

Local Group News

Friends of the SMN, Auckland - LEO HOBBS +64 9 478 7809

Leo writes: In April, May and June ROGER BOOTH addressed one of the fundamental questions about our 'Being', namely, 'Who am I?'. We had planned two meetings for this, but Roger's expert presentation, drawing particularly on the work of Maturana and Varela, proved so interesting, and the discussion so productive, we agreed enthusiastically to continue to a third meeting. We learned that what distinguishes living cells and organisms from other things is their capacity for self-generation and maintenance in dynamic equilibrium, both internally and in relation to their environment. As the environment changes the organism will seek to adapt to maintain its viability. The processes involved have been described as autopoiesis. In the evolutionary process, symbiotic relationship between species and with their environments is more important than competition. The biology of evolution is one of cooperation.

Human beings are distinguished from other species by the way we use linguistic coordination in our social existence. Language is a particular manner of living together. In conversations we discover symbols, self, intentionality and meaning. These belong to the domain of languaging and are not part of nervous system operation or physiology. The nervous system does not operate in symbols or intentionality. And because language and humanness both arise out of consensual coordinations within a biology of cooperation, the only emotion which allows language to emerge is *love*.

Love is thus the fundamental emotion, or domain of behaviour, by which human beings arise. Living in this domain of behaviour I accept that the other's existence is as legitimate as my own and I am not blind to his/her/its condition of being. Recognition of the fundamental role of love provides a very clear rebuttal to post-modernism's, 'Anything Goes'.

Our July meeting was devoted to planning our programme for the remainder of 2000.

Swiss Group - KURT DRESSLER +41 1 980 0886

Kurt writes: Eleven SMN members of the Swiss Group and 23 associated friends and partners met in Zurich April 9th. As on previous occasions a private house was rented for the day, a very nice 'villa' with meeting hall and rooms and garden space ideal for sharing a potluck lunch following the talks. Thanks to PETER BINZ for the organisation and to owner Charlotte Herzel who also participated at our meeting.

Sadly, this meeting had to be started in remembrance of our member RUDOLF JÄCKLI who had died two days before, the father of BARBARA JÄCKLI who together with her partner Peter Binz has been active and instrumental in organizing and keeping alive the meetings of the Swiss group for many years.

The theme of the meeting had been announced in the letter of invitation as follows:
Material Manifestations of Immaterial Information 'Fields'

- * Quantum Physics (Introductory remarks by KURT DRESSLER on 'Space- and Time-Transcending Wholeness of Physical Reality' (see his article on Time in Network No 71),
- * Homeopathy (see Harald Walach: 'Magic of Signs: A Nonlocal Interpretation of Homeopathy' in J. Scientific Exploration Vol 13 Nos 2 & 3, 1999),
- * Parapsychology (see Rupert Sheldrake: 'The Unexplained Powers of Animals' in Network No 70),

- * Dream Research (Member ART FUNKHOUSER reports on the book by Linda L. Magallon: 'Mutual Dreaming: When Two or More People Share the Same Dream'),
- * Medicine (Member ELI LASCH, author of the German book 'Overwhelmed by the Light - My Path from MD to Spiritual Healer' reviewed in Network No 72, presents a lecture on 'Cancer - A Decease of the Regulating Fields, A New Point of View' (see his article 'Cancer and Morphogenetic Fields' in Network No 70).

The meeting actually focussed on the two talks by Art and by Eli, who met with enthusiastic interest. Lively discussions followed and persisted into lunchtime and into the early afternoon. The citation of relevant Network articles in the letter of invitation had given SMN members the advantage of access to substantial advance information. This fact and the quality of the meeting motivated several of the attending friends to pick up a SMN Joining Form. We look forward to discussing the other topics mentioned in the invitation on future occasions.

Chichester Group LEON WYMAN 01243 530833

Forty two members and guests attended our branch meeting held at The Hayloft on June 22nd. It was a particular pleasure for me to introduce Dr NEIL DOUGLAS-KLOTZ who talked about his life and work and presented themes from his latest book "The Hidden Gospel - Decoding the Spiritual Message of the Aramaic Jesus."

