

Issue 67 – October 2000 - Email version

Meetings (3rd Sunday)
81 Greville Street

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Editor' s note

Thank you to this month's contributors for a very varied menu. The question that is exercising me at the moment is 'what is the purpose of all this'? Supposing that an individual arrives at a resolution of the question of what is really going on in terms of the perennial philosophy really wakes up. What then? What, if any, are the practical consequences? Is it a purely subjective matter or are there wider ramifications? My particular beef is that it leads to "enjoying the world aright". There are many readers I've spoken to about this and some of you have spoken or written about this subject in other places. I hope you will decide to say something here. In the meantime, Gary Hipworth has agreed to pursue a dialogue with me on this question, which continues from last month and will continue in future issues.

The Border Gathering This is a plan to hold a weekend on or near the Victorian border, which would provide an opportunity for Victorian subscribers to meet some of the NSW people most of whom meet their NSW fellows fairly regularly through the various dialogue meetings and weekends. However, there doesn't seem to be sufficient interest in this plan south of the border and I sense that I'm flogging a dead horse. I might have it

wrong so if any Victorian readers want me to keep this alive please let me know before the end of November.

Censorship

The subject of the September, Greville Street dialogue meeting turned out to be ' judgment' what it is and when and if it is necessary. As an example of judgment in action we used a current dilemma arising from censorship in the Nowletter.

I am always asking for contributions yet, in the past couple of years, I have rejected three contributions. The articles were relevant to the aims of the Nowletter and the content dealt with matters of current and continuing interest. However, in disagreeing with the points of view expressed by other contributors or of other people associated directly or indirectly with their message the writers of these rejected contributions were extremely ' personal' in the way they put their case. In other words, they were being what I judged to be unnecessarily rude in presenting their point of view. Their contributions were returned with a request to re-present with emphasis on the subject matter and without what I judged to be personal abuse.

This led to the claim that I am tampering with the truth and that, in the interests of truth, everything should be allowed to flow. Also, that I am in the business of protecting reputations including my own. Well, as always, there is some truth in these accusations but does that mean that 'anything goes'?

The dialogue meeting at Greville Street agreed that a line has to be drawn somewhere, that it is a matter of judgment where the line falls and the responsibility for deciding where it falls lies with the person putting it together, the editor. They also felt it important to acknowledge that where conditions apply the readership is informed about what the restrictions are. So here they are:

Contributions should be relevant to the general aim of the Nowletter (see back page) or to current issues under discussion. If neither but of burning interest to the contributor, the article should be accompanied by a personal note explaining why the contributor is so excited about it or why it should be published. Any article including content, which can be interpreted as a personal attack will be returned for revision.

Alan Mann

The Santa Claus Effect

Alan Mann is asking me, "Since, as you have explained, only death is certain and the time of death uncertain, and since I am now claiming that ' shutting up' short of death is impossible, what shall I do?"

I am not going to tell anyone else what to do. My reasons for this follow:

Since birth we have been fed a pack of lies (not deliberate, but the effect is the same) and our brains are so terribly conditioned that we can only look to some authority figure to hopefully, save us.

When I was a young child I believed in the idea that a jolly man in a red suit and a white beard would visit our house on Christmas Eve, climb down the chimney, and leave gifts by our beds for me, and my brother and sister.

One Christmas Eve, not long after falling asleep, I suddenly awoke to find my mother leaving a package by my bed and sneaking away like the Pink Panther. I suddenly realized with a shock that my mother was Santa Claus. From that moment on, I lost interest in the idea of a jolly man in a red suit who came out of nowhere to give me a present. Mind you, I still looked forward to the presents that my mother would somehow conjure up from her meagre income.

The second major inkling I got that something was very wrong with the knowledge stuff that had been drilled into my brain was the death of my brother (Ray) - suddenly at 33 he was no longer. He was killed by a jealous "friend". One of Ray's deep beliefs was that you stood by your friends - he was generous to a fault with his money, and his possessions and his time. In a real sense, this belief partly caused his death. I was forced by the facts of life and death at the morgue that day to re-assess everything that I had been told was the truth. You can't argue with a dead body. Ray was mortal. I was mortal. Then why did I have the feeling inside my head that I would continue on indefinitely?

