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BLAKE'S MILTON

To annihilate the Self-hood of Deceit & False Forgiveness



THE POLITICS OF CONVERSATION

As finite beings, we are faced with many intangibles such as those that concern the future of an incarnate existence, the sources of truth, love, our interdependence and the meaning of our acts upon this planet. Some of these intangibles became the main content of religions and spiritual paths. To a lesser extent, they have become the provenance of science, philosophy and psychology. We represent ourselves to ourselves in ways that derive from the cultures to which we belong. We want answers, meanings, that satisfy our dual needs for reassurance and creativity.

Gurdjieff, envisioning a meeting of strangers in some deserted region, said that the first thing they would need to do is to ascertain which of them should be the teacher of the other. Nearly all of his teaching was predicated on the relationship of teacher to student. This supposes that one will know more, see more, or understand more than the other. This point of view is still reflected in spiritual enterprises everywhere. The assumption is that there a relative few who have connection with truth superior to that of the relatively many who fumble in the dark. If we are to find a viable connection with the truth ourselves, it is incumbent upon us to seek and find a teacher who can direct us rightly.

This is directly contrary to the spirit of science, which advocates reliance on the act of discovery itself and not upon persons. Needless to say, science is in fact governed by authorities – the ‘authors’ or those *who have the right to speak*. The spirit and the actuality of science are often in conflict. Just as in any human grouping, statements by some people are valued over and above statements by others.

When, as is often the case, we find ourselves uncertain and in anxiety, it is very tempting to take the path of seeking for an authority, a teacher, guide, hidden masters, etc. who we presume can see further than we can. In the extreme, this takes the form of seeking for a messiah or saviour, something embodied in both Christianity and Judaism, the dominant religions driving the western world. Certain sects of Judaism are beautiful in their state of constant expectation of the coming of the messiah. Certain sects of Christianity are sublime in their readiness for the second coming of Christ.

For groups of people meeting together in fellowship and enquiry, these prevailing trends are not the whole story. There is another way of approach. A completely contrary one. Instead of hoping for, or relying on, a saviour to come who will illuminate the way, the group accepts responsibility for its own truth. Small step by small step, it relies instead on what the people in the group can reveal of this truth. To do this is to suppose that what can be said or brought forth is not

already locked into place as part of the mechanisms of their existence, or in their brains, but comes 'out of the blue'. It is to trust in the capacity of everyone to be as a 'prophet' – in their own country. It does not predicate anything about the source of such revelations. Instead of authenticating what is said by reference to a supposed authority or source, the revelation is taken as it comes.

This is precisely similar to the Goethean approach to science, in which phenomena – or 'appearances' – are taken to be what *is*, and not something to be explained by means of reference to a hidden 'noumenal' reality beyond appearances. What you see is what there is. Given this requirement, what the phenomena *mean* is very different from how they might be viewed if one is seeking explanation (that is, 'out of the plane of'). In the case of people meeting together, it is that what they say is the whole truth they have, and there is no other to be sought.

We should remember that, for most of our history, there has been a division of 'castes'. There has been those who do and those who say. The gaining of 'free speech' in the political sense is of supreme importance. The power of revealing truth can now be seen as integral to speech itself, and not attributable to the person speaking. But, this means that a step has to be made away from the view that *people speak*. In its place, we need some understanding of speech coming 'before' people. For this to be intelligible, we first need some concept of *their being thoughts before we think them*. A further step is to conceive of thoughts as having no origin in authority at all. Thoughts do not need to originate in someone. They do not need a 'source' at all. Entertaining this idea is to shatter the myths of thousands of years. All along we have imagined that a true thought must be authenticated by the person thinking it. It is only in recent times that it has become possible to consider the heresy that thought is a perfectly accessible process that requires no author. The trick is to allow this to be true. It is not easy. Nearly all of us have been deeply impressed by the myth of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai bearing the tablets of the commandments: God the author and Moses the publisher! This myth is now being challenged.

