



A Participative Spiritual Inquiry

Wrekin Forum/Scientific & Medical Network
March 3rd – 6th, 2008

Joycelin Dawes

Earlier this year, members of the Scientific and Medical Network participated in a participative spiritual inquiry, organized by Wrekin Forum and with support from the Blaker Foundation. The Scientific and Medical Network interest in this inquiry springs partly from our work in the late 1980s with David Bohm's 'dialogue'. Participative spiritual inquiry also aims to bring people together in small groups to generate open and honest dialogue that can lead to deeper levels of knowing and community. This inquiry brought together three strands of potential for this kind of work: exploring new ways of knowing and new ways of connection through 'deepening spiritual connection' that inquires into each word of this purpose – deepening, spiritual and connection; practical experience of learning how best to use one of the many new 'social technologies' gaining more common currency today; in opening the inquiry, one of the facilitators observed that 'There is a new dimension to this thing called reality and we need to look to see what we can do to bring this new understanding to the world.'

A cycle of inquiry starts from a shared interest of the participants

who frame their interest as a question, then devise and carry out an activity that seeks to explore the question. Participants report back on their experience and outcomes of the activity, and thus consider collaboratively what they have learned and how this might be integrated into future actions. Participants learn the method and skill of inquiry with two experienced initiating facilitators, who, as the inquiry progresses, 'die' in the facilitation role in the group, as the group learns to self-manage and self-direct.

The Blaker Foundation were interested to support the inquiry as it offered a practical learning in a structured and rigorous way for people to discover and put into practice new ways of perceiving the world and of living their lives. It opens horizons and enables participants to explore and develop all dimensions of their experience - practical, emotional, spiritual, intuitive and intellectual.

As you read the report that follows, you will see that the inquiry has been successful in enabling this group to experience a high degree of trust, honesty, coherency and depth, which was experienced as real connection. This came from hard work, and willingness to recognise and lay aside

taken-for-granted defences and responses to difference and diversity.

Wrekin Forum is planning new inquiries, initially open to their Associates, and they will bring the first group together again to take their inquiry further. When a group reaches what became called 'common ground' it is important to realise that this is only an initial phase, not the end-point. If participative inquiry is really to demonstrate how groups can work collaboratively from a transpersonal and shared field of experience, this has to be grounded and anchored. This is long-term work.

Longer-term funding of new groups is a challenge. Although each inquiry will become self-supporting, there are set-up costs, for skilled initiating facilitators as the group learns self-management and to cover Forum overhead costs of developing the project.

Further information or interest in supporting the project: Wrekin Forum, Courtyard Lodge, Mellow Fm, Hawcross Lane, Redmarley d'Abitot, Glos GL19 3JQ tel: 01452 840033 or email: info@wrekintrust.org

Report compiled by Joycelin Dawes,
on behalf of Wrekin Forum
(joycelindawes@aol.com)



The Common Ground Report

A Participative Spiritual Inquiry held March 3rd-6th, 2008

This body of this report is compiled from the reflections of the 16 participants. Their 'voices' are alternately in normal and italic type. Process observations are in boxes

'We arrived. We began – introductions, some explanation from our initiating facilitators, Bryce Taylor and Kathryn Fitch. We thought we were starting at the beginning. Well, you do, don't you – conventionally that is – in linear fashion.

But participative spiritual inquiry is a cyclical method. It felt as if we started somewhere, went round a number of circles, then began to realise what we were doing, what was happening – learning on the job, experiencing and doing, and reflecting on it. Eventually, we discovered that each new cycle – each somewhere – was a prelude to going more deeply together, of challenges, frustration, and opaqueness opening to clear light. Then, there we were – really somewhere, together, as one, exploring the heart of developing deep dialogue together, each in our uniqueness, one in our common ground.'

The 16 of us were very different, all with a way or paradigm of understanding our life in the Spirit. Through successive cycles of, muddling-ly, wondering if what we were going through was spiritual experience, we eventually reached a point late Wednesday afternoon, carried forward to Thursday morning, when, collectively, we designed an inquiry into how we might deepen our spiritual connection. We agreed an activity that would test this, carried it out, reported back on our experience of it, its meaning, how that impacted our spiritual understanding and what we learnt from it.

We came to see that we were on 'Common Ground'; that we held and valued an 'open space' amongst us; it needed to be held collectively in a clear light free from individual perceptions, but from which we each share. The group, I think, experienced themselves reaching a unified transcendent space, holding a clear, grounded collective intent in which agreement came so much more easily.

The group became one of peers, facilitated itself and the initiating facilitators 'died' to become part of the group.

'Collaborative spiritual inquiry was new to me and I found both the process, and what happened to this particular group, enlightening and full of wonder. This whole person learning process was considered important enough to require everyone being present throughout; and I discovered I really didn't want to miss out on anything! So a requirement became willing and joyful. A safe environment was created by the facilitators and the group. The quiet joy and feeling of peace I experienced when we had come through the tangle of muddle, separation and darkness, into a clear space of underlying union, was indescribably beautiful. I felt the relief of knowing that staying with what happens in the moment, however difficult, leads to clarity and vision. I learned a lot during the three days – but am aware there is a great deal more to learn about this new way, as being salutary both to individuals, groups and thus further afield.'