The next event that caught me 'offguard' was the failure of my marriage. I had succeeded at most things in life, but when it came to the most important one, I failed miserably. My self-esteem plummeted to worm level. Emotionally, I was a basket case. A girlfriend tried to commit suicide because I wanted to end the relationship. Fortunately, she was also a failure. I kept asking myself, 'What is going on?'

I then spent the worst part of fifteen years trying to get help for my mother who had a mystery illness. She eventually committed suicide by sticking her head in an oven. Back to the morgue - another dose of reality for Gary Hipworth. My inner world was full of bitterness, hate and shocking memories that would not go away.

Then one day I came across a Krishnamurti article. The essence of it was to begin to question everything - including one's conditioning as a human being. It had never occurred to me that knowledge and thought might be part of the problem. This was the insight that changed my life - not that I believed in what K had to say - but in the fact that he was questioning all authority, all tradition, and in particular the structure of the psyche. It was up to me to find my own answers. He said this over and over - don't be concerned about K the person - find out for yourself, stand alone, doubt everything and everyone. It took me years to get that simple, but profound message.

I then did a lot of homework and research in the areas of learning, evolution, science, philosophy, metaphysics, psychology, religion, time and very critically knowledge. I also studied my daily reactions to each challenge that came along. I was motivated by a need to find the truth about the human condition, but I did not know if this was possible.

Incredibly, all these diverse knowledge paths led me back to the one fundamental insight - the self/ ego/ thinker is an idea, not an entity of any kind.

This meant that Gary Hipworth was an idea, and memory kept this idea alive. Why did memory do this? It gave ' me' a psychological sense of security, misguided, but done like a true-blue robot. The Santa Claus effect then took over, because memory provided me with a lot of pleasure, including an imagined future, full of hope and happiness. The Gary Hipworth belief then became set in concrete, reinforced by self-talk, family, friends and total strangers.

I can say to you that I have found the only answer that really does make any sense, and this insight has given me joy without a cause - ' there is no self (or soul, or higher Self), other than as an idea' . When I saw this false belief operating in my own head, I suddenly stopped believing in Gary Hipworth, the idea. There was no doing, there was a ' not doing' . Just like the idea of Santa Claus, the Gary Hipworth idea just slipped away.

But unlike the jolly man in the red suit, this ' self idea' is keeping humanity in bondage and causing immense and unnecessary suffering. What a sad joke, I thought. A miserable, petty idea is stopping human beings from living with spontaneous joy and real freedom. So, I thought it might be a good thing to alert a few people to this bizarre state of affairs. The first person I blurted out my insight to was a work colleague during "happy hour" on a Friday evening. The following Monday I was told by the General Manager that the staff thought I was "weird" and did not want me around anymore. I had upset their ' happy hour' .

I quickly learnt that this "identity business" was not supposed to be discussed in general company. The conscious mind reacts almost immediately to the prospect of being nothing as ridiculous and that it must be coming from a madman. It also strikes at the heart of our civilization. This is very dangerous territory.

I also realized that it was up to each person to discover their own "truth" - otherwise it was just more second-hand knowledge. The greatest danger in all this is the acceptance from anyone else that "such and such" is the truth. My research into the theories of Evolution gave me the insight into why humans are great copycats. For over 4 billion years life has been blindly copying itself to survive. Firstly it was genetic copying, and then humans invented psychological copying to go on top of the biological robot. When I ' stood back' from this evolutionary process and saw in a flash what was being repeated over and over again across 4 billion years, I was stunned. I realized that ' I' was also caught in this process - but only if I continued to believe in the psychological game of separate entities and identified with Gary Hipworth as an entity. I had seen the enemy and it was ' me' . The seeing of this whole process being repeated ad nauseam in myself, was the ending of that world forever.

Can I prove scientifically that the self is only an idea? No, I cannot and for a very good reason. A zero cannot be proven to exist - only objects that exist ' in the world out there' can be proven to exist because we can use logic, (non-contradictory identification, eg,

this is a rope, not a snake) and scientific observations that can be verified by an independent observer. An idea is a pattern of energy that is remembered through repetitive activity in the brain. It can never be 'objectified'.