It is not easy on many grounds. Foremost amongst them is the feeling that what we face on this planet with our exploding population, environmental crisis and technology out of control is a dangerous situation requiring help from 'another level'. We have become – many of us – so anxious that we do not dare to trust ourselves but live in the hope of salvation from beyond us. There is an alternative view: that we do not consider these crises as we tend to imagine them, but as an integral part of our process of ongoing discovery. In our anxiety about realising that we do not understand what is going on, we have created demons and angels in profusion, the whole scale of teacher and taught, but we can begin to reclaim what we ourselves have created – by allowing ourselves to allow revelation to unfold in us.

This amounts to a radical change we make in our stance towards authority (and hence 'authorship' of the word). It can be regarded as akin to a political revolution. Group psychologists associated with the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, particularly Gordon Lawrence and David Armstrong working in the tradition of Bion, have come to distinguish two 'politics': the 'politics of salvation' and the 'politics of revelation'. In the former, the group operates in the expectation and hope of salvation or help from outside of itself and sees itself as in a state of privation. In particular, it does not believe that it can be responsible for its own truth. In the latter politics, the group accepts that all the truth it can have will come through its own members. This does not mean that the group works in heedless isolation. It can be open to influences and information coming from other sources, but all of these will be taken as they are processed by the group itself. In other words, 'the buck stops here'.

The contrast between the two politics can be extreme. The salvationists will look for a single, complete and authoritative source that will hold 'for ever'. The revelationists will accept a seemingly random, piece-meal emergence of the truth 'for the moment'. We should realise, however, that the revelationist group may include members who are personally convinced of the reality of higher

sources of information and guidance; because the politics of revelation includes and *contains* diversity while the politics of salvation does not. To illustrate the point: In a dialogue we were part of two years ago a moment came when some members of the group began to talk of the presence in the room, which many felt, as the presence of 'angels'. Another member of the group suggested instead that this was a manifestation of the 'unconscious'. Yet another reported that she was not aware of any presence at all but only of the thoughts in her head. There was no resolution of this diversity. Instead, the group began to address this diversity as a reality of the group. As what we are calling in this essay 'politics of revelation'.

Reverting to Gurdjieff's attitude, which is common amongst 'spiritual' or 'esoteric' groupings, of their having to be the teacher and the taught relationship for the advancement of truth, we might now say that in the politics of revelation this relationship holds reciprocally between all the members of the group. There is no one special role or person, present or absent. There is no body of truth other than which is constituted in the group itself. We can imagine other groups operating on a higher level if we wish, constituting a higher truth than our own, but the truth of this has to be realised in some way within our own group.

This raises an interesting question: Is it possible for a group (or even a single person constituting a group of one) to impart something to another group? According to the politics of salvation, this can only be done by the group being taken over and directed. According to the politics of revelation, this can only be done by the two groups being constituted as one group and subject to the same process of shared revelation. This is hinted at in the Sufi dictum that the 'teaching' is *co-created* by the teacher and the taught.

We now need to address the question of thought, since we have raised the issue of whether 'something' can be imparted. David Armstrong suggests that there are two kinds of thinking that he calls 'thinking 1' and

'thinking 2'. It is worth while summarising some of their properties:

Thinking 1

Is produced by a thinker and 'belong' to her
They can be true or false
They are capable of being taught
Need to be explained, justified, etc.

Thinking 2

Precede any thinker
They just are
They can be learned from but not taught
Require nothing else but themselves

It is fairly obvious that, once we suspend the properties of ownership, truth, teachability, etc. then the thinking of the group becomes very different. At first, it may be very difficult to operate in a way such that what is said is not taken as one's personal claim on truth aimed at convincing others that one is right – which, necessarily, will elicit counter moves by others – and, instead, *allow* things to be said that then stand in their own right. It is highly likely that a group will come to this point only after being thoroughly disillusioned about what can be gained from a system of operation that is centred on authorship, or teaching. As Illich pointed out in his books, such systems as schools, just by having roles called 'teachers', actually *create* ignorance. The existence of authorities and teachers entails the existence of those who lack 'true knowledge'.

We might remark that such considerations were not unknown to some of the greatest spiritual teachers and call to mind Rumi's famous saying, 'Don't look at me. Take what is in my hand.' But this hardly goes far enough.