I joined the group to become different through learning rather than accrue more learning. I changed through the process and realise:

- We don't have to create spiritual experiences, just recognise ourselves within them; BE them, not just have them. We were the living inquiry – the issue, problem and solution*
- We have to take responsibility for what's created and develop the ability to respond*
- There is potential within tension - in tension we can find intention*
- We can be the Destroyer, Creator and holder*
- Group agreement and conformity are not the same or as powerful as group intent*
- There is unity in diversity.*

Individually connecting to a higher group intent enables everyone to connect to a more powerful source, to 'be' and contribute themselves – we enable each other to be who we truly are; We are doomed if only connecting from the personality level as we only allow each other to be who we want and expect others to be.

This, for me provides great hope for the future of mankind and is the bridge between the old and new paradigms in terms of work to be done through groups and leaders in the world.

'The experience we had together seems to defy rational analysis because, collectively, we surrendered the rational through a painful and frustrating struggle through which we found a space beyond where knowing was replaced by meaning. This 'place beyond' has, hitherto, been the province of the religions and described by mystics variously as 'the cloud of unknowing', Christ Consciousness, Buddha Mind, the I Am Presence etc. Amongst our discoveries was the sense that this space is real (we seem to have termed it common ground) and there is a great sense of love and joy when we connect with it individually. When we connect collectively, as we did, I think we re-discovered a way forward for humanity in these transitional times.

I am fortunate to be in a few group situations where we choose to be in this space together, but I haven't experienced before the struggle to get there and the surrender of all identity and difference in order to reach this field of unknowing in which other dimensions of awareness can break through. This field is authentic, it lives in the moment and it can be trusted if we are willing to give it our trust. Clearly we are not the first to discover this but I hope through the process of morphogenesis that with each

evolutionary step we take so it may open up a space for others to do the same.

The Arthurian myths seem to hint at how each of us goes forth on the Grail Quest for wholeness and, having found our own individual connection, we return to the round table to find discover collective insight and to band together to offer collective leadership to Camelot. Maybe it is through the soul connected higher mind that we receive higher awareness and then somehow pass this to the more concrete lower mind to process and operationalise. This is where maybe an ongoing collaboration between Wrekin Forum and the Network might be useful – learning how to perceive through the eye of the mind and the eye of the heart and then integrate the two.

My own learnings seem to have been:

- That true spirituality has to be authentic
- That we can only reach it through surrender of all that we think and think that we are
- That it swims in a field of unconditional love in which 'greater love hath no man than this – that a man give up his life for his friend' (I hope I get it!)
- That other dimensions of being are real and await our connection to take us there.

Quite what is the deeper meaning of the golden anchor I saw descending between us during the final meditation I am not sure but the golden chain reaching into the heavens was solid and strong. I look forward to another time of being with everyone and await where this might lead us.'

A process observation: we were told in the first session by Bryce that sessions would start on time with whoever was there.....what a relief! How many frustrations have I suffered from turning up on time and having to wait till everybody was there! I noticed during the 3 days everyone was on time because (it would seem) they *really wanted to be there and not miss out!* this for me, if nothing else, was a proof that this whole process was very, very worthwhile – and that working with the fogginess of not entirely understanding, was worth 'being with'....until it moved, of its own volition, to a less foggy view.

What did I learn?

- *When to speak and when to remain silent*
- *That to be silent is to participate*
- *To recognise myself in others*
- *To trust the moment and to risk not knowing where it leads*
- *To witness the process yet be part of it*
- *To hold the thread of focused awareness throughout a labyrinthine journey*
- *To keep going through the not knowing*
- *To be aware of the common ground underlying apparent differences*
- *To watch a small seed germinate, gain strength, and grow*
- *To trust that the group has an intelligence of its own*
- *To participate in an alchemical process of transformation*

'My strongest learnings were more to do with meanings than with feelings or the imaginal. As an example, I went for a walk every morning, and on the first was rewarded by seeing the very last sliver of the waning moon, visible just before sunrise. The thought of entering the period of dark moon for our inquiry kept recurring, filling me with assurance that our dark not-knowing would be under the guidance of the moon. This then affected how I worked, or rather, how I perceived my part in our working, in the group. Increasingly often, as we progressed, I found myself in a state that I imagine surf-board riders to be in, balancing on the cusp of an onward wave where my movements and the wave's were one. It required constant attention. Words dissolve into paradox: it combined relaxation with unceasing activity, constant control with complete letting go of control, full personal responsibility with total acceptance of the group context. The techniques and ideas I learned were also of immense practical help, but it was this experience of living in a new way that now stays with me.'

Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness Eckhart Tolle.

'This is exactly what the inquiry did for me. It is difficult to put into words, experiences that are very transformative, and garnering the insights and learnings takes time. But you just know that a shift has taken place. So there are deep personal learnings from it, but also the knowledge that we achieved something quite profound together. I learnt that to be at the creative edge, is where deep

learning takes place, as well as understanding how a group can find higher ways of working together. What is it that a group can do together that individuals cannot? We can come into a collective emergence.

So full authentic participation in a group, with a conscious intention, is to co-create. I learnt the strength of authenticity and the immediacy of being at the creative edge, and that in the space of the common ground, that we created, even though there are differences between us, an energy becomes available to us, that has a deep creative flow.

