

Local Group News

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

LEO HOBBS reports on meetings of the Friends of the SMN. At our regular meeting on 11 November Leo Hobbs reported on the 1998 SMN Annual Gathering and AGM which he had attended at Warwick University. The following night we held a special meeting to hear JOYCE KOVELMAN who was visiting NZ briefly from the USA. Joyce presented some of the ideas in her new book, 'Once upon ASoul', which deals with the evolution of consciousness and the integration of science, psychology and the realms of the spirit, and concluded with a guided meditation. Time was all too short for some of us to absorb the widely ranging material she covered but we have a copy of her book and fully expect to see her again in Auckland before long. It was a privilege to have Joyce with us. New friendships have begun.

Can Physics Explain Life? This question was addressed by retired physicist, DENNIS MARSHALL, at our final meeting for 1998. He drew strongly on the ideas of Walter Elsasser, a respected theoretical physicist, who presented his ideas in two books, *'The Chief Abstractions of Biology'* (North-Holland/Elsevier 1975), and *'The Physical Foundation of Biology'* (Pergamon 1958). Elsasser said that the vitalists omitted the logical analysis to show why current theories of physics and chemistry were inadequate to account for life. They had downgraded quantitative aspects and allowed metaphysics to creep in. Elsasser canvassed a series of arguments to demonstrate his contention that deterministic physics could not account for the laws which described biological phenomena such as the structural and functional hierarchies of inter-related levels, running from the components of cells through cells themselves, and organs, to complete organisms, and beyond to embrace the relevant ecologies. Wide variation is allowed at any one level provided the integrity of the next level is not impaired. Nor had there been time since the beginning of the universe for chance and necessity alone to allow all the observed and inferred forms and species of life to develop in all their multiplicity and complexity. Elsasser does not seem to have addressed the subject of consciousness or the origin of life itself.

Evidently Elsasser rejected vitalism, nor would he seem to have been a covert creationist or a liberal theist, so he seems to have been arguing for the existence of an additional organising principle in nature. Fervent neo-Darwinists might well see this as vitalism nonetheless. Clearly such arguments as Elsasser's have not met wide acceptance in mainstream biology, but the debate is not over. Could it be that the mysteries of life and of consciousness await the same blinding solution?

Dutch Group – HERBERT VAN ERKELENS

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HERBERT VAN ERKELENS writes: here in Holland things are going well, but almost all the members of our group have no longer employment in science. That's why we are concentrating our attention on the issue of spirituality. We speak about our own inner experiences. In the near future we will return to alchemy as a spiritual adventure. In that connection we will closely investigate the various alchemical motives in Mozart's last opera *'The Magic Flute'*.

Swiss Group – KURT DRESSLER

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KURT DRESSLER writes: **How real is reality?** Who would not be deeply touched by IRMGARD FEDERER'S portrayal on the experience with her second child, Simon, 12, with Downs syndrome. After what she told us, we were not able to answer her question: "Is a child with a 'mental ailment' really ailing or does this merely reflect a projection of 'mental ailment', as it is understood by science?"

Shortly after Simon's birth, Irmgard, an M.D. with special training in nephrology and psychiatry, observed how her own body reacted alternatively when she felt unhappy, hopeless, thinking of the child's handicap as compared to focusing on 'just right', 'what makes him happy?', 'what are his needs?'. In the latter cases she perceived her own strength, was standing more upright and felt her heart open.

By crawling towards a dog Simon established a relationship between the owner, an esoteric woman, and his mother. Their contact proved to become most important for his own development. Did he know? Simon opened new pathways to Irmgard's work in private practice and to her husband, a physician, specialising in homeopathy. - She spends nightly hours to feel herself 'into' Simon, more so, 'to become' Simon. Not only can she then perceive his needs, if properly centred, but she also 'knows' what therapy is required at any given time. She has familiarised herself to such a degree with this process that she can use it now with her patients, especially when the diagnoses become difficult, e.g. in psychosomatic diseases. - As she identifies herself intensively with Simon, her language becomes unclear, gauche and heavy. But also, she hears an inner voice, expressing sentences of high wisdom such as:

- To be part of creation
- To be happy
- To be responsible
- To develop a new sight of reality
- To follow one's trail without defence
- To become creative instead of defensive.