Neil wears his scholarship and erudition lightly and has a very relaxed style of presentation. His main thesis was the need to understand that in the Aramaic language (and also Hebrew and Arabic) words may frequently be translated in different ways, thus enriching and deepening sacred texts. Historically, Jesus' teaching has come to us filtered through the Greek soul and language, the inherent dualism of which has led to an emphasis on an "either/or", "this OR that" approach, inevitably resulting in "correct" and "incorrect" beliefs; thus believers and heretics. The implication of the change to "this AND that" hardly needs elaborating; creed may now become spiritual work. He gave as an example the word RUACH in Hebrew or RUCHAH in Aramaic (the CH is guttural, as in Loch) which simultaneously means spirit, wind, air and breath. Holy Spirit is thus also Holy Breath. We can now, therefore, become aware of our breathing experientially, as part of a spiritual discipline, whereas the single translation of Holy Spirit may simply involve more or less interesting theology. Neil at this point did in fact lead the group in a breathing exercise involving the chanting of the first line of The Lord's Prayer in the Aramaic original. Other examples could be given, but space does not permit this. Instead, I would strongly recommend reading Neil's book

Although there were some in the audience who were already familiar with Neil's work, or at least strong parallels with different spiritual traditions, it was also apparent that to others this was an entirely novel approach, which led to interesting and lively questions and discussion. The books, CDs and tapes ordered for the meeting sold out!!

Chilterns Group - ELAINE HADFIELD 01442 864613, MIKE REVELEY 01442 258309

Elaine writes: Our regular bimonthly meetings continue to be very well attended. In May we had a fascinating practical presentation on Dowsing by GEOFF CROCKFORD and in July enjoyed a stimulating talk and meditation led by VERONICA KEMP. On Saturday 17 June 2000 the SMN Chilterns group held its special Millennium Day Conference in the form of a social occasion as well as an intellectually stimulating event. The Friends Meeting House in

Berkhamsted provided a cool setting on a hot day and its shady gardens gave shelter from a burning sun during breaks. The lunch was excellent and there was much post-prandial discussion at leisure.

The main speakers of the day were-

ELAINE HADFIELD - who welcomed everyone and addressed the group on the Role of the Local Group.

ANNE SILK - who gave a summary on the work during the previous year of the Language group- (viz. Elaine Hadfield, Mike Reveley, Mike Rogers and Anne Silk)

RICHARD ROOLEY- who rendered a very balanced picture with respect to the 'sick building syndrome'-incorporating all the aspects which have to be considered in investigating this phenomenon.

RODNEY HALE - who reported on his work in trying to obtain meaningful scientific data (though direct measurements of any possible electrical/ magnetic fields during sessions given by a healer).

ROGER TAYLOR - here we had an overview of torsion fields and their applications to real world phenomena. Evidently a lot of the work in this area has been researched in Russia during the past decades and the translations are beginning to appear more frequently now. This was a fascinating talk with the research results giving findings which could have implications in many fields-from the technical and industrial applications considered by the Russians to the areas of dowsing, healing, radionics, and psychometry in alternative therapies.

Tea was followed with a plenary Question and Discussion Session and it was sparking on all cylinders from here with much enthusiastic interchange .

The day ended with a feeling that it had all been a most enjoyable venture and its organisers (Elaine Hadfield and Mike Reveley)are pleased that it turned out to be such a successful occasion and would like to thank all the speakers, especially, for their efforts in making it so.

Summary of talk given by Rodney Hale to the Chilterns Group Millennium Meeting

Measurement of electric/magnetic changes during healing sessions The monitoring of the environment adjacent to meditators and healers by a variety of electronic instruments has shown some interesting effects in the case of background radioactivity and ELF electromagnetic fields. The natural variability of radioactivity readings tend to obscure any short-term changes, but by the careful use of cumulative summing graphs, trends can be established. It has been shown that in a statistically significant number of cases, the background radiation has increased at the commencement of a meditation period, whilst in the case of healing, a reduction takes place. Care has been taken to determine that it is the human intention which triggers this effect, and not just the presence of bodies. Recently, confirmation of this effect has been given by some American work using sophisticated equipment.

Using coils of many kilometres of wire and low-noise electronic amplifiers, some extra low frequencies have been detected from meditators and healers, which appear to emanate from the body. Frequencies have been observed from 8 Hz. down to 0.1 Hz. and exhibit unexpected patterns which are difficult to associate with breathing or heart-beat rates. Efforts have been made to reduce the possibility of very weak mechanical coupling between body movements and the coils which could give rise to some of these signals. An association

was suggested with William Tiller's work on the effect of mental intention on the various bio- oscillators in the body, which showed effects down to these frequencies.

Summary of talk given by Dr Roger Taylor to the Chilterns Group Millennium Meeting.

Torsion Fields and related phenomena

There are many phenomena involving action at a distance, which do not seem to be explicable by electro-magnetism, or other well known forces. These phenomena are often loosely grouped as "subtle energy", together with a number of others particular to living beings, especially human beings. As can be seen from the rapidly growing literature, new physical speculations are coming within range of an account of such subtle energy. Central to most of these speculations is the idea that the vacuum, or ether, is not simply an empty void, but has mathematical describable properties. These properties allow for physical effects to be at a distance either by spinning objects, or by the aligned spin particles in an object such as a magnet. Such influences are referred to, especially in Russia, as Torsion Fields. Since, however, these speculations connect only tenuously with the reigning mainstream paradigm, (and I am not a physicist) I limit myself summarising some of the experimental data.