This inquiry has contributed to the development of my own consciousness, and hence the collective consciousness, as well as to the creative development of group collaboration. It takes us forward individually and collectively.

'The experience brought to me a real sense of belonging which I have not felt before though I have often thought about it and known it to be possible. This I feel was brought about by the invitation to authentic expression which the process of the cooperative inquiry encouraged and was so evident in the later stages of our time together. I will carry with me the feeling of unity which we all created as the common ground. I am grateful too for the opportunity to practice the facilitator role in such a supportive atmosphere. This has, without a doubt contributed greatly to my gradual overcoming of the fear of speaking and enabled a step change in how I handled a talk I gave on the evening of our final day. I am left with the impression that the process of cooperative inquiry will be a great tool in the future for handling the opening of awareness in an atmosphere of equal voice where no-one can dominate to the disadvantage of others.'

Being safe: a safe environment was created. This safe environment brought forth such feelings and voiced thoughts as, it is OK to be a destroyer, because I know there will be a creator coming afterwards. The quiet joy and feeling of peace when we had come through the tangle of muddle, separateness and darkness, into the clear space of an underlying union, was indescribably beautiful... and brought forth in me a sense of relief too – if I hang on in there long enough, dawn will emerge...

When I stopped trying to make this event into the 'head' experience that I had been expecting and instead went with the group's flow, I then got from it instead a 'heart' experience - a powerful feeling, which has also stayed with me so far since, of love for the group, for my life and for life, and a gratefulness that all is very well.

At my 'head' level, I have been particularly impressed with how this group process mirrors life, in particular I see that in both:

- One of the most valuable things that I can give to others is to be fully present to them and not withdraw if the going gets rough or I lose interest*
- The group and life goes where the energy is, and I need to not give away my power, dithering to find a right moment to say/do something, as by this time the energy has often moved elsewhere,*
- I need to approach experiences open-mindedly, rather than through of my frames of reference*

This has all led me to renewed efforts at chopping the wood and fetching the water of my daily life with a new level of mindful intent.

I had had no time to prepare so had no pre-conceptions, expectations, stress or baggage. I did have confidence that: the group would go through considerable angst, resistance and struggle; Bryce would guide the journey without taking anything away from it; I was committed to being present and to use my energy purposefully; everyone had volunteered to be there and was spiritually intentioned so this was a resource; I had no investment in the outcome. I got exasperated by what I perceived as middle class politeness and little peer accountability holding up the group's progress, but this turned out, I think, to be useful.

The real learning, for me, lies in what I think was a surrender of some kind which came over us to the degree that we didn't really notice until we noticed there was something going on. We reached a place of no-one or the group having an agenda big or precious enough to get in the way. We all found a way of bringing our conscious intent together to invoke something different to what we were all used to. We gave to one another so that we might, together, find something new and richer to explore.'

3 – 6 March 2008; dates in the diary. Anticipation. Participative inquiry? Do I like this facilitated process; these tram lines for my behaviour? Finally! We phrased an inquiry as, what is the experience for the individual and the group when we intentionally create common ground? Simple intention; simple act - powerful result! I don't think it is too much to say 'heaven arose.' I could analyse it further; I could deconstruct it, but I choose not to. Its preciousness is in my recollection of its integrity as an experience. I have been living with the consequences of this ever since. I feel the on-going expansion like the ripples-from-the-stone-in-a-pond image, but instead of the ripples diminishing, they are gaining in wavelength and frequency!

The inquiry brought us to transcendence because it integrated self-and-other into one. I learned transcendency is a paradox; I examine self to lose self; I understand by seeking to understand not. Meaning is that which comes from inside – anything imposed from without is fundamentally an illusion. Once I understand from inside, I can use my intention to share my portion with the whole and truly participate. Knowing

about and experiencing Individuation in Oneness is different. I prefer experience.

'This four day experience presented me with a method of profound group potential for change and spiritual leadership. A very rigorous system of negotiation, discussion and counter agreement revealed so much, not only of our individual blockages but the group blocks, and even humanity's (as macrocosm). This testing process opens up experience of difference, stuckness, acceptance, growth and emergence, and a real deep respect for each group member as they experience the burning ground together and ultimately transformation.

The point of change to group creativity and with this the birth of a new receptivity and the acknowledgement of shared other dimensions meant a new learning could emerge.'

It is fascinating to be in a space of detachment and see things objectively and feel attuned with others in excitement of discovery or rediscovery! Despite the high Octane intellectual fireworks and plethora of debates, the process of inquiry and spiritual quest has touched my heart and mind, opening new windows of connecting



with strangers in more ways than one. The buzz word is simple, it is love. I have continued feeling an encompassing feeling of love all around me, still... integrating humans and all beings into the periphery of 'love zone' It is very beautiful feeling. In our non contract downsizing technocratic world, our meeting was wonderfully connecting in such a short space of time; a new emotional surge in my ribosomes tells me that after all we are all connected in very deep level, we just need to find it within a ground of openness, acceptance and love.

Making a proposal: An example might be: 'I propose that we spend the next 30 minutes discussing what it means to be really 'in' in this group'.

Anyone can make a proposal which is then voted on by the group: raising your hand means Yes, lowering it means No, halfway means Not sure – the low/halfway hands have then to be individually checked out. Depending on what is shared this will decide the next step; e.g. after clarification or discussion is the person willing to change their lowered hand to a raised one? If enough do this, the Proposal may then go ahead. As we learnt the process, we used the principle that the proposer then took responsibility for guiding the conduct of what was proposed. If not, it is dropped. (NB: important to be absolutely honest or you end up with something you don't want!)