Space does neither allow to describe how Simon reacts with strong emotions to outside events which effect him but are not yet known to his parents, how he seems to know what teachers and therapists he needs, and how he interacts with the world in his own way. - Most participants, if not all, are looking forward to a next meeting when Irmgard will introduce us to the practical side of her methods.

It was Dr. BERTRAND WEISSENBACH, member of the SMN, who put Irmgard's presentation into perspective. As a physicist and mathematician, he dwelled on parapsychology for years. So, he now has problem accepting phenomena which cannot be placed within the scientific framework, such as obtaining valid information, referring to the past and the future, through an inner voice, to perceive remote diagnoses and to do such therapy. Kurt Dressler, who also introduced the non members to the organisation and activities of the SMN, concluded the well frequented gathering with warm words, highly appreciating the contributions of the two speakers.

Bristol Group - RICHARD HELLEN

01453-548724

The Bristol Group continues its regular meetings on the second Wednesday of the months at Sally Lawson's starting at 8 pm prompt and end at 10 pm. The format is one based on dialogue, starting the process with a 5 minute meditation. The results are inevitably rewarding and delightfully participatory. Typically about a dozen individuals attend and the meetings are not exclusive to S&MN Members. Members are encouraged to bring their friends along. From this focal point of the monthly meeting individuals sharing a specific interests spawn separate "working groups" which grow and die as needed. Altogether quite an evolutionary process.

Any members wishing to find out more contact either of our local co-ordinators, Richard Hellen (01453 548724) or Sally Lawson (01179 248694).

Cambridge Group – JOHN ROBERTS

01954-782032

JOHN ROBERTS writes: For our early Autumn meeting (19th Oct 1998), ALASDAIR PHILIPS came to discuss his study of the effects on human bodies of the electromagnetic fields in our environment. Various sources of electromagnetic fields were covered: mains distribution, microwave cooking and mobile phones, and the talk included an account of how the speaker persuaded his own local electricity supplier to replace overhead wires outside his home with 'Advanced Bunched Cable' but only after planning to feature the site on a television documentary. As with most epidemiological work, where conclusions have to be based on normally occurring data instead of designed experiments, the evidence has the character of being increasingly suggestive rather than immediately conclusive but there is also supportive evidence that field levels which are normally considered harmless do produce cellular change. The present understanding tends to suggest that the hazards most to be avoided are those of being exposed to fields when in a relaxed and recuperative part of the daily cycle (especially in children's bedrooms) rather than in the physically active and productive phase (such as experienced by arc-welders). The emerging tentative theories of water storing 'vibrational memory' (cf Benveniste's controversial research) may provide theoretical connections for piecing together the threads of evidence. A wide discussion followed.

Our next meeting (7 Dec) was to have been a discussion led by one of our local members on the theme discussed a year previously on the pitfall of accepting too uncritically anything on the fringe of properly investigated knowledge. However, this was replaced by an un-led discussion on the same subject attended by a small group of hard core, mainly longstanding, local members. A wide range of topics was touched on, including leading edge physics, telepathy and prospective activities and exhibits for the next *Beyond the Brain* conference. The general question was also discussed of what (if any) screening or refereeing procedures or specialist discussion meetings would be appropriate to the Network. We hope that the meeting helped to sharpen our collective selective conscience in choosing topics for future meetings.