The identification of thoughts with the thinker was a constant theme of criticism by Krishnamurti. However, it cuts very deep into questions of personal identity. One might ask oneself, 'If these thoughts are not mine, then who am I?' – a desperate quandary coming after Descartes' famous declaration of *cogito ergo sum*. Attempting a reconciliation, John Bennett proposed that we all share in what he called 'conscious energy' – and, indeed, that this is what enables us to share at all. He distinguished this energy of

awareness from another he called 'sensitivity'. In sensitivity, we are *attached* to what we experience and take it *personally*. In consciousness, we are not so attached. Bennett however, never made the next step, which is to consider consciousness as implicitly transpersonal, even though he clearly saw that it was this energy that enabled us to understand what each other means. He called consciousness a 'cosmic' energy; but it is better expressed as 'transpersonal'. It belongs with Pensinger's 'identity transparency' (see DuVersity Newsletter issue 1). *Part of who we are is to be more than ourselves.*

The 'transpersonal' is not something hovering over and above us – as is often depicted in the various models of the 'true' or 'higher' self – but is integral to our existence. Only, it is often the case that this is *hidden* in the sense of not being available to us at the sensitive level. Using Bohm's language, we can say that this transpersonal reality remains for the most part in the implicate order. Only under certain conditions can it become manifest in actual operations. If such conditions obtain, then for example, we can experience thought as belonging to the group rather than to any one person. Here, however, the group is not to be understood as a collection of persons alone. If we think in terms of separate persons, then the process of thinking 2 becomes utterly mysterious and we will be led into adopting various theories or beliefs to explain it away.

We all know phenomena such as someone saying something that another happens to be thinking at the same time. This is just the tip of the iceberg. The Ur-phenomena (to use Goethe's approach) is speaking as if someone else. This is not the same as disassociation, because it has to be utterly *embodied*. This aspect has not been noticed sufficiently. It corresponds to the therapeutic discovery that movement or development in the person requires an action that can be located in the body – combined with an apposite expression in words. No doubt (though a case for this view has hardly been made) this therapeutic action draws on Bennett's conscious energy, thinking 2, the transpersonal, etc. We just have to bring to mind the fact that a therapy builds out of a two-person group at least.

(With the intriguing proviso that perhaps 'meditation' is a one-person therapy!).

Patrick de Mare's attitude is that in the Median group, which creates conditions for the transpersonal – that he refers to as *koinonia* or 'impersonal fellowship' – we can see philosophy as therapy, just as Wittgenstein advocated. Instead of philosophy being a matter of authorities and arguments (which can have no end), it becomes a way of meaning. Hence, both philosophy and spirituality take on a very different aspect than how they appear in common discourse. At the very least, they are turned into a process that can honestly address our anxieties and uncertainties – by going into what they *are* rather than seeking to eliminate them by postulating and believing in the existence of 'answers' residing in some higher source.

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ACTIVE IMAGINATION

By Dr. Edith Wallace

WHAT DO I 'MEME'?

With Susan Blackmore's book *The Meme Machine*, the concept of 'memes' first put forward by Richard Dawkins shows itself as well established in the human mind and continuing to replicate at a high rate. Dawkins, almost as an aside, suggested at the end of his book on *The Selfish Gene* that we should look for units of cultural information that replicate and compete in a similar manner to the way that genes do. The idea took hold and the word 'meme' has almost reached the stage of passing into human vocabulary as an accepted term, for many not requiring any explanation at all.

The history of the concept goes back into the nineteenth century to Wallace, a contemporary of Darwin. In contrast with Darwin, Wallace believed that something other than physical evolution – through variation and selection – was at work in the formation of the human species. This idea continued to survive in spite of the triumph of Darwinianism. It was not simply a matter of religious prejudice. The human capacity for abstract thought, symbolism and language did not seem explicable in terms of survival needs. The large size of the brain, the greatly extended period of helplessness of the infant beyond anything comparable in any other species, and the amount of energy expended in cultural pursuits seemed at variance with the Darwinian model.

Of course, when Darwin proposed his theory, there was no concept of genes. This came much later – and is now reaching its greatest flowering in the present human genome project to map out the total code for humans. It was a major breakthrough to finally come to detect, measure and even alter the basic units that transmit the pattern of living beings from generation to generation so effectively. As this picture emerged, so we were coming to grips with the universality of another concept: that of information. With the rise of computing science came the realisation that our genetic material, our DNA, consisted of set of instructions for the building and running of organic systems.