Since I sent to you my initial reflections upon what I learned in our time together as a group, I have had the chance to watch the process deepen and develop. The feeling of recognising myself in others is still there, especially as I read the many wonderful contributions which have been circulated. The sense of keeping going through a time of not knowing has stayed with me, through a few days of intense activity. It has been like riding a huge wave of energy, while striving to remain steady, focused, and watchful.

For me, the most enduring memory has been of the widening of vision that took place, taking us beyond our frustrations, stuckness and irritation. The shared awareness of a common

ground worked its magic. We did not have to bring it into being, it was there waiting for us to wake up to its presence.

'I have had a mantra/phrase in my head and heart for many many years...

'I will not give myself fully until it is the real thing.'

"For me, where we got to at the end was and is, the future way of living. By any other name, we landed in heaven, we inhabited the heaven, the common ground of heaven, that has always been present. A new way of collective Being in the world and because of that, we will really make a difference in all areas of our lives, I feel sure.'

I found this journey quite a struggle to start with. In truth I had not read the paperwork properly, otherwise I would probably not have gone. Perhaps it was meant that I did not read the papers because I would certainly have missed out on a tremendous and valuable experience and learning curve. I had not appreciated how much of me was still stuck in perceptions and conditioning. I had always thought of myself as a good Aquarian, very detached and able to see the wider vision. Those few days were to show me that there was still much of me stuck in the Piscean age and its resultant perceptions and structures.

Initially, I saw only the outer process and this I found very frustrating. Gradually, however, on the third day, the penny dropped and I suddenly became aware of something much deeper happening. I saw beneath the process. In essence I connected with the energy that was prevalent in the group and when this connection was made, it was as if something opened up within me. I saw the value of how groups working together like this could bring about so much needed change in our society. Above all, I understood that my fears, my concern, were groundless. It had all been about perceptions and conditioning that I had picked up since birth and these needed to go. I had lost nothing of value and instead had gained so much. Something within was released and I became free.

With this release and freedom, I was so conscious of the exciting possibilities that lay ahead with this type of group work. I suddenly realised that this was true Aquarian group work and that those like us were pioneers in visualising the freedom, the transformation necessary for a deeper spiritual connection in humanity.

Humanity needs to be free of the remnants of the Piscean Age and transform all its beautiful spiritual qualities into the visionary Aquarian Age. The Age where each human being will gain freedom from its own imprisonment and connect with its true spiritual nature.

It was a great privilege to do this journey with you all and I so much look forward to seeing you again.

The bell: this was a small bell and ribbon – the only object in the middle of the circle. It was there for any member of the group to use at any point when they felt we were off track and were not doing what the group had agreed for any given period. You were invited to pick it up from the middle of the circle and ring it. The proceedings then stopped immediately, and you said why you had rung it. It was a risk: would you have stopped proceedings appropriately? Would the person you had stopped speaking be angry? Would it help – or hinder – the group process as a whole?

'What is the emergence of common ground? We don't know where we are until we get there. And we won't get there until we know where we are going and that there is a we that is going and that the we is together - enough.

Straightforward, simple enough. How many times did we have to formulate our intent together before we almost got it fully into operation?

I know something of how long it takes to get 16 people's intent sufficiently aligned to bring about what they wish for cooperative inquiry teaches patience and the need to let the ego's reactivity burn up in the frustrations of learning how much we need it to be... (whatever way we believe it ought or needs to be)

Dreams, wishes, ideas, planning and intention - only when those last two appear do we get to bring about collective action – even if it is to dream collectively (is that a future challenge?).'

We are: Amit Biswas, Marolyn Burgess, Chris Clarke, Joycelin Dawes, Janice Dolley, Vince Dowse, Carol Duncan, Astra Ferro, Kathryn Fitch, Heather Giles, Ann Hellyer, Dave Hufton, Tessa Maskell, Denise Moll, Bernie Rochford, Bryce Taylor.



The Body and Beyond 1: Cross Cultural Understandings of Subtle Energy

Bath Spa University, 22nd - 24th August 2008

Robert A Charman

The West Downs campus, set in the rolling countryside of North Somerset with cows in nearby ruminative contemplation, was an excellent site for the subtle energy theme of this conference. The sun shone to greet our arrival on Friday evening and smiled on us again for most of Saturday, but by late afternoon the celestial effort proved too much and we lapsed back into cloud and some light rain.

John Clarke, Chairman of Council, opened the conference with a warm welcome to everyone together with an especially warm welcome to those attending for the first time. He expressed the hope that any non members present would join the fellowship of the SMN. On this subject he reminded us that, like so many small societies, membership remained relatively static and urged everyone to support the sterling efforts of Council by playing their part in spreading the word. **Peter Fenwick**, as President, then gave a short address in which he informed us that the latest exciting discoveries in neuroscience were leading to renewed recognition that mind, as an entity in its own right, could influence brain and was not just an end product of brain processing. Philosophically, this represents a return to the concept of mind to brain top down causation instead of brain to mind bottom up causation. John Searle, a leading philosopher who had, until recently, championed a bottom up approach has now issued a cautious re-appraisal in favour of the top down hypothesis. Consciousness involves the whole brain which can reprogramme its processing of sensory information to achieve a desired mental end. For example, when the blind explore the world using their hands their receiving visual cortex takes on a new role in processing the sensory input from their hands and associated arm movements to help create a three dimensional map of a world they cannot see.