Therefore how does Gary Hipworth 'know' that he does not exist? I know what an idea is - it is a symbol for something else, usually it stands for something that is an object in the world. But when an idea stands for some intangible something in my head, it gets itself into deep water. It creates psychological suffering. So, I know what I am not - I am not an idea. What remains is the unknown, and this is - ??? - not objectifiable. End of story. I have run up against the limits of knowledge. Gary Hipworth - the idea reinforced by the memory process, lets go, surrenders to the unknown - every unique moment.

Ideas separate and kill people (by this I mean of the psychological kind - there are many practical ideas that are saving lives and making life much better for all of us) - this is a fact that can be proven any day of the week. The reactions to the 'Nature Bats Last' article also show this trait in us. To suggest that it is any other way is to deny reality - but in my head I can imagine that the world is a beautiful place and that I am a good person (only by comparing myself with a bad person) and that Santa Claus is real, and that tomorrow there will be peace on Earth.

At least we can do that much for our children, (give them a false belief) until they have to grow up and accept this rotten world the way it is. Don't misunderstand me the natural world is a miracle, and a constant source of unlimited joy. This is tempered by the fact that all life forms are fragile. The body eventually breaks down and there is a lot of physical suffering. But the human world that the psyche has invented is corrupt and mechanical and causes unnecessary psychological suffering because it is built on a lie through ignorance and the blind survival instinct. This is something that an intelligent brain can attend to - with insight and understanding and sensitivity to all of life, the 'me' simply ebbs away.

Love is a word I rarely use - it has become so commercial. But if we have any love, then it must surely be for our children. Maybe we can give our children something other than fairy tales? The tools for self-discovery would be a good start. Just like you and me, they will have to find their own answers. But at least we can point them to a door that has not been corrupted by ideas about life.

Gary Hipworth

Look Out!

(The following two contributions are extracted from a recent exchange on the 'LookforYourself email conference.)

jb had asked, by way of a challenge to headless doctrine, the following question: "When I fail to notice a sign above a door, that says "Please mind your head?" and, as a result knock myself unconscious, what is it I haven't minded?"

1 - Reply

1) This whole scene is a report of a past event, a third person interpretation of the accident. So, I think it quite legitimate to answer as third person Alan, - what is it I haven' t minded ? "I didn' t mind my head" without compromising my understanding of headlessness. But isn't this an admission that I have a head after all? If that' s what it takes to give a meaningful, objective explanation of what happened, yes, there is something going on up there, something which the lintel drew to attention just before I blacked out.

2) Is it possible to provide a first person view, allowing that it has to be presented in third person terms (language)? Yes, awareness of approaching doorway, Bang! starburst, then an arising consciousness with painful sensations in what I describe as the head area. From this perspective it seems clear that what wasn' t minded was the doorway as it rushed by.

3) The problem I have in dealing with these sorts of questions is based on shaky interpretations of realisations of headlessness e.g., that I am now an entity minus a head rather than non-entity minus everything – except whatever comes and goes. As a tentative offering as to the cause of this misreading I think language such as Douglas' s continued use of the ' what you, really, really are" term, to point to this capacity, encourages the notion that I am after all some thing and a pretty comprehensive ' whatever it is at that.

Some time ago on the conference we shuffled together a definition of headlessness as ' aware capacity' and added the rider that ' aware capacity' is not other than or separate from what arises ' in' it. So, it seems to me, it is not meaningful to say "I am headless" because not only is there no head here in aware capacity but there is no I, as entity, either.

Alan Mann

2 Commentary - I wonder if anything is really wrong?

I wonder if anything is really wrong? Isn' t all language third person? Even the idea of a first person is a concept or object. Naming the first person is useful for talking about it or thinking about it, but the name is not the named. This is just chapter one Lao Tzu. The purpose of talking about it is to point to it. Maybe the best words to use as pointers are short and sweet.

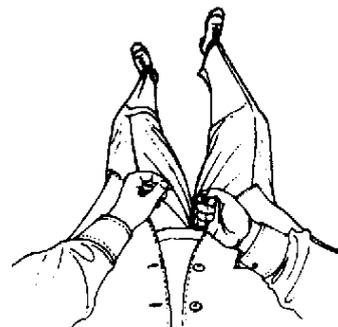
Behold. Voilà. Here. Now. This. Given. Singularity. Look. See. Presence. Am. Be. Is.