Computers familiarised us with the concept of ‘software’ versus ‘hardware’ and led many to suppose that the human brain could be looked at as composed of a software that we tend to think of as ‘mental’ and a hardware that we think of as ‘physical’. It had taken more than two thousand years to turn Aristotle’s Form and Matter into a question of ‘in-form-ation’. Information seemed to offer a way of dealing with the question of mind, as energy had offered a way of dealing with life and matter with existence. Also, in the new trinity of Matter-Energy-Information, information tended to assume something of the role of the Holy Ghost!

Memes now seem to be an almost inevitable concept, given the coming together of the concept of genes, the concept of information

and the concept of mind as software. Dawkins proposal came after others such as that of Waddington who came close to a similar idea in his book *Man, the Ethical Animal*. Karl Popper’s scheme of three worlds (1) the world of objective things (such as water) (2) the world of subjective experiences (such as pain) (3) the world of meanings (such as theories) actually anticipates in the third world a view of a realm composed of cultural quasi-objects. Dawkins himself has no theory about what memes consist of or where they can be located, though the overall impression he supports is that they are lodged somehow in the brain, which Susan Blackmore agrees with. However, we should take into account that obvious fact that memes can also be located in buildings, books, plays, dress, etc. that is in ‘public space’.

We should also bear in mind the emergence of a new way of conceiving of the human mind. This was to think of it more as a *receptacle* for information, than as an *origin*. This began to permeate our modern culture, not least through the influence of science fiction and allied forms of expression. The avant-garde American novelist William Burroughs gave us his view that language itself was akin to a virus that had infected the human race. He even proposed that this has come from outer space! In a more Gnostic mode, Philip K. Dick suggested that there was something he called VALIS – Vast Active Living Intelligent System – capable of providing the information for humans to wake up from their forgetfulness of divine reality. He explored the issue of what makes us human, playing on the ambiguity of humans as automata – or ‘replicants’ – and as free beings. At the beginning of the century, Gurdjieff had already proposed that humans were just complicated machines, though he also argued that it was possible for them to escape from their slavery.

With the advent of the concept of memes, we now have a way of thinking of human beings as being ‘possessed’ by units of cultural information that *blindly* seek their own replication. Just as, according to Dawkins, the organic genes blindly seek their own replication, so do memes. In this view, humans are just machines driven by

'thoughts' that operate on their own terms. There is no such thing as a 'thinker'. It is more than strange, at first sight, that such a view closely corresponds to that of a modern mystic, Krishnamurti, who regarded thinking as a process that creates the thought of a thinker! In this respect, we should mention that, when Susan Blackmore takes up the issue of what is left for us in the realisation that we are merely carriers of memes, she speaks of her own experiences of a state of consciousness which is very close indeed to Krishnamurti's concept of 'choiceless awareness'. The first thing that has to go is our belief that we can choose!

As we suggest in our essay on the 'Politics of Conversation' (see in this issue) it is now becoming more generally accepted that we can operate in a world where we do not have to believe that 'we think' at all. In general, the idea that there can be an entity – such as a human mind - that operates a pure source for anything is becoming more and more suspect. We now see everything happening increasingly in terms of cycles of process. There is no one favoured node in such cycles or circuits. Anyone who has reflected on their beliefs and ideas at all seriously cannot doubt that what they hold dear has probably arisen in them through influences from the social context in which they grew up. With the acquisition of language, we are cut off from a more primordial state of being and subject to the social complex of which we are a part. If we do not acquire language, then we remain undeveloped and not entirely human. The physicist Freeman Dyson once said, "Culture consists of conversations", a telling observation. We become human by becoming participants in the mutual exchange of memes. The 'errors' in replication that naturally occur play much the same role as errors in replication in the genetic world: they enable variation which is crucial for selection, and hence evolution.

It is worthwhile considering two apparently different kinds of meme replication that humans experience as illustrating the same phenomena. In the case of religion we observe how the competitive nature of memes can lead to the extremes of violence and mass-murder, and the propagation of such 'senseless' behaviours over centuries (as

in Northern Ireland or the former Yugoslavia). In the case of technology, we see technologies developing, propagating and 'taking control' without any regard for what might be deemed the 'good' of human beings. The American historian Lewis Mumford drew attention to what he called the 'megamachine' of technology that is acting just as if it were an entity in its own right. To say that this technology is created by human beings to serve their ends is highly dubious. In many respects, technology is calling the shots, especially now. Computers have proliferated in human life beyond any reasonable expectation and it is just as if they were 'parasites' exploiting human brains for their own ends. Just as it is as if religious beliefs were seeking their own dominance without regard for any tangible human welfare.