David Lorimer, Editor of Network Review and Conference Chair, then opened the subtle energy theme of the conference. He reviewed the western approach to explaining the mystery of life by referring us to Aristotle's (384-322 BC) hypothesis of a vegetable soul, an animal soul, and a rational soul, and that we embodied all three. By the 17th C it seems that two of these souls had become lost in transit as the world was redivided by René Descartes (1596-1650) 'Father of modern philosophy' into a dualism consisting of the realm of the outer world of measurable physical extension (*res extensa*), and the realm of non measurable, non extended mind (*res cogitans*). Only humans possess mind because only humans can say 'I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am' (*Dubito, ergo cogito,*

ergo sum). As animals cannot do this they have no self and are no more than instinctual automatons (You may strongly disagree with this criterion!). From the 19th century onwards the accelerating rate of scientific discovery, the scientific method, and related philosophy rejected dualism in favour of a one substance monism in which our sense of being a separate self is an illusion that dies when the brain dies.

Over the centuries, running counter to this scientific paradigm of mind-less nature, a continuing stream of western esoteric philosophy (esoteric – secret, mysterious knowledge, taught to initiates mainly through the language of symbolism, rites and magic) retained mind and soul as primary entities inhabiting bodies sustained by the *Ian Vital* or Life Force in mutual accord with the soul of the universe. David referred us to the physicist Raynor C Johnson's 1953 book *The Imprisoned Splendour: An approach to Reality based upon the significance of data drawn from the fields of Natural Science, Psychical Research and Mystical Experience* as a brilliant exposition of this paradigm (I would also include here his *Watcher On The Hills* (1959), based upon unexpected mystical and other worldly experiences sent to him by ordinary people. Each available through Amazon). Another important author was Robert Crookall who, notably in *Casebook of Astral Projection* (1964) proposed that the experiential bodily states of people varied accorded to the realm of universe they inhabited. In conclusion, David quoted from the physicist William Barrett's 1926 book

Deathbed Visions: Psychological experiences of the dying to the effect that such experiences imply we inhabit a realm in which we are all one with another. Following his talk the conference speakers then joined him to introduce themselves and the main theme of their forthcoming presentations. As a delightful and very much appreciated musical postlude David introduced James D'Angelo, professional pianist and sound therapist, who played Bach's *Italian Concerto* on the magnificent new piano recently acquired by the university.

Saturday morning commenced with **Dr Ornella Corazza** discussing *Near-Death Experiences: Exploring the Mind-Body Connection*. Dr Corazza took us through the typical experience of an NDE, including a tunnel, approaching a light, seeing relatives, maybe a godlike figure, maybe a life review, and then, at some point, receiving a command to return into their body as their life's journey was not yet fulfilled. NDEs possess an unshakeable reality that profoundly affects the rest of a person's life, including no fear of death. They are sometimes preceded by an OBE in which the person 'floats' to the ceiling, observing all below before entering the NDE. Studies have shown that about 11% of those near clinical death experience an NDE. Ketamine, an anaesthetic sometimes used as a recreational drug, can also induce an NDE type experience but it doesn't have the same sense of absolute reality. NDEs are not always near death phenomena as they can occur during dissociated states of dreaming, stress, and deep meditation. Much of Ornella's research was done in Japan where, as here, some NDEs are terrifying instead of beatific. For the Japanese there is no clear distinction between life and death, as the 'dead' continue in a permanent state of OBE/NDE and accompany the presently living. Body-mind is a continuum of 'betweenness' with no dualist separation. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.

After coffee **Dr Shigenori Nagatomo** presented research evidence for the existence of Ki in *Ki-Energy: Its Detection and Meaning*. Ki, or Chi, energy is the 'invisible body' of life force that animates the 'visible body' of gross anatomy from plants to man. In animals it flows along the meridians whose acupoints interact with universal Ki. It can be sensed when in the right state of awareness. Post war



Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, David Lorimer, Clare Goodrick-Clarke

research in Japan, and later in China, was initiated by news that on being stimulated at an acupoint a blind patient felt a sensation of Ki that travelled at around 15cm per second along the traditional meridian line. These lines do not correspond to sensory nerve patterns. Ki flow was then electronically detected as flowing at anywhere between 3 - 48 cm per second according to the meridian, far slower than sensory nerve conduction. For example, it travels along the so-called Triple Heater line from 4th finger to shoulder at around 3-8 cms per second. Masters of Qigong can generate and project Ki energy through space. Dr Nagatomo showed a short research film in which, for the first experiment, a Qigong master, standing on one side of a transparent screen with his outstretched arm and fingers through a hole in the screen, aimed his Ki energy at a line of ten lit candles. After a few seconds the flame of the nearest candle bent away from his fingers and this effect then travelled along the line of candle flames. In the second experiment a metal disc, hanging motionless from the ceiling, started to rotate under the influence of projected Ki (there was a gasp of amazement as we watched in fascination). The healing effect of Ki was shown in slide pictures of stomach cancer cells in a Petri dish where the intestinal tissue in contact with them slowly separated away, leaving them porous and vulnerable to attack. Physiological monitoring of changes in bloodflow, heart rate, and body temperature in qigong masters indicate that intentional Ki is

controlled by the autonomic nervous system. In Qigong philosophy our bodies are open systems in continuous exchange of Ki energy with our environment, including with each other. When, for example, a person of high Ki enters a room he, or she, can energise those with lower Ki. Conversely, one can feel drained as a sick person absorbs your Ki. External space is not the uniform blankness of Newtonian theory, but has good and bad areas. The Ki from a polluted environment can poison our Ki, making us feel lethargic and open to illness, whereas the Ki from mountains, woods and streams can re-energise us.