Used in this way, words are like the experiments. They take you home. They don' t land you in the middle of controversy and present you with problems.

Here' s an example- the problem of distance. Distance resolves to zero when measured from here. That' s first person perspective, but it' s still just talk. Douglas talks about regional appearances. He maps it out. That' s third person perspective and more talk. The purpose of this more verbose talk is still to point one home. Both ways of speaking are valid. Only the perspective is different. If it doesn' t take you home, it' s just chatter.

To see that I' m upside down (see picture below – from p2 “On Having No Head) takes me home to the presence. But I still use a third person perspective to talk about my posture. If we stand toe to toe, we' re standing on the same ground. Unless I dig deeper, that' s as far down as I go- the bottom-line. I talk that way out of politeness to others and to their perspective. There just can' t be two languages!

To see the absence (headless state) takes me home too. But out of consideration to you, I say I banged my head. I have to have some third person perspective too. I need both! Headless is a good word home to This, which is just another word that points homeward -- to the place where names and language are not primary. They' re just part of the passing scene.



Another unnecessary problem comes up when we think our words about this apply to something other than this. When I say I' m my source and destiny, I' m using words that imply that this came from somewhere and is going somewhere. I' m talking time and movement. But those words really mean ~~that~~ source and destiny are part of what is right now and that I should look for myself to see for myself. It' s all here right now. The words get too confusing if we think we' re describing something that we aren' t seeing presently. We can' t make a first pers language because it' s not about words. It' s about what is, about being.

Presence of Awareness
Is Absence of a head.
If you can see that This is so
That' s all that need be said.

If you can see the two at once,
The Seer and the scenery,
Then you have seen Totality,
The Whole, the All, the Plenary.

The word headless is a pointer to here. Look here. Look there. Nothing is missing! The arrangement is perfect. No improvements are possible. No improvements are ever possible. Nothing is wrong.

Jim Clatfelter

LETTERS

Intuition vs. Intellect.

I have an inner feeling when I read or hear Anthony De Mello, that what he states is also his action, he seems to me, to be "feeling the meaning". He is walking the talk!
In reading Alex Reichel' s article titled ' De Mello and the Vatican' it sounds more to me like semantics "the study of meaning" a continuation of sinking into talk from previous talks.

Talk or walk, sink or swim, I choose to swim and follow my feelings.

Barry Hora

Dialogue

Some thoughts on the dialogue and the Now issue: for me Dialogue is to connect with people, very complicated in a lot of ways.

The question is: whether to do something spontaneous or refrain from doing it (writing this letter, sharing a poem), to say something from the heart (positive or negative) or keep your mouth shut (dilemma), to embrace and hug freely (general) or to withhold.

The written contributions in the "Now Issue" I'll leave to the thinkers. As a doer, that would take too much out of me. I enjoy so much the meetings. I always enjoy so much the meetings, I always feel excited to come to one and be alert to participate in whatever is going on.

Ingrid Sweeney

PS

Don' t walk in front of me I may not follow.

Don' t walk behind me I may not lead.

Please walk beside me, and just be my friend.

Anon

(The following article was sent to me by Alex after I'd sent him a Sydney Morning Herald review of a book by Julian Barbour called The End of Time: The Next revolution in which the author explains his view that time does not exist. Ed.)

Stephen Hawking and the Manufacture of Time

(Stephen Hawking. "A Brief History of Time", Bantam Books, 1988)

"There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven. A time for giving birth, a time for dying, a time for planting, a time for uprooting what has been planted. A time for killing, a time for healing; a time for knocking down, a time for building. A time for tears, a time for laughter; a time for mourning, a time for dancing. A time for throwing stones away, a time for gathering them up; a time for embracing, a time to refrain from embracing. A time for searching, a time for losing; a time for keeping, a time for throwing away. A time for tearing, a time for sewing; a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking. A time for loving, a time for hating; a time for war, a time for peace".