At our next meeting (19th March 1999) the group was pleased to welcome Dr MAUROOF ATHIQUE, a practitioner of Ayurvedic medicine of thirty years standing who also lectures on that subject, to give us an overview. The main strength in this medical tradition is in the understanding and prevention of long term effects on chronic conditions caused by habits of living and being, and there is emphasis on listening, attention to diet and life-style and

respect for the needs of different physical and emotional types. In the last aspect, the theory of the three *doshas* (elements of bio-energy) plays a key role. The first of these is *Vata* (motion and change) which is positive as a healthy creative force but which, in excess, can produce anxiety, insomnia or digestive problems. The second is *Pitta* (transformation and metabolism) which is necessary in being strong, energetic, warm and healthily assertive but manifested in irritability and aggressiveness when uncontrolled. The third is *Kapha* (solidity and stability) which is positively manifested by calm and harmonious qualities but by congestion and resistance to healthy change when excessive. This three-element model is simpler than but possibly open to being collated with the five-element model in the Chinese tradition to which it is historically related. The presentation was followed by a wide ranging discussion which included questions on what exactly a patient might expect, on the historical roots and an observation that western medicine as, according to the best medical schools, it would be ideally practised would also relate to the whole patient.

Guildford Group

DIANA CLIFT 01483-417922

DIANA CLIFT writes: The Guildford Group continues to thrive and attract visitors from far afield. We were lucky enough to have MONTAGUE KEEN to speak on September 30th. Monty is a distinguished member of the Society for Psychical research and has recently been studying the remarkable physical mediumship phenomena which have been occurring at Scole in Norfolk which he considers to be the best evidence for human survival of death since the cross-correspondences of the early years of this century.

The events are hosted by a couple, both of whom are trance mediums. The personalities which come through during the seances purport to be deceased members of the SPR though they do not reveal their identity and indeed hint that they are more composites than individuals. A range of physical phenomena are produced including moving lights and materialisations, but by far the most interesting from the point of view of research are the images, particularly writing which appear on unexposed photographic film during these sessions. The customary meticulous care of the SPR ensures that there is no possibility of fraud and the writing is amazing. Montague showed us a range of samples which included an extract of a rare draft of a poem by William Wordsworth in the handwriting of Dorothy Wordsworth. All this had to be checked against the only surviving handwritten draft of that version of the poem which is in the library at Yale University and the handwriting is undoubtedly the same though it is not like a photocopy. Similarly staggering was a diagram of a device to help Arthur Ellison with recording electronic voice phenomena. The Edwardian-style diagram was accompanied by explanatory notes and a curious squiggle which, after a lot more research, Monty discovered to be the signature of Thomas Edison!

Monty has prepared a 100,000 word report on the phenomena which should be published shortly.

On November 25th we had the Reverend KEVIN TINGAY to speak on "Fundamentalism: The Quest for Certainty in Religion, Science and Politics". Kevin is Interfaith advisor to the diocese of Bath and Wells and interested in the tendency of the human mind to cling to simple certainties rather than admit that the truth is often complex and unknowable. Kevin spoke particularly of the rifts within the Church of England on matters of certainty versus

doubt, but pointed out that politicians and scientists are also prone to simplistic thinking with dangerous results.

On January 20th we had the author Michael Baigent to speak on " Art: The Bridge between Science and Spirituality". Michael has written various books on myth, symbolism, history and art, including Holy Blood and Holy Grail, and the Elixir and the Stone. He discussed the Hermetic tradition and Renaissance art, suggesting that the world view of the artist is as valid as that of the scientist.

In February we had an additional meeting with visiting Russian physicist, Dr KONSTANTIN KOROTKOV, talking about his research into Kirlian photography using equipment of his own design. His claims were remarkable, but interpretation of results of Kirlian photography is always a controversial exercise.

Our March meeting was rather different from the usual format. We had ex-professional boxer turned medium, ADRIAN BROWN, giving a demonstration of clairvoyance (also using clairaudience and clairsentience). He managed to give personal 'readings', some of which were startlingly accurate and specific, to all the 21 people present.

The evening was also unusual because ten of those present had been at the recent conference with Dean Radin at Frenchman's Cove, Jamaica. It was therefore a reunion of nearly a quarter of the attendees at that remarkable event. Our pleasure at meeting up again was overshadowed by sadness at the tragic loss of Hermod Sverre and we observed a minute's silence at the start of the evening in Hermod's memory.