Following lunch **Dr Gay Watson's** talk, entitled *Embodying Knowledge in Buddhist, Psychotherapy and Neuroscience* took us into Buddhist thought that emphasises right action and experiencing rather than intellectualising. Post Cartesian western philosophy has divided mind from body, thus creating an unresolvable dualism because, as neither possesses the properties of the other, they remain irreconcilable. In contrast, Buddhistic psychotherapy is based upon the concept of a mind-body continuum in which the six senses of the body (the 6th sense being intellect) are synthesised into a continuous embodiment of experiencing. An indivisible oneness. In practice, the psychotherapist must remain emotionally stable whatever he, or she, is hearing from a disturbed client because, if the client's fears become the therapist's fears, then no help can be given. A degree of non identification is essential. Modern

neuroscience research has demonstrated that the brain possesses astonishingly sensitive neuroplasticity to good or bad experiencing and, through therapeutic exercise including breathing, the psychotherapist can use this knowledge to help remodel brain function in favour of beneficial experiencing. In the brain there are 'mirror neurons' (nerve cells) whose activity at non conscious emotional levels enables the brain to inwardly 'act out' the observed or told experiences of another, have demonstrated that good or bad influences can be neurally embodied. Film, video, or observed real life violence empathically activates these neurones so that, in effect, the observer becomes the embodiment of the observed. Conversely, these same neurones help to form empathic baby and parent bonding. Watching a skill helps to develop that skill. By rejecting mind-brain dualism in favour of the oneness of experiential embodiment Buddhist psychotherapy aims, through active therapy, to replace bad experiencing with good experiencing.

After the tea break **Paul Hougham** introduced us to *Textures and Transformations: The Meridians of Traditional Acupuncture*. He opened his talk by giving us an update on the increasing acceptance of acupuncture in medical practice and the accompanying increase in undergraduate courses leading to a BSc or, as in his College of Traditional Acupuncture, a BA in acupuncture. Historically, acupuncture appears to have evolved in China many centuries BC. In the 3rd century BC Acumoxotherapy (Zenjiu), involving the use of small, slow burning, herbal sticks placed upon acupoints had become widely practiced in the context of 'Nurturing Life' (Yang shen) through diet, meditation, exercise, sexual activity and social ceremony. The concept of 'Guiding and Pulling' (Daoyin) into the good life through prescribed exercises, leading to Tai Chi and Qigong, became common practice in both China and Japan. Acupuncture, first by using thin slivers of sharp bone, then needles, was practiced alongside moxa therapy, being inserted after the moxa had burned through. The traditional meridians and acupoints of Ki energy flow, linking the surface to the internal organs, were developed over centuries. They were based upon sensory experience instead of



Ornella Corazza, Peter Fenwick, Shigenori Nagatomo

anatomical dissection as the latter was banned. Acupoints are the open channels of Ki energy connecting the body in energy exchange with the universe. Although translated as 'subtle energy' a closer concept with Eastern thought is 'breaths' of change and transformation. The meridian system is where body, mind and spirit met in energy union. Acupoint therapy can remove energy blockages and restore wholeness of Ki energy flow.

After dinner many of us bravely ventured a 10 minute walk across the fields (umbrellas up) to join others in the welcoming interior of the Holy Trinity Church, Newton St. Loe, with its fine, 15th century Perpendicular west tower. On the left jamb of the south porch as you enter are two 'scratch dials' that acted as sun dials for the priest to check the time for Mass, and just inside is a complete list of Rectors down the centuries commencing with Francis de Stockley in 1297. We had gathered there to listen to a guitar recital by one of our members, **Catherine Thom**, who is a professional guitarist. Catherine, who was warmly introduced by Max Payne, then guided us through a selection of compositions from the baroque to the present, including a much appreciated composition of her own. At the end of her recital our applause shook the ancient rafters and we wended our way back to West Downs musically refreshed and in good heart.