The writer of Ecclesiastes is talking about the time we live in; a time we see within ourselves. St. Augustine said something to the effect that "When you ask me what time is I do not know but when you don' t ask me I know". He also knew that without a created universe there would be no time. Intimations of mystery were also expressed by T.S. Eliot:

"Time present and time past
 Are both perhaps present In time future
 And time future contained in time past
 If all time is eternally present".

But to Stephen Hawking, there are no mysteries to be respected. Time can be stopped in its tracks, wrapped up and objectivised in an ingenious mathematical construction stemming from a febrile Cartesian mind. The ultimate aim of the process he espouses is to produce a complete unified theory of the whole universe which will allow the existence of structures as complicated as human beings who can investigate the laws of the universe and ask about the nature of God, (p184). Hawking is well aware that the process is only available to a few high priests of the craft and even they do not *understand* the structured product, it is after all only *mathematics*. But with the exaggerated hubris of nineteenth century science Hawking cannot resist the temptation of imputing real being to his mathematical models: "If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason - for then we would know the mind of God" (p185). Ho hum! The failure to appreciate the difference between mathematical models and metaphysical reality led to widespread confusion and paved the way for 19th century Materialism. This confusion is also the real rip-off involved in current scientific posturing. The latent uncertainties which are almost everywhere manifest in scientific discourse are largely ignored. In the 20th century however, any scientist worth his salt has come to appreciate his monumental ignorance rather than monumental knowledge.

For we common men who are naturally equipped just to take in natural realities, the artificial 'objectivized' world alienates the properly human in us and distorts our vision. The attempt to take in such constructs is sometimes quite humorous. A simple example! At the Big Bang, (p.123,136 etc.) the universe was of zero size (got that?) with zero total energy (what is energy?) but it had infinite temperature (presumably on God's thermometer!). Although the layman's mind might boggle a bit, the mathematician is simply interpreting singular points in his field equations which are basically statements in geometry, and his model does in fact bring a measure of coherence to some observations in physical theory. The most startling "confirmation" of Big-Bang-ism was the observation by Penzias and Wilson in 1965 of the 3 degrees Kelvin uniform background microwave radiation. At about the same time Gamow, Dicke and Peebles argued that the "glow" from the early universe should still be observable but now so "red shifted" that it would appear in the microwave range. Penzias and Wilson got the Nobel Prize in 1978. There are no Nobel Prizes for mathematicians, but that is another story! Maybe people like Hawking and Roger Penrose might just pass the Nobel test as theoretical physicists.

The question a layman might ask is "how can a physicist be so amazingly specific about a temperature of 3 degrees Kelvin when there are no thermometers capable of reading this temperature?" The answer is that he reasons back along a long linear causal chain, starting from his instruments which he can read, employing many other currently accepted theories on the way. Observations in science are now recognised as being theory

dependent. The main thing is to get the whole structure to "work". There is no such thing as pure observation in science.

The process in which Hawking is involved, far from dispelling mysteries as he would like, merely opens up a myriad more mysteries which are usually glossed over by the monodisciplined specialist. The process might be said to have started with Rene Descartes who, on one cold night, climbed into a wall oven to get warm. When his mind was suitably overheated he had a vision. We can grasp something of that vision from his writings. Descartes writes: "Those long chains of reasoning, all simple and easy, which geometers are wont to use to reach the conclusions of their most difficult demonstrations, had led me to believe that everything that can fall under human knowledge forms a similar sequence" (Discourse on Method II). If Newton's occult forces are included, Descartes model was identical with the machine model of the visible world. He wrote: "I have hitherto described this earth and generally the whole visible world as if it were merely a machine in which there was nothing at all to consider except the shapes and motions of its parts" (Principles IV). The mind became something like a reasoning ghost in the machine the agent for performing the long chains of reasoning needed to make the model of linear causal chains work. The human body was an earthly machine and even the brain consisted of conduits and valves after the manner of an hydraulic system.

The machine metaphor has so victimised the Western scientific mind that it has come to believe that the natural world really is that way. In more modern reductionist theories the mind can be dispensed with altogether; so much so that in many journals of psychiatry today the mind is hardly mentioned. The philosophy of "nothing but", the reductionist stance of modern science, may be said to have originated with Descartes.