In addition our 'offshoot' groups continue with enthusiasm. the Bohmian dialogue group has now been meeting every other week for two and a half years!! The 'Boys' Club' still meets every alternate Tuesday, to investigate all manner of unorthodox gadgetry, particularly healing devices and Bob Haining holds sessions every week with his Rife machine for all those interested, including several people with serious illnesses.

Heart of England Group –

JOAN WALTON 01527 597898

CHARMIAN WYLDE 0121 441 2757

JOAN WALTON writes: The most recent meeting of the group was held on Saturday, 20th February, when JENNY KITCHEN BM, FRCP, lead a day entitled 'Living into Dying' - an opportunity to explore how our attitudes to living and dying interact. The day was 'quietly but deeply enjoyed' by all present. In the morning, we shared feelings and experiences of death. In the afternoon, we used 'Bohm Dialogue' principles, where the basic ground rules are that no one person talks for too long, (not more than a minute?); and that there is time for reflection between each contribution. The principle is that the listening is as important as the talking - and that in the silence, much can happen! The starting point for the dialogue was 'what would we like our own deaths to be like' - but then it broadened out into other related themes.

In the reflection on the day that took place afterwards, there was a unanimous acknowledgement about how good it was to be able to share in a supportive setting our feelings about what remains a 'taboo' subject in our society. Jenny's gentle facilitation enabled everyone to feel comfortable from the outset. The experience of dialogue 'a la

Bohm' was also felt to be a good one, and there was general agreement that it would be useful to incorporate this into other sessions.

North London Group -

RUPERT KINGLAKE TOWER: 0171-435 9730

RUPERT KINGLAKE TOWER *writes*: The North London Group has held three meetings since the last issue. On 18th November 1998 MIKE HARDING spoke on "The Astrology Wars: How Science has responded to pro-astrology findings". In a provocative talk Mike reviewed statistical studies conducted by research psychologists Michel and Francoise Gauquelin which show compelling correlations between planetary placements and professional attributes in sports champions, scientists, and artists. He explored the paradoxical nature of Astrology, comparing its "natural" language which contains a mathematical core that can be recognised by orthodox science, and its poetic language that expresses our symbolic relationship with Time. The questions to which many of us who attended continued to return were: does all this have value? what is its significance? and does this demonstrate consistent, predictable rhythms and causality, or rather does Astrology simply portray most elegantly collective psychic responses in people that mirror planetary rhythms in the stars?

For 1999, Professor ARTHUR ELLISON entertained us on January 14th with amusing anecdotes of his personal experiences with Altered States of Consciousness, and in particular Lucid Dreaming. Arthur spoke eloquently of the mystery of our ordinary daily consciousness and the philosophical considerations associated with Lucid Dreaming. He indicated that first-hand experience of Lucid Dreaming could be achieved relatively quickly through the practice of simple exercises and experiments which with discipline would initiate the onset of spontaneous Lucid Dreaming. He shared examples of these, and some of his own lucid dreams, which added to a fun and lively evening.

DAVID BLACK gave an informal talk to an intimate gathering on February 25th entitled "Psychoanalysis and Consciousness". David addressed two questions in relation to the psychoanalytic point of view. Firstly, what is the relation between consciousness and the body, or more specifically the brain? He reviewed recent research by Gerald Edelman in Neuroscience which demonstrated that the brain manifests an order of complexity comparable to Psychoanalysis' picture of the psyche - PET scans show that the brains of happy, healthy, socially active children show up as full of light, whereas large areas of darkness and inactivity are found in the brains of Romanian orphans. These findings are typical of the new understanding that both Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience describe in some sense the same thing, though perceiving brain processes through two different modalities of perception, which can't be reduced to one another, but give the best model we yet have for thinking about the relation between the brain and the mind. Secondly, David addressed the question: what is consciousness for? why should consciousness have developed? He suggested that the function of consciousness is to enable us to decide what we will regard as reality, and thus to adapt to the always new and unprecedented present. Responsible decision is made possible by consciousness. The psychoanalyst is concerned with consciousness in that it is sufficient to live in the world, and to fulfil those desires which an individual decides, on reflection, hold meaning for him or her.