Professor Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke opened the Sunday programme with a talk entitled *Wheels of Fire: the Assimilation of Eastern Subtle Body Doctrines in the Western Esoteric Tradition*. His historical review commenced with Pythagoras (circa 575-490 BC) a Greek mathematician and philosopher whose Three

Pythagorean Worlds theory formed the basis for western esoteric thought for many centuries. Pythagoras divided the universe and man into the Supreme Realm of Deity, connected to the spirit of the Thorax; the Superior, or Supramunda Realm of the planets, soul and cranium, and the Inferior Realm of the physical world of objects and bodies associated with the abdomen. A later philosopher Macrobius (395-423 AD) proposed that each soul descended through the heavenly spheres of the planets, taking on the characteristics of each planet before entering the unborn child. Robert Fludd (1574-1637 AD) proposed Zodiacal Man where the sun and planets connected to the heart and thorax respectively, with the Windows of the Soul open to Pure Mind (God), and Active Intellect (middle soul, rational spirit), in strong parallel with the Esoteric Anatomy of early Christian theology. Later translations of Sanskrit texts, Egyptian hieroglyphs, Mesopotamian scripts, together with the Kabbalah united a flood of Eastern and ancient esoteric thought with western esotericism. Through her travels and interpretations of Eastern thought regarding spirituality and the divine Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) founded the Theosophy movement in 1875 and published her influential two-volume *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888. Charles Leadbeater (1847-1934) in his many books proposed that we passed through a hierarchical series of spiritual ascent from the physical, astral, mental, and Buddhist to Paranirvana. Later theosophical writers such as Sir Arthur of Avalon, Dion Fortune and Alice Bailey, emphasising karma, spiritual enlightenment, reincarnation and soul transmutation opened the floodgates



of 'New Age' therapies and philosophies including Caroline Myss, Deepak Chopra and, on a more medical front regarding healing, Larry Dossey.

After coffee **Clare Goodrick-Clarke** continued this theme through *Healing Agents of the Soul: Vital Force, Dynamis, Susceptibility*. While we understand the 'human' of 'human being' we are, she said, less sure what we mean by 'being'. Sometimes illness has meaning as an attempt to correct our lives because illness and health are aspects along a common continuum of being. Our biography becomes, in part, our biology, as our soul life enters deep into our organic processes. Western medicine works on bodies and parts of bodies, seen solely in terms of the pathology and repair of biological mechanisms, but true healing echoes Plato's dictum that 'the cure of the part should not be attempted without treatment of the soul'. Distress of the soul is often made manifest through the distress of bodily symptoms, and true healing

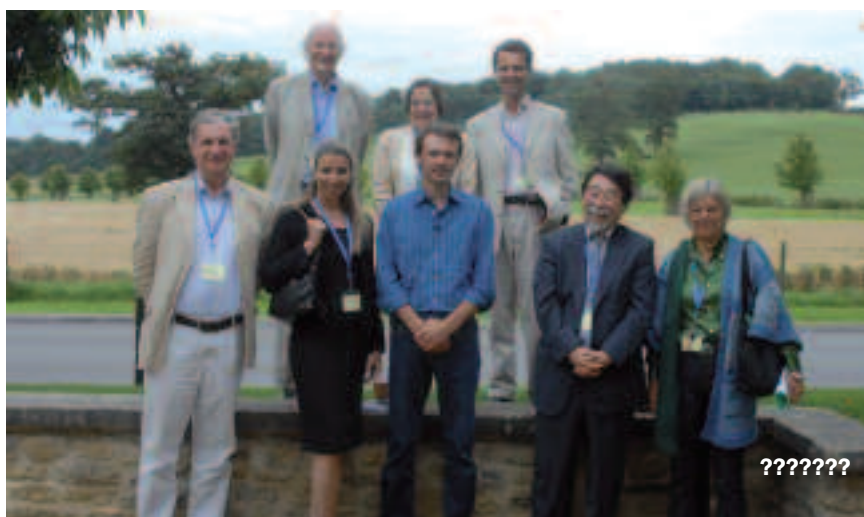
involves harmonious restoration of the Ki, or Vital Force, often assisted by the healing properties of plants and carefully chosen homeopathic remedies. The *vis medicatrix naturae* of Hippocrates (ca. 490-370 BC) Augmentation of natural healing Ki by increasing susceptibility to healing through magical presentation, is shown by the story of Sir William Osler (1849-1919) the charismatic 'Father of modern medicine' who, dressed in the swirling red cloak of a magician, visited a small boy in the almost terminal stage of smallpox, and sat by his bedside slowly peeling and feeding him a peach (almost unknown then). On his way out he told the parents to be prepared for the worst but hope for the best. The boy, against all viral odds, recovered. Clare supports Sheldrake's theory of morphic fields of reciprocating influence, and ended her talk with slides showing marked similarities of crystalline patterning between crystallised drops of tissue fluid from patients with particular illnesses and crystallised tintured essence of plants used for healing same, the crystallising agent being CuCl_2 (copper chloride).

The afternoon session consisted firstly of small group discussions on particular topics such as Ki energy and NDEs followed by a final discussion forum with the panel of lecturers during which differing views concerning esoteric thought and its implications were expressed. Overall, the conference opened the minds of many of us to a world of esoteric philosophy whose paradigm of nature and the living body sustained by subtle energy flows, and mind, soul and spirit evolving upwards through other realms containing other Beings towards some ultimate nirvana is in complete

contrast to the pragmatic paradigm of scientific and medical thought. The philosophical dissonance between the two world views seems irreconcilable. You only have to contrast Richard Dawkins with, say, Deepak Chopra. For this writer esoteric philosophy, or philosophies, seem a matter of sincerely held belief systems about the nature of the universe, usually expressed in imaginative symbolism as in astrology, in which the search for evidence to support such beliefs plays little, if any, part. If esoteric thought was the prevailing world view it seems unlikely that our modern world of physics and chemistry, biology, DNA, evolution, the neurosciences, electronics, telecommunications, modern medicine, tectonic plates and astrophysics would ever have been discovered. This world is based upon factual data, scientific inquiry, testable hypotheses, and further inquiry in an endless cycle of exploration. Medicine, in esoteric thought, would still be based upon the concept of miasmas. Maybe the role of the SMN is to help bring the two worlds together in some form of constructive synthesis. In fact, it may already be doing just that through the *Network Review* and through the much appreciated conference bookstalls, one manned by our indefatigable Charla and the other by the good heartedness of Alan Shepherd, GreenSpirit Books.