Hawking, of course, has not gone as far as the 'mindless' psychiatrists. It is obvious he cherishes his soaring creative mind. Nevertheless he still espouses the rigorous determinism of the nineteenth century mind-set. It is a matter of his belief that the universe is governed by definite laws which are discoverable by science. "The eventual goal of science", he says, "is to provide a single theory that describes the whole universe". In a rare philosophical reflection however he sees a flaw in the argument. "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 conclusion? Or no conclusion at all?" His answer goes from the sublime to the gorbliney! He takes refuge in another nineteenth century article of faith, Darwin's principle of natural selection! He says: "... provided the universe has evolved in a regular way, we might expect that the reasoning abilities that natural selection has given us would be valid in our search for a complete unified theory, and so would not lead us to the wrong conclusions", (p14). The whole edifice of science has to hang together you see! The "clockwork" God of Paley's Natural Theology has left his mark on British science good and proper!

But the world of science moves on. We see now that what we have called Nature's Laws must be written in inverted commas. They are also creations of the free soaring

mathematical mind and will make way for new understandings. The "laws of nature" are conditional statements. They permit the prediction of observations in another place and time based on present understanding. There are, of course, observations of regularity which are discernible in the baffling complexity of the universe but it is always possible to inject circumstances in which the regularities are no longer discernible. However it is the existence of regularities under reproducible conditions which makes physics possible. The physical universe is not absurd. It is amazingly coherent. Nevertheless, the question asked by the philosopher of science G. N. Lewis has relevance in the present context: "Can we not see that exact laws, like all other ultimates and absolutes, are as fabulous as the crock of gold at rainbow' s end?" Hawking' s belief (p.12) that..."if we know what the universe is like at any one time, these physical laws tell us how it will look at any later time" has been already been brought to a sticky end by the advent of chaos theory where the "laws" can be almost any reasonable statement of physical laws.

The big mystery is "Why does mathematics apply?" This free-soaring mathematical creativity can only be accepted as knowledge when experimental verification gives the physicist some form of imaginative support and consequent emotional reassurance. This is very clearly a non-rational element of the enterprise and it raises a host of considerations as to the relationship between theory and experiment. Eugene Wigner saw this mystery more clearly than most. He tells the following story: Two friends who were classmates in high school were talking about their jobs. One of them had become a statistician and was working on population trends. He showed a reprint to his former classmate. The reprint started as usual with the Gaussian distribution and the statistician explained to his former classmate the meaning of the symbols for the actual population, for the average population, and so on. His classmate was a bit incredulous and was not quite sure whether the statistician was pulling his leg. "How can you know that?" was his query. "And what is this symbol here?" "Oh," said the statistician, "this is (π)". What is that?" "The ratio of the circumference of the circle to its diameter." "Well now you are pushing your joke too far," said the classmate, "surely the population has nothing to do with the circumference of the circle. Wigner admits to an eerie feeling on hearing the story because he saw that the reaction of the classmate betrayed only plain common sense. Mathematics is an imaginative construction on reality. It ought never to be confused with reality itself.

Wigner also reacted with confusion to a remark made to him by Werner: "How do we know that, if we made a theory which focuses its attention on phenomena we disregard and disregards some of the phenomena now commanding our attention, that we could not build another theory which has little in common with the present one but which, nevertheless, explains just as many phenomena as the present theory?" We have no evidence that there is no such theory. We have no way of knowing whether a theory formulated in terms of mathematical concepts is uniquely appropriate.

In 1981 four first year university students decided to invent a new number system. They wondered about a number whose absolute value (length) is -1 . The result was *perplex numbers* which, following the analogy with complex numbers, have a real part and an *hallucinatory part*. Lo and behold, the number system was found to have relevance in

physics. It was found that they could be used to extend the usual formalism of special relativity, part of Einstein' s domain. It is early days yet, but who knows if a Hawking of the future will not devise a set of field equations based on *perplex functions* and a metric yet to be invented, which will give us a whole new mathematical construct with little in common with the present ones. Whereas the present Hawking, using the concept of *imaginary* time (p142-144), surmises a universe which is finite but without a boundary (got that?), Hawking II may use the concept of *hallucinatory* time to give us a universe which is completely contained within his own head. Then of course, there would be no need to communicate it. There are indeed some in the tradition of the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum mechanics who would wish to reduce the universe to pure consciousness. Hawking, however is much more subtle than this. His notion of a universe with no edge in space, no beginning or end in time, and nothing for a Creator to do, has been swallowed hook line and sinker by Carl Sagan, who wrote the introduction, and by many others. It is obvious that Hawking wishes to leave this impression, but he has carefully covered his tracks. On page 147 he writes: "When one goes back to the real time in which we live, however, 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. This might suggest that the so-called imaginary time is really the real time, and that what we call real time is just a figment of our imaginations". To me this might suggest that one can have one' s cake and eat it too.