Our thanks and appreciation go as always to our generous hosts for local group evenings - Baroness di Pauli and Lynn McGregor.

The North London Group has also been running a special series of meetings from January to June 1999 with the Noetics Group viewing the "Power of Myth" video interviews between Bill Moyers and Joseph Campbell. The evenings (two so far) have been held at Rupert and Shawn Tower's place in Hampstead with a vibrant mix of thought-provoking discussion, wine and conviviality.

West London Group –

CLIVE HICKS - 0181 997 7974

ANUSHKA JORDAN - 0181 578 4431

YVONNEKE ROE - 0171 733 5857

CLIVE HICKS writes: Clive Hicks is abroad at present, so only a brief report is possible from the West London Group. The group held meetings on the second Wednesdays of February and March, both on psychological subjects - for Bryce McKenzie Smith on "Why Psychotherapy?" and then Beata Bishop on "Facing the Shadow". Both evoked deeply probing discussion. The group will meet on the second Wednesdays of May and June - details will be available near the time from Clive Hicks (0181 997 7974, or email CliveHicks@aol.com) or Anushka Jordan (0181 578 4431).

Oxford Group –

NEIL HANCOX on 01235-524534

NEIL HANCOX writes: A few members of the Oxford group met on 9th February 1999 for a talk and discussion, led by STEPHEN FULDER, on defining health, its philosophy and cultural context. Stephen, a biochemist, writer and researcher, lives in Israel, and is currently studying traditional Arabic medicine, in particular its present day applicability to dermatology.

The current, strongly mechanistic, Western paradigm of health reflects how we view the world generally. If medical treatment does not agree with one's model of the body/person people tend to seek out alternative therapies. Sometimes it is suggested that what is required in conventional medicine is, more time for consultation, but it was argued that a different model of health rather than more time was what was really needed. Stephen, who teaches a foundation course in holistic medicine, listed some of the models of the body that are used in different cultures, including the anatomical (Western), emotional, chakra, reflex and meridian. The last three are based on physics energy is considered as the basis of consciousness. The models of the body do not overlap though a research programme in the USA will attempt to find commonality among the non-Western ones.

Models of medicine form a spectrum ranging from the extremely mechanistic, biochemical, definition through the social, folk and vitalistic/spiritual viewpoints. The first mentioned is not subjective. Healing the body, possibly with a 'magic bullet' or drug, will take care of the mind/soul as well, The folk viewpoint is less symptom oriented and takes a broad, commonsense, view - a person may be said to be healthy if their eyes are bright and their skin good etc. The vitalistic approach believes that if the soul is healed the body will be alright. Another version or (Buddhist) interpretation recommends a non-judgmental acceptance of one's situation. The different approaches suit different situations. For instance

vitalism is not very helpful if dealing with the plague or meningitis, but may be of more use in combating high cholesterol levels, which appear to be due to life style.

The questions and discussion, which punctuated the talk, developed some of these ideas in more detail. An interesting example of the effect of the choice of model on the effectiveness of a treatment is the use of carrots and beta carotene. Consumption of the former has been shown to reduce the incidence of some types of cancer, but the use of the latter, which is presumed to be the active ingredient, has no effect. On the biochemical model the treatment is useless, while on a holistic approach it is effective. The treatment and its results are culturally determined. Most patients are pluralistic in their approach to the use of medicine. It was concluded that much is unknown (about the body) and that as more knowledge is amassed we find even greater ignorance - probably a not unfamiliar statement in science generally. People need guidance and help in navigating the labyrinth of health and tolerance and education are required of both practitioners and patients. Our thanks to Green College for providing the venue and to Stephen for sharing his ideas with us.