The 'as if' of these conjectures are turned into 'it is so' in the theory of memes. All that a meme 'wants' to do is replicate itself – just as a gene does. The drama of it all is that memes must replicate in a way that does not destroy their hosts. Take the example of a religious martyr. Such a person is driven to what amounts to suicide by a meme that he or she carries. Now, instead of this making others regard this meme as a danger to human life, it is often then regarded the more highly and is enabled to replicate faster in the given social group. It does this by being associated with other memes – largely to do with very strong memes we call 'values' – that carry it with them. We say to ourselves, 'If someone can lay down their life for this belief, it must be an important one.' The Soviets knew this well and held public trials to humiliate and discredit any such martyrs! Of course, the meme-theorist would say that Soviet Russia was itself driven by powerful memes seeking their own propagation. Communism was born with a mission to take over all of human life on the planet!

It seems that many, sensitive to such examples began to believe that thought itself – and language – was at fault. Hence, the cult of the New Age with its tendency to downplay rational thought and advocate silence, what is 'natural' and dream states. We might add (as Susan Blackmore does in her book) that such memes were powerfully

coupled with others that sought to exploit human gullibility for the sake of profit.

One of Gurdjieff's astounding claims was that human culture was permeated with dysfunctional memes (though he did not know or use this word) that seemed to be capable of propagating themselves without regard for 'reason'. He postulated an event in early human history resulting in distortions of human perception and understanding, which distortions continued to be carried on by cultural replication right up until the present day. His theory supposed that some organic mutation arose in the first place which then made humans susceptible to suggestion (amongst other misfortunes). Certainly, the vulnerability we have to suggestion is a terrifying feature of our nature. But it may be regarded by the meme-theorists as simply par for the course.

The interplay between the organic structure of humans and their 'manipulation' by memes is simply an unknown. Susan Blackmore argues that our relatively large brains are a result of selection dictated by memes: the bigger the brain, the greater its capacity to store and transmit them. She also argues that sexual selection is becoming increasingly guided by memes, that women tend more and more to mate with men who exhibit strong meme-capacity (such as writers, artists, politicians, etc.). The cult of the pop star can be understood in such a fashion. We look askance at TV evangelists as a distortion of religion, but the 'television celebrity' is successfully competing with the religious leader because he is becoming far more significant in the propagation of memes (we might think here of Oprah Winfrey who has taken a role of publicising books for her viewers and bringing the industry millions of more dollars a year while she propagates memes to do with race and gender which concern – 'possess' - her).

But, to emphasise the point, we have at present no model for the physical basis of memes in organic terms. The hypothesis that our very organic structure is becoming increasingly under the control of memes is very challenging indeed. It is a hypothesis that strikes home in the face of the prospect of human genetic engineering – an

acceleration of the process. On another front, we should consider the emergence of means of interaction such as the Internet, which enable memes to be spread across the globe at a high rate (this is assuming, of course, that verbal communication is significant in their transmission, which appears likely). We should also remember Patrick de Mare's point that mind is not to be located in separate brains at all but in the interfaces between them.

What then of the vexed question of who or what we are? In the context of meme theory, 'we' are merely complexes of memes – 'memplexes' – and nothing else. We have no souls, wills, etc. at all. Such features as soul and will are themselves 'only' memes. Susan Blackmore suggests that such memes will become extinct! We have to point out that no solid contribution has been made by meme theory to the difficult questions surrounding consciousness. At best, consciousness appears as an organic state saturated with memes. Adopting this view, we can see that humans look like crucial versatile devices for the interaction of memes. They introduce a 'randomising' element that we now begin to understand is crucial for the maintenance and evolution of all living systems. To put it crudely: the memes that collect together in a human identity cannot be predicted.