The uncanny appropriateness of mathematical concepts in various fields, while bordering on the mysterious, does raise the question of their uniqueness. It seems indeed paradoxical that all of this imaginative development of pure mathematical structure which seems to skate around unreality in such an amazing manner should find some resonance in the physical world. I cannot accept that such activity can be explained on the basis of natural selection in the species "homo-sapiens". Of course, only a small fraction of the mathematics developed has physical significance and usually the appropriate mathematics is recognised first by the physicist. There may be the exercise of mathematical taste, just as there is in any art. This is another non-rational element. Why are we more likely to accept ' beautiful' theories rather than pedestrian ones?

Mathematics and physics exist in different modal categories. The interpretation of one in terms of the other is an art. To identify one with the other is an article of faith with no rational basis. There is a growing feeling that the bridge between mathematics and physics ought to be more open to free traffic, perhaps by the use of less perfect ' prophetic' interpretation. The growing feeling of distrust for formal mathematical systems as physics is paralleled by a growing feeling that an empathic unity between knower and known in relation to the natural world ought to have more pristine rights than existing formal languages.

Hawking is well aware of the implications of a complete formal mathematical theory of the universe taken to be identified with physics. The nineteenth century hubris which sought to dispel God altogether from his creation still needs to be exorcised. His statement in a couple of places (p144 and p149) that "If the universe is really completely self-contained, having no boundary or edge, it would have neither beginning or end. it

would simply BE". "It would not be affected by anything outside itself. It would neither be created nor destroyed". "What place, then, for a creator"?

With such a conception of the universe it is not at all clear what happens to the Big Bang theory and the physical observations suggested by it. Hawking's conception of a universe which cannot start or finish but just IS has many other implications for the whole edifice of science. The success of his programme would render all existing theories of mathematical physics subject to serious doubts as to their uniqueness. This would accord with the history of all scientific theories so far, but the final one, would, in a sense, be outside history. This introduces the element of utter futility to the scientific quest. The astrophysicist Stephen Weinberg has spotted this when he writes: "The more the universe seems comprehensible the more it seems pointless".

The tendency to reduce time to space is a phenomenon which is common to young children, as Piaget has shown, and to philosophers in the Parmenidean tradition of eternal fixity. What we experience is illusion! But surely this is a dualism far more severe than Descartes'; the realm of physical reality in which there is no 'becoming', and our private 'stream of consciousness' or experience 'of becoming'. Fortunately other world views are coming into science with the work of people like Ilya Prigogine who recognises 'becoming' as a physical phenomenon and also the wonderful heady new wine of chaos theory.

It is not at all strange that a nineteenth century mind be more at home with a necessarily existing universe than it could ever be with a necessarily existing, but transcendent God. The former need not trouble one's conscience at all but the latter gives meaning and purpose to one's life and opens up the world of ethics. In a universe with no boundary or edge, not only can nothing get in but nothing can get out either. So we are eternally trapped. This is a persistent theme in pagan thought. But a universe with a transcendent God to which we are existentially linked is not a trap but a temporary home. Then of course the universe is not a necessary existence but a highly contingent one. It is also an open one. An open universe is always open to new phenomena, new creative science and many surprises. "Joy is like the rain....", but paganism is deadly dull and will bring science to an end as it has done already in all ancient civilisations.

