

## **The 1998 Annual Gathering - Warwick, UK**

### **A Personal Impression**

#### **Anne Miller, Cambridge, England**

As usual, the AGM was a wonderful occasion for sharing and exchanging ideas, meeting, meditating, dancing and laughing together, with 80 participants from 11 countries, including New Zealand and Hong Kong.

Inevitably a report of a three day meeting can only be a personal impression, but for many of us it was a quotation from Goethe 'The creative life of nature is eternal unity in manifestation' during Julian Candy's discussion of the close parallels between subjective and 'normal' objective science, that perhaps summed up the entire weekend. For me, this linked two key intertwining strands snaking through the proceedings, bringing home the importance of recognising creativity and individuality, while at the same time recognising an ultimate unity and connectivity.

Barbara Lerosé very clearly demonstrated the importance of recognising creativity in an excellent presentation on a 10 year experimental education programme for gifted children in Wisconsin, USA. This focused on playfulness, risk taking and imagination, teaching the ability to analyse and synthesise and recognising the individuality of the students, rather than squeezing them through a 'sausage factory' education system. This teaching approach seemed to benefit all children with above average IQ and doubled the GPA (the scores) of gifted minority high school children. However, even though the programme was highly successful and cost effective, after 10 years growth it has now almost disappeared, apparently isolated and starved by the traditional education system, in a parallel to the way that the body isolates foreign tissue to prevent infection.

In a fascinating presentation on Zen and the Brain, James Austin gave us a taste of the advanced Zen state of meditation known as Kensho, and described some tantalising links to the underlying neurochemistry, described much more fully in his book *Zen and the Brain*. Although the advanced mystical state is said to be indescribable, James felt that Julian's quotation from Goethe encapsulated the sense of unity experienced in Zen.

After years of practice in meditation, Kensho may occur quite unexpectedly (in one case during a journey to work on the London Underground). In this state, the mind is unfocussed but instantly acquires a sense of 'absolute reality, intrinsic rightness, ultimate perfection'. Although the optical aspect of perception are unchanged, there is an enhanced sense of reality and the impressions enter that this is 'an eternal state of affairs, there is nothing more to do, nothing to fear'.

James described the process of Zen as letting go of the human emotional baggage, letting free the underlying basic human response. Richard Petty noted that recent work at the University of Pennsylvania using MRI on seven experienced Tibetan meditators in Kensho has shown attenuated activity in the frontal lobes of the brain.

Richard Petty later described the principles underlying the course in Integrated Medicine, which he has set up at the University of Pennsylvania medical school. A key principle of Integrated Medicine is the explicit recognition that a 'human being is composed of interlinked physical, psychological, social and spiritual natures' and that 'Healing requires co-operation based on mutual respect, the patient is central'. Although the inclusion of the

consideration of human spiritual nature is a radical concept within a leading medical school it is significant that a major pharmaceutical company has recognised the importance of this and is actively supporting the programme.

Richard pointed out that while conventional medicine focuses on generalised interventions to prevent or correct pathological states, Integrated Medicine focuses on an individual approach to stimulate healing and health.

This again brings together the twin strands of recognising the individual and the processes involved in stimulating healing, which at times are so mysterious that, personally, I feel that they are only explicable if there is some fundamental underlying unity and connectivity between us all.

Eli Lasch a doctor and healer, described his experience in 1994 when, as an experiment, he was asked to try healing via television. In a simple broadcast lasting only a few minutes, he invited the viewers to feel love and compassion radiating from him. Initially this was broadcast live to 9 million viewers in Germany, and then repeated a week later to 11 million viewers. The results were overwhelming. In follow up poll, 76% of viewers claimed to have felt something, but more significantly thousands and perhaps tens of thousands of people were healed, many with chronic organic diseases where tissue reverted to normal overnight. Many of these cases have been medically verified by the patients<sup>1</sup> doctors.

Eli has no explanation for what happened.

Overnight, Eli was declared both a charlatan and a saint, both rather unpleasant experiences. He is very clear that he is not a saint (even though he has a lovely biblical beard!), that it is not hypnosis or an act of his mind, and that it goes far beyond the activation of the self healing process. The individuals who were healed were not necessarily believers in the process, although all did say that they felt 'love and compassion' during the broadcast. He can only say that he felt as if he were a channel, for God healing through him. Eli played a tape of a subsequent Dutch broadcast in English to the assembled gathering of about 80 people. This cured one headache!

My only conclusion is another quotation from Goethe:  
*Zum erstaunen, bin ich da* (To wonder, am I here)

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