We do not pick and choose between memes – they pick us! Or, in more neutral terms, as we accumulate an identity so we form links with corresponding sets of memes. When any of these memes is threatened by a competing meme, the whole system reacts in defence. Many find themselves astonished at the violence and emotion, which ensues when our beliefs are questioned. This reaches into the depths of scientific work. Michael Polanyi in his masterful book *Personal Knowledge* shows how the passionate attachment of a scientist to 'his' ideas is critical for the progress of science. We know of scientific martyrdom. It is strange to listen to an argument in the pub while entertaining the idea of memes! We begin to see what is going on as a skirmish between memes rather than as people arguing for their personal truths.

Referring back to Gurdjieff again, it is more than interesting that he often describes what is going in himself or some character he is describing in terms of *crystallisation of data*. What could be closer to the idea of memes than that? The twist in the story is the haunting possibility that this might be accomplished *intentionally*. He speaks of the role of teachers and guides concerned with such 'conscious education', even though in his account of his own life he seems to be describing a whole series of *accidental* crystallisations. Even supposing that there are such teachers and guides, from where would they derive the memes they would implant and why would they do such a thing in the first place? One hypothesis has been mentioned already in referring to Philip K Dick: there is a 'sea of information' (to use one of Dick's phrases) that has not been governed by conditions on Earth. Contact with this 'sea' enables us to 'wake up' – that is, not to be subject to the replicating behaviour of terrestrial memes. The root idea of a source of information that is free of the traumas of human history is an ad hoc hypothesis, which tells us very little. What we arrive at is something similar to the old idea that organic evolution itself came from the action of a 'higher intelligence' that preceded humankind. If people now suppose that there is some source of 'pure' information it is just to 'move the goalposts' as it were. But such questions dig down to the foundations of *who we are*.

In a strange way, those who posit a source of 'unpolluted information' in the way we have suggested are supporting the idea of memes. What is the very basis of Christianity? *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and was God*. It is hearing the 'word of God' that leads us to salvation.

David Bohm, writing in his last book *The Undivided Universe* about information and the ontology of quantum mechanics, speaks of *active* information. Some information is more active than others. The more active the information, the more it can *in-form* or 'put the form in'. He suggests that we see the highest realms of active information as the *void*, much as in Buddhism. This may point to the convergence of meme theory and mysticism, a convergence we have suggested

earlier. The relatively 'ultimate' experience is of *nothingness*. Gurdjieff taught that the work of transformation began with the realisation of one's own nothingness. Perhaps we need to throw away the idea that this is 'only' the prelude to becoming 'something'. John Bennett in the last year of his life said, "Gurdjieff taught that man did not have an 'I' but could get one. I say that man does not have an 'I' and cannot get one!"

The theory of memes is most startling in its claim that they operate entirely through replication and competition, upholding Darwinian precepts. Though we might argue that genes and memes are just the present historical form of what is really Cartesian dualism, the meme-theorist insist that both are in some sense material, both in substance and in operation. However, other evolutionary theorists such as Lynn Margulis continue to argue that the evolutionary process works most strongly in *symbiosis* rather than in *competition*. The symbiotic model would lend itself to interpreting the human 'self' as a symbiotic whole made from the contributions of many memes. Thus, the making of a human self would constitute an open programme, with no apparent limit. We could envisage the emergence of a human totality made from the memeplexes of the billions of humans on this planet. What such a megamemeplex might 'think' would be quite beyond us as we are now. Such far-flung speculations can be approached by considering the implications of present day research into group mind. It would seem that the endeavour to create or realise such minds can now be looked at as an enterprise beyond any current theory. The relation between 'I' and 'We' might turn out to be the most crucial factor in evolution.

STRUCTURAL COMMUNICATION

The DuVersity is currently running a research project in bringing the technique of 'structural communication, first developed by John Bennet and his colleagues in the 1960s, into the world of the Internet. This is being conducted by Jason Joslyn under the guidance of Anthony Blake, Director of Studies of the DuVersity. We explain below what this technique is and its possible significance as a new tool for organising information in interactive systems.