One of the most exciting developments in modern cosmology has been the introduction of the so-called anthropic principles (from the Greek *anthropos*, man) as explanatory devices. These principles refer to the amazing specificity of the existing universe. There are many observed physical and chemical parameters which are so delicately balanced that even slight variations in them would lead to conditions in which life, and especially human life, would be impossible. Wheeler's version of the anthropic principle is that "no reason has ever offered itself why certain of the constants and initial conditions have the values they do, except that otherwise anything like observership as we know it would be impossible" This essentially means that the observer is as essential to the creation of the universe as the universe is to the creation of the observer. Hawking discusses the anthropic principles in their various versions in several places. It seems that he can see their utility but boggles at their implications: "Yet the strong anthropic principle would

claim that this whole vast construction exists simply for our sake. This is very hard to believe", (p133). It is certainly hard to believe for nineteenth century traditionalists who seek to expel man from his place as the pinnacle of creation. A little reflection will show however that the whole edifice of science is utterly dependent on its having been elaborated on planet Earth. Most of the critical observations in the historical development of science could not be made on any other planet, and as yet we have no evidence that there are planets (in our sense) around any other star.

There is much to admire in Stephen Hawking's book, particularly its clarity. This makes "throwing stones" somewhat easy, so that the reading from Ecclesiastes at the beginning of this review is appropriate to it. For my part, a universe which is thoroughly coherent without any absurdity, strikingly specific in space and time so as to make men possible, and exclusive in its oneness, can have only one implication. It is a given. And it is precisely this givenness which makes science, not only possible but also always enthralling.

Alex Reichel

A Note on Dialogue

(This extract is from p34 of Confessions of a Philosopher by Bryan Magee I thought it a good example of one of the ways Dialogue can go off the rails. Ed)

I have to say at the outset that I was trained in Oxford philosophy without ever subscribing to it. I seem to have learnt to do it as well some of its practitioners, but I never believed in its validity *as a conception of philosophy* - though I always perceived that as a form of intellectual training it had considerable merits. It taught students to be hyper-careful about what they said, and to make sure they understood it as well meant it; to treat subtle differences of meaning as if they mattered; and to try to achieve these things with clarity and humour. The fact, too, that so much of it involved face-to-face argument made it a training in mental agility and public debate, though this carried with it the disadvantage of being unaccommodating to people who were deep-thinking but slow moving: in live argument the cleverest people quite often lost out while the superficially clever shone. Whenever someone says anything philosophically interesting to me my natural reaction is to want to go a~ and think about it, not to give it some impromptu, off-the-top-of-my-head response and then continue the discussion from *there*, of all places. Philosophical discussion that moves forward in that way simply passes from one instant response to the next instant response. Of course these instant responses are informed by previous reflections, but they cannot take account of the new. And this is the way most philosophical discussion in professional circles proceeds. My most deeply felt criticism of it is that it trains its practitioners in quickness and cleverness while precluding depth.

DIALOGUE MEETINGS SYDNEY AREA				
	DAY OF MONTH	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
City	Third Saturday	Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Clontarf	Fourth Sunday	49 Peronne Avenue Clontarf	11am Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379 018 410 127

Group Meetings

Sydney

Academy of the Word Seminar Programme - Under St Peter's, Devonshire St., Surry Hills

Second Tuesdays 6.15pm - Healing & Well-being

Fourth Tuesdays 6.15pm - State of the World

Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504

Satsang with johndavid. Tuesday & Friday - ongoing - From 7.15 -9.15pm.

Theosophy House, 484 Kent Street, City - Near Town Hall Station

Call Open Sky (02) 9388 8344 for details.

Nowra

Dialogue Group meets the first Saturday of the month from 4-6pm

The Tea Club, Berry Street, Nowra - Opposite Roxy Cinema - Call Riche 4421 5947

KRISHNAMURTI WEEKEND GATHERING, NOVEMBER 2000

THEME: What are You Doing? What am I Doing?

There will be talks, dialogues, workshops, light discussions, video screenings, Ch' i Kung and free time for recreation and bush walking.

VENUE:

The Theosophical Education & Retreat Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road Springbrook, 4213, in Southeast Queensland.

DATE & TIME: Saturday November 4th & Sunday November 5th, 2000.

Participants may arrive Friday evening (3rd) in time for a light meal if more convenient for them, otherwise Saturday 9am in time for Registration.

COST:

Friday evening to Sunday - \$125 - Saturday to Sunday - \$100 - Day Visits only - \$25

Enrolment forms from Krishnamurti Australia,

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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 views, experiences, discoveries and responses.

