God was an unnecessary complication, like putting on the same robe again, but this time back to front. However, I found her argument for the gender shift in imagery compelling and I think she has much to offer. These rough notes are based on a first hearing and are subject to review after I’ve read her book.

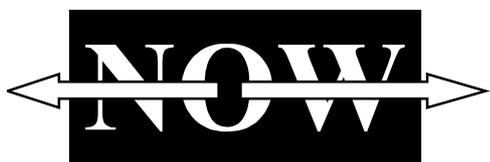
*Alan Mann*

**Academy of the Word Seminar Programme** Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504 – 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays– Polding Centre, Level UB, 133 Liverpool St., SYDNEY. 2000 - The New Phone Number is (02) 9268 0635. **Second** Tuesday 6.15pm - *Healing & Well-being* - **Fourth** Tuesday 6pm - *State of the World*

**Blavatsky Lodge of The Theosophical Society** Level 2, 484 Kent St., Sydney (near Town Hall Station) Talks Programme Every Wednesday at 2.30pm and 7pm – Printed programme available 02 9267 6955 and at – <http://www.matra.com.au/~hpb/index.html>

**Melbourne – Evening Satsang/Dialogue with Penny Fenner** 23a Britten Street Glen Iris - Monday evenings 7.30-9.30pm - To confirm attendance and for further information please call 03 - 9885 0119 T: + 61 3 9885 0119// 0411 554 007 - E: [penny@fenner.org](mailto:penny@fenner.org) - [www.skilfulaction.org](http://www.skilfulaction.org)

**Look for Yourself Meetings** - Approximately bi-monthly, by email notification of date and programme.



### Nowletter 106 –March 2005

**If unable to deliver please return to:  
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<b>Regular Dialogue Meetings</b>				
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>DAY</b>	<b>MEETING PLACE</b>	<b>TIME &amp; CONTACT</b>	<b>Phone Nos.</b>
Sydney City	Third Saturday	Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society - Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 8218 5900 M.Box770184
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Nowra	First Saturday	The Tea Club, Berry Street, Opposite Roxy Cinema	4-6pm –Riche du Plessis	4423 4774
Nowra	Third Sunday	3/117 Berry Street, Nowra	10.30 am Riche du Plessis	4423 4774