Abiding memories? West Downs campus itself, conference camaraderie, the outstretched fingers of the Qigong master, the successive bending away of those candle flames, the slow turning of that suspended disc, and the plangent notes of a guitar in a country church that, like the theme of the conference itself, speaks to us of another world.

Robert Charman is a retired physiotherapy lecturer whose specialities were neuro-rehabilitation and biophysics. He was founder/chair of the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Energy Medicine and is Chair of the Confederation of Healing Organisations. He was editor **Complementary Therapies for Physical Therapists (2000)**; has published a review of EEG and fMRI evidence for direct brainmind to brainmind communication (*Journal for the Society for Psychical Research*, download www.spr.ac.uk), and articles reviewing the implications of psychical research on healing and theories of telepathy, remote viewing, psychokinesis and the relationship between brain and mind.
Email: bigbobcharman@yahoo.co.uk





Science and Spirituality

Annual Gathering 2008 of the German SMN Group

Dr. Stephan Krall (Kronberg)

From 15 to 17 August, 2008, 28 members and friends of the SMN met in Goslar (Harz) for their annual German meeting. In accordance with the objective of the SMN we chose the theme Science and Spirituality. Eight papers were presented followed by long and fruitful discussions. For the sake of brevity only some of them will be described here more in detail.

After a short introduction into science theory and the role of intuition by **Dr. Stephan Krall**, a presentation was given by the psychologist and philosopher **Dagmar Mundhenke** on the collaboration of Carl Gustav Jung and Wolfgang Pauli. The first, a famous psychiatrist and psychoanalyst met the second a no less famous physicist and Nobel Prize laureate during an personal crisis of Pauli. A long and fruitful relationship developed during which Jung learned a lot about physics and its new world view through quantum mechanics and vice versa Pauli opened his mind to a world beyond the material. They developed together the concept of synchronicity

and complementarity. Not much is known about Pauli in public and little is published and still available.

Dr. med. Gudrun Bornhöft tried to show us the difficulties of finding ways to prove immaterial and spiritual forces in the process of healing. From the four elements of Aristotle *causa materialis*, *causa efficiens*, *causa formalis* and *causa finalis* only the first two are recognised by modern science. The form-building force and the teleology are banned. Immaterial forces often do not follow a bottom-up principle, as stipulated by science, but a top-down one. Moderated, documented and qualitatively analysed conversations between patients and

experts could help to improve the understanding of such immaterial forces.

Whether nature is self-organised or not was the subject of **Robert Gansler's** presentation. Quantum mechanics and chaos theory show the self-organising forces of nature which can lead to processes of emergence of new patterns far away from the thermodynamic equilibrium. These new structures are open, unstable and always at the border of chaos. Nature is self-organised to a certain extent but there are always some steering programmes behind reactions, Robert claimed, from his background as an engineer.



The Speakers

Causality or final purpose (teleology) is one of the fundamental questions in nature. In contemporary science the concept of causality is the predominant one. **Dr. Stephan Krall** from his view as a biologist explained that this was not always the case and that many scientists, mainly biologists, were, until the forties of the last century, convinced that there must be a driving force or attractor behind processes in nature. This concept of teleology is widely unknown today but there are still some supporters and it seems that the concept is not so wrong as perceived in public. The truth lies obviously in the fact that both are right. There are many processes in nature which are clearly driven by causality but there are as well others which might be better explained by finality of teleology.

The biologist **Dr. Jens Tesmer** described experiments carried out by

Ciba Geigy scientists on the surprising influence of electrostatic fields on biological development. Due to those fields new and archaic forms of plants developed which appears as new (or old) species. Jens put forward for discussion the argument that the effect is probably not caused primarily through the electric field but maybe by new and unknown fields embedded in a spiritual field.

At the end of the meeting **Dr. Hans Hönl** tried to explain the spirit as an aspect of matter and therefore attempted to solve the problem of dualism. He as a chemist found very often during his professional career that biological reactions in particular are not easily explainable as caused by trial and error or accident. In his view, the interaction of elementary particles of matter brings about new entities which can be described as spiritual parts. They lead to

consciousness which is then an integral part of matter. Only highly organised matter can become what we call life.

On Saturday evening we had a special guest from a research institute in St. Petersburg, Russia. **Dr. med. Natalia Shareyko**, who reported on the practical aspects of the biosensory work of her institute. It is mainly on the ability of people to cause telekinetic effects. She demonstrated it by a video film from her institute and offered meditative exercises to the participants.

As usual the atmosphere of the meeting was characterized by harmonious discussions, a splendid ambience of the building and the park and rounded off by Qi Gong exercised offered by **Cornelia Krall** which demonstrated how man is stretched between heaven and earth, or let's say between Science and Spirituality.

Moon Face by Dr Carolyn Reinhart