In the late 60s, John Bennett proposed that we should look at how 'communication in depth' works. Just what is it that happens when a student converses with her tutor to develop her understanding? What makes this more than learning how to repeat what the teacher says? Communication in depth involves ambiguity, context, multiplicity of interpretation and cannot be reduced to getting the right answer. The tutor asks the student to explain, interpret and theorise about a topic. The student offers her ideas, saying more or less, 'Is it like this?' Instead of saying yes or no, right or wrong, the tutor will ask further questions or suggest the relevance of other information than the student used in her response. The tutor will build on the student's ideas to show where they might lead.

The first requirement for this kind of conversation to take place is that student and tutor share in a common language, or possibly, an overlapping set of references. They are both talking about the same thing. In their conversation, they can refer to evidence, examples, propositions, etc. which they both know, though maybe in different degrees. Without this interface of references held in common, they cannot converse effectively. We call the references, examples, etc. by the generic name of 'molecules of meaning' (MMs) and the set of such molecules constitutes a 'field' of meanings. For all practical purposes, the set of MMs can be adequately represented by 10 to 100 members.

The second requirement is that the conversation consist of exchanges in which the meaning of any one piece of evidence, example, etc. depends on every other piece. It is the *combination* of MMs utilised that constitutes such things as an argument, an interpretation, a design, a diagnosis, etc. These in their turn are related to *context*. For the sake of illustration, think of a courtroom dispute between defence and prosecution. The one will select some of the evidence and downplay the rest, while the other will make a completely different selection and rejection. This is because the one wants the accused to be acquitted and the other for him to be found guilty. This example is limited because it

involves only two and conflicting intentions. In other kinds of interaction there may a dozen or more points of view, each of which would make their corresponding selections and rejections.

The third requirement is that there is some means for the people involved in the conversation to exchange information about combinations of MMs. This is where Bennett and his colleagues made a major breakthrough. First of all, the meaning field was represented by an *array* or set of about 20 MMs. The nature of these MMs depended on the topic concerned and the kind of understanding being sought for. The second feature was to provide a set of questions or *tasks of interpretation*. These all took the form of, 'What do you think is relevant to this: point of view, purpose, experiment, calculation, diagnosis, etc.?' Imagine the array as consisting of components with various physical properties and attributes. One might be asked to select those that, when combined, enable you to measure a given phenomenon. Clearly, if one chose at random, the combination would serve no useful function. Further, there might well a more elegant kind of design than one first thinks of. Thus, a third feature was to respond to the response with *reflective comments*. Such comments would be designed to correct for mistakes, minimise irrelevancies and encourage improvement. They relied on sets of *diagnostics*.

Let's take a very simple array of just six MMs, each of which applies to humans.

1 – mortal 2 - bisexual 3 – walks upright
4 – linguistic 5 - conscious 6 - technological

Let's ask a question such as: Why should humans be capable of directing their own evolution? In thinking about this, we could articulate the array into four sets, distinguishing between their members as follows: 4, 6 essential; 5 arguable; 3 irrelevant and 1, 2 misleading. Imagine now a device that applies the following tests:

- a. are any of the set {4,6} omitted?
- b. is {5} included?
- c. is {5} excluded?
- d. are any of the set {1,2} included?

It is fairly easy to see that one could compose comments appropriate to each of these tests, if the answer is yes. Someone responding to the question and reading the comments that come up according to the diagnosis of her response may find herself still thinking at variance with the original author but at least she will be able to *understand* what the author *means*. Very complex and subtle information can be transmitted. Just imagine what is possible if we have an array of 20 or more MMs, each of which is more complex in its articulation than in the above simplistic example! The tests themselves can be made more complex, for example criteria of inclusion and exclusion in the same diagnostic.

Note that this is not a truly two-way communication, because it only *simulates* the response of the 'tutor' to the 'student'. No author sitting down to construct such a structured text can ever fully anticipate the thinking of his readers. So, now we imagine that we allow the 'student' to reply to the diagnostics of the 'tutor' *with diagnostics of her own*. What we then come to is a true exchange.

This need not be restricted to questions and responses. Imagine someone making a selection from the array and sending this as a message. The recipient asks why these included, and why those excluded, or any more complex question. Now we imagine that along with the selection as the overt message was a covert one, consisting of diagnostic-comments. The recipient inputs his queries and receives further corresponding data.

