

ARIADNES'S THREAD



We are living in a time in which all the normal pathways and channels for expressing meaning seem silted over. What our heart is urging seems to be off the world agenda, wrapped up in economic woes. So many areas of debate, including sustainability and governance, have become arenas for platitudes and corporate self-justification. The world retells itself continuously in the image of whatever it is we want to believe.

At times we are shocked to outrage in the election promises or the company spins or the casino practises of banks. But the truth is that beyond any one example, the system has become so fragmented, the arena of public values and institutions are no longer able to serve a whole universal ethic. The danger in this disintegration of values is that everything deteriorates into mere rhetoric, falls to the level of cheap argument, without being backed by real commitment.

This issue has come together in recognising a second movement of our time, the discovery of our own elements that lead to meaning. This is illustrated in Sean Ferris' article, where the hidden metallic elements become a vehicle for the transmutation of the meaning to "uncover one's purpose and to find fulfilment." The meaning, no longer to be found in the arena of public debate, is come across through underground symbols, as pathway to illumination.

This point is further illustrated in Stephen Buhner's description of his own personal journey. Leaving behind conventional biology he takes us through the story of how he became self-reliant on his own sense of what is meaningful and real. The medium of his journey to meaning is through plants.

Anna Breytenbach represents the paths of many individuals who still stand in honest relation to the universality of the living world. These are the baboons, panthers and elephants with whom she telepathically interacts and who reflect back to her a concern for humanity.

Evelyn Underhill foresees in an article written a hundred years ago, the fall through abstraction of our current society. How do we find our way back from the perspectives of rationality to religion, pain and beauty as signs of the eternal? The article is prescient of the abyss science was about to fall into, in the work of quantum theory, the implications of which are considered in detail in this issue.

Our journeys to meaning do not yet know the universal web into which they are weaving. Where the Kogi still retain a mythological relation of the individual to the universal good of the world, for us our own innovative journeys have to make new chord with the universal. While science has given us many insights of our relation to the world, in the abstract, the challenge is to find the pattern in our living. These authentic journeys are characterised by their unassuming humility, the acceptance that the pathways of meaning occur at an individual level, out of public spotlight. The language of our journeys is the empathy to see in each other's silent determination, a resonant articulation of a shared endeavour.

By gathering together all these pathways, in their separate realms and understandings, we glimpse a universality of engagement, discovered not in thought but through life.

This issue is about all with the courage to pursue their own personal pathway to meaning.

Philip Franses