Sussex (East) Group

ANTHONY PILKINGTON 01424-420271

TONY PILKINGTON writes: On Tuesday 9th March 1999, eleven members attended this first meeting of the East Sussex Group held at the Beauport Park Country House Hotel. This was an excellent meeting place, providing a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere allowing members to enjoy the talk given by Dr COLIN TAYLOR, an International authority on the North American Indians.

The lecture, "North American Indians and Spontaneous Healing" described the 'scientific' knowledge applied by the Plains Indians in their everyday life. Indian architecture matched the environment, they were aware of convection currents and held the spider's web in awe because of its strength and beauty. In medicine, the Indians made great use of the herb Essiac, the critical ingredient of which is Sheep Sorrel, recently mentioned for use in cases of cancer. Different areas necessitated different lifestyles, but one feature was common throughout them all. This was the use of a type of vapour bath, vividly described by Dr Taylor and detailed in one of the various leaflets which he provided.

Holistic health was also mentioned. A white doctor, aware of the value of Indian methods, suggested to a sick Navaho Indian that he returned home to his tribe to seek relief. Here, the whole community provided physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects to contribute to the Indian's recovery. After the talk, members discussed possible future events.

Wessex Group –

JULIAN CANDY 01703 844149

JULIAN CANDY writes: We have continued to hold enjoyable and well-attended meetings on the second Friday of the month. In November Kathleen Devitt introduced 'Power and Empowerment'; in December SIMON HOUSE helped us to tackle 'Duty'; and in January ANNE BARING, in whose lovely house we meet, led us into the topic of 'Education'. We had a break in February, then in March I introduced a lively discussion on 'The Open and the Closed'. We are looking forward to invited speakers in April and May, then in June we hope to discuss some of the issues raised by 'Conversations with God', particularly those relating to more advanced intelligences than our own – see the Local Group Calendar.

Yorkshire Group –

MAX PAYNE 0114 230 4194

MIKE BROWN 01423 879038

MICHAEL BROWN writes: The meeting was hosted by Max Payne, and was held at his home in Sheffield.

Reflections on the Gita, by Dr Chris Bartzokas

Chris gave a fascinating and illuminating account of the history of the Bhagavad Gita, and insights into the nature of its teachings. The Gita is a spiritual poem revealing profound spiritual truths of Hinduism. Virtues are personified into people to aid understanding. There are about 300 translations of the Gita and about 2,000 books about it.

In ancient times, students were given the training necessary for the interpretation of the texts, which are inaccessible without vital keys. A lot of time is required to absorb the true meanings of the texts. During the discussions that followed the presentation, Chris circulated details of a study course that about to give. It is aimed at acquainting aspirants with exalted ethics of the treatise, and inspiring devotees with ever-deeper perspectives of the Cosmic Ultimates. Further details from: Dr. Chris A. Bartzokas, Ty Ucha, Hafod Road, Gwernymynydd, Wales CH7 5JS. Tel 01352 755195

Ruth Kay updated us with regard to her healing work at Cookridge Hospital, and read a moving and articulate letter of appreciation that she had received from one of the healees.

The Healing Potential of Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness by Dr. Chris Lyons.

Chris took us quickly through the development of Transpersonal Psychology, listing in particular contributions by leading figures such as Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich, Ken Wilber and Stanislav Grof.

He went on to describe Grof's early work using LSD as a psychotherapeutic agent, and then explained how, when this substance became prohibited, Grof developed techniques for inducing similar states by means of deep and fast breathing, accompanied by evocative music. The effects can be very powerful and trained supervision is important during such sessions. Participants frequently re-experience painful episodes from their past, and may even recall events surrounding their birth. On some occasions the experiences can be even deeper and include glimpses into what Grof calls the transpersonal realm. Such experiences sometimes involve the seeming re-experiencing of past lives, together with the ability to speak in foreign languages. After integrating these experiences participants frequently report a dramatic improvement in their psychological functioning, and an increased appreciation of the spiritual dimension of existence. Lively discussions followed concerning the implications of the work and requisite precautionary measures at such sessions.