Although Russian scientists have been active in this area for some decades, it is only recently that their work has become to be available in translation. Besides producing a large body of theory, the Russians have done many experiments, which go a long way towards bearing out the essentials of the theory. Using a variety of torsion generators (most often a simple cone revolving at 10 - 25,000 rpm) they have shown a great variety of physical effects. Among those I present are: small reduction in background count of a scintillation counter; slight acceleration of a quartz oscillator; increase in fractality of crystallising salts; exposure in the dark of photographic film. Besides spinning objects, it seems clear that certain defined shapes can also be sources of torsion fields. I show the effect of a small pyramid on the infrared spectrum of water. Many of these effects continue to persist for some time after the torsion generator has been switched off, or even after it has been moved some distance away. A particularly impressive example of such a "torsion phantom" is seen in the persistence of the laser-scattering pattern of DNA in an empty cuvette for some days after the DNA had been removed from it.

These findings have implications for many fields, from the technical and industrial applications considered by the Russians, to so-called "paranormal" human faculties such as dowsing, healing, radionics and psychometry - and even perhaps to some kind of physical account of the place of mind in nature.

Guildford Group - DIANA CLIFT 01483 417922

Diana writes: For our May meeting our guest speaker was Professor GUY CLAXTON, author of many books on creativity, meditation and the unconscious mind. His topic was "Creativity, Intuition, Meditation: How to make yourself genius-prone". He presented some of the scientific studies on the power of the unconscious mind and how to access this remarkable resource. This led to a spirited discussion on whether the unconscious mind is limited to the individual or has a transpersonal component. Guy will be leading a conference/workshop on "Creation, Intuition and Meditation" at Frenchman's Cove in Jamaica this November (24th to 30th). It's bound to be an enjoyable and stimulating week.

In July we were delighted to welcome BARRY BRAILSFORD from Christchurch New Zealand. He is an archaeologist and master story teller and he took us on a "Journey into Ancient

Wisdom", by describing his own extraordinary experiences with one of the Maori tribes of NZ, the Waitaha. An astrological event caused the elders of this tribe to approach Barry to share their knowledge and history, but he was also required to carry out a number of tasks on their behalf. Barry's story was literally spellbinding. In it he claims that NZ was populated thousands of years earlier than currently believed by people from the northern hemisphere. He also made the startling claim that about a third of words in the Maori language are derived from Sanskrit. Apparently Finnish is also derived in part from Sanskrit and that Fins and Maoris can to a very limited extent understand each other!

The social element to our meetings is just as important as the formal proceedings and we are very pleased that we attract so many visitors from outside the area and from outside the Network. Do keep coming! We are indebted to BRONWEN ASTOR for our wonderful venue, an old barn converted into a conference/retreat centre (with the dovecote transformed into a little chapel), set in beautiful ornamental gardens at her home in Godalming.

North London Group - RUPERT KINGLAKE TOWER: 0207-435 9730

Rupert writes: The North London Group was most regretful that Professor VICTOR MANSFIELD'S planned talk on "Synchronicity, Astrology, and Soul-making" had to be cancelled at short notice owing to severe storms in the US that delayed his outward journey. We hope that we will be able to plan another visit from Vic Mansfield in 2001.

However, on June 20th we were very fortunate to experience an intimate, in-depth talk by Dr MAX VELMANS about his new, pioneering book "Understanding Consciousness". Max gave us a brief survey of the main state of play in the Mind-Body debate, and outlined the competing world-views of classical dualism, which splits the universe into two fundamentally different mental and physical substances or properties, and materialist reductionism, which claims consciousness to be nothing more than a state or function of the brain. Max then explored with us what and where are experiences, and showed that all experiences seem to result in a reflexive interactive interaction of an observer with an observed, a reflexive model of how consciousness relates to the physical world, to knowledge, and to the detailed workings of the brain. These intricate relationships can seem to form an impenetrable "World Knot", but Max demonstrated the importance of combining "common sense" enquiry with Science, as well as the struggle Dualists and Reductionists have to explain or deny the existence of the 'qualia' of consciousness.

Finally, Max gave us a preview of his personal synthesis of consciousness, to which he refers as a form of "reflexive monism". Consciousness gives meaning to existence, as just one, natural manifestation of a wider self-conscious universe. It spreads across our perceptual horizons and fills phenomenal space, being embedded in a broader universe. This is a perennial, ancient theme that was present in Ancient Egypt. A wonderful, mind-expanding and thought-provoking evening.

Scottish Group - DAVID LORIMER 01333-340490

Jane Ridder-Patrick writes: We had a most enjoyable evening with Roy Willis, which was very well attended and much appreciated by everyone present. He talked about his experiences of healing rituals which he had been privileged to attend while on field trips in Africa and showed a video which he had shot himself of the ceremonies.