What is happening here is multi-channel communication. There are at least two main channels. One is concerned with statements as in text, and the other with *structures* as in the diagnostics. Such truly structural two-way communications have only become possible through the Internet and the invention by Jason of the requisite software. To illustrate the principle of structural communication we can imagine the making of a building. On the one hand, the right materials have to be sent to the site. On the other, the *plans* for the building need to be

sent. Similarly in thinking one should include thinking about thinking. What kind of thinking is being used? What are its assumptions?

Such communications are *structured* because they contain both information – the content of the MMs – and the way the information is *organised* – that is, made into a 'story', 'explanation', etc. We are presently considering an alternative mode of structural communication, not requiring the diagnostics. In this approach, the sender *colours* the MMs according to an agreed code. If we used five colours, we would be able to distinguish between the following:

- | | |
|------------------|--------|
| 1. Essential | red |
| 2. Supplementary | yellow |
| 3. Arguable | green |
| 4. Irrelevant | blue |
| 5. Misleading | black |

By scanning the array in colour, the receiver would be able to form a definite idea of the argument or way of thinking of the sender. A simpler scheme would use red, green and blue as Yes, Maybe and No.

Readers interested in following up on SC-www (structural communication on the web) can log onto www.neo3dxxxxx

A GATHERING ON SYSTEMATICS

May 5-7 a group of people concerned with Systematics will gather to exchange ideas. The method of Systematics originated with John Bennett. It is based on the properties of 'number-systems': wholeness, or one term; polarity, or two term; relatedness or three term; order or four term; significance or five term, etc. Number-systems are to be found in all traditions and cultures, and in all walks of life. We can discover them in ancient Greece, or China, or Africa and so on and in theology, management, psychology, mathematics, language, etc. The meaning ascribed to these systems subtly varies from culture to culture, or discipline to discipline, or situation to situation; but there is sufficient agreement to assume that they all share in the same patterns of meaning.

Christianity – western

1. Monad – God is One
2. Dyad – the Dual Nature of Christ
3. Triad – the Holy Trinity
4. Tetrad – the Four Gospels

Chinese –eastern

1. Tao
2. Yin-Yang
3. Triad of Heaven, Earth and Man
4. The Four Directions

Systematics – synthesis

1. Wholeness
2. Complementarity
3. Dynamism
4. Order

The number-systems are not so much models of the world ‘out there’ but of the ways in which we can understand or see this world – as well as the world of our own experience. It is argued that there as many ways of understanding as there are numbers. Misunderstanding often happens between people because they are using different systems, usually unconsciously. The same applies to conflict between different cultures. It is hard to become conscious of the way in which one sees, because it is too close.

Systematics itself is subject to the systems and there are very many ways of understanding what Systematics means. It is for example, qualitative and quantitative (dyad) and Bennett proposed four modes of systematics (tetrad): Pure, Abstract, Applied and Practical. The properties of each system are explored in dialogue, drawing on diverse experience. Systems can appear mathematical or poetic, deal with societies or with engineering, be expressed in images or in words, etc. The gathering is organised by the DuVersity in collaboration with UNIS (www.xxxxxxx)

POETRY AND LISTENING

Anthony Blake is making a series of recordings of poetic and other texts. These can be enjoyed for their own sake, but they have a significant application for anyone seeking to evoke their own creativity. Anthony has developed the method of ILM (immediate learning method) from work with

the late Edward Matchett on ‘neural education’. In this method, music or any sound of complex nature is used to amplify any meaning-signals being generated in the unconscious. The listener simply opens herself to the depth of meaning in the music, natural sounds or poetry without any concern with enjoying or judging, by-passing the interpretational filter. The ‘amplification of meaning-signals’ happens by itself. It is now widely recognised that apparently ‘random’ contexts and environments foster intelligence and creativity. What we tend to call ‘random’



*there appear'd a pleasant Mild Shadow above,
beneath, & on all sides round*

is more like an over-abundance of meaning which we cannot handle consciously or conceptually. The same point is made in the article in this issue by Dr Edith Wallace. However, in ILM, the subject does not actually produce anything as the vehicle of ‘random’ meaning but, instead, relies on what is given in the music.

In hand is the production of a three-CD set of Blake’s great poem *Milton*. The language and imagery of Blake is fantastic and intense and eludes any attempt at rational reduction. The

listener is advised to 'let it happen to' them
and not try to understand at all.