South West Group - JOHN COSH 01803-863939

John writes: Some 20 members and guests of the SW Group met at Bogan House, Totnes on 15th April. Anne Bancroft was in the chair.

Our first speaker was Dr WENDY STAYTE, an experienced child psychiatrist who works in Devon and Cornwall, based on Plymouth. Her presentation was entitled "Square Pegs in Round Holes Children Who Don't Fit In". She drew on her long experience as a child psychiatrist to share reflections about recent developments in her field. She focussed on contemporary understanding of certain kinds of children (mainly boys) who are described as showing developmental disorders.

Using projected drawings she portrayed some of the most striking aspects of the behaviour and experience of boys who are described as manifesting attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The pictures gave attention to the context in which these children live their lives, their schools and homes and peer groups. Through this means she drew out the clash between contexts in which restraint, compassion, conformity and safety are valued and expected, and the behaviour of these children that can often be lacking in restraint and empathy for others, idiosyncratic and reckless. It was noted that one of the few contexts in which these children do not feel at odds with their world is when involved with a computer, particularly computer games. Although children who retain some of these characteristics as adults may find more scope in our society for some niche that suits their temperaments, many don't.

She drew attention to the fact that recent researches had allowed us a more discriminating awareness of how these children experience their worlds. She also suggested that the high level of interaction with machines (computer/TV) that are often a feature of these children's lives may be playing a part in the escalation of these problems. As well, this interaction can provide for these children a temporary life of "virtual reality" more engaging and satisfying than their 'real' life.

She invited speculation about how far these children highlight a contemporary dilemma of integrating archetypal masculine qualities within individuals and within society as a whole. Many other aspects of our western society have changed in recent decades; and interesting points about this were raised in the discussion afterwards, e.g. that children had not enough of a useful role to play, that the lack of an empire gave no scope for those who needed challenge, adventure and often isolation from their fellow men!

Our second speaker, SIMON MILLS is a specialist in the practice of herbal medicine and the author of books on the subject. He is also co-principal of Exeter University's Centre for Complementary Health Studies.

His topic, "The Pharmacology of Complexity" began with a reference to the chemical complexity found in all natural herbal remedies - an extension of the extraordinary complexity of the living cell. Yet, in their therapeutic use, herbal remedies have essentially simple effects in helping the body's natural healing processes, through actions such as elimination of toxins, tissue repair, immunity and healing. The power of the mind through suggestion is important too, and it is this which underlies the placebo reaction, of which Simon gave some examples. We are all susceptible to this in some degree and the response to a placebo should be recognised and used as a positive element in the complexity of the healing process.

An interesting general discussion followed, in which the two speakers took part. Members expressed their appreciation of the artistic and effective sketches which Wendy had designed to illustrate the problem children she had encountered.

Wessex Group - JULIAN CANDY 02380 844149

Julian writes: We have continued to meet in Liz Kramers' studio, a lovely setting where the beautiful objects all around us provide just the right atmosphere to whet our discussions: inspiration linked with application.

In May John Kerr spoke to us about 'Darwinian Ethics', an intriguing and timely topic which provoked a wide-ranging debate both about how ethics may be incorporated into a Darwinian world view, and about whether the ethical issue itself may be part of any challenge to the comprehensiveness of that world view.

In July I plan to speak about Goethe, Science and the Esoteric, and Micheal Beesley will be speaking in September.

Yorkshire Group - MAX PAYNE 01142 304194 MIKE BROWN 01423 879038

The May 5th meeting was hosted by Susan Steward in Knaresborough. PETER and ELIZABETH FENWICK gave a talk on "*Out of Body & Near Death Experiences*". The Yorkshire group was treated to a text book display of how a Network inquiry should be conducted. First hand accounts of these experiences were shown on video, and some additional evidence was offered by the audience. There was no doubt left that these experiences genuinely occur, and it remains amazing that they are not the centre of concentrated research by every neurophysiological research centre on the planet. They raise the fundamental issue as to whether consciousness is solely the by-product of brain processes, or whether individual consciousness can exist separately from the body. The evidence for both hypotheses was examined. objectively. The clarity and life enhancing nature of the experiences certainly does not fit the thesis that they are caused by oxygen starvation. There is impressive anecdotal evidence that subjects see things in their out of body experiences which would be inaccessible to a consciousness situated inside their apparently unconscious brain. And yet the credibility gap remains. Faced with the entrenched scepticism of the orthodox establishment, clinching evidence still slips through the fingers. Correct medical protocols are difficult to establish. More significantly out of body experiences often do not always reflect accurately reality in four dimensional space-time.

The talk evoked a wide ranging discussion on the scientific, metaphysical and religious implications of these experiences. The chairman was Max :Payne. The next meeting will be on Sept. 23rd in York.