

Reports from Local Groups

We have received a large number of reports for this issue, detailed below. As a result of various meetings, we are planning from the next issue to include a separate sheet with forthcoming meetings detailed under group headings, while retaining the reports in the body of the Review

I have been actively promoting the creation of new local groups. You will see details of South-East and South-West London below. By the summer we should be reporting on new groups in Essex, Kent, Suffolk and Sussex.

New Zealand Group

Leo Hobbis +64 9 478 7809

LEO HOBBS writes from the Friends of the Scientific and Medical Network, Auckland, NZ: At present there are some 18 people in the SMN membership in New Zealand. Ten of these are in the Auckland area, the rest fairly widely dispersed. Several were delighted to meet Peter and Elizabeth Fenwick in December 1995, when Peter encouraged us to start a local branch. Early in 1996 we explored with various contacts the idea of forming a discussion/study group in the general field of mind, consciousness and being. Since then this group has met regularly in most months of the year, at present on the second Wednesday evening. We are fortunate to have use of the premises of the Methodist church, Trinity at Waiake, in Torbay, where the church membership encourages a very open approach in the search for knowledge and understanding in all areas of human endeavour. After a short period of identity crisis, because most of the group were not SMN members, the title, Friends of the Scientific and Medical Network, came into use and has stuck.

Our membership comes from a diverse background in science, mathematics, medicine, engineering, education, design, art, music, theology, philosophy, horticulture, homemaking, psychotherapy. Attendance is seldom below 12, and occasionally much larger when the topic has wider appeal. Topics presented for discussion by members or invited speakers have included: consciousness and personal development; alternative methods of diagnosis in general medical practice; the participatory universe; stages of development in childhood and adolescence; mathematics as art, vocation, and therapy; artificial intelligence; quantum physics and chaos theory in modelling consciousness; the death wish in living cells; Vedic medicine; dreams and consciousness; Michael Drosnin's The Bible Code; the nature and source of intuition, inspiration, and revelation. We are at present exploring the significance of a mythic inner journey experienced as a waking dream over a six year period by one of our members, MARGARET NEEDHAM, a counsellor and psychotherapist. An extended report on this exercise will be made at a later date. Future subjects will include: personal experiences of mysticism; Aristotle and the doctor-patient relationship; drawing to Brahms-colour and shape in music; biology of human-ness; what might underlie spiritual experience?

Several members participated in a 'Wellness Night' presented to the Waiake community in October, 1996. Two members have attended SMN meetings when visiting Britain. It was good to meet JENNIFER and BRIAN BARRACLOUGH (Southampton) when they passed through in February 1997. All SMN members and associates have a standing invitation to contact the local membership when planning to visit NZ.

Dutch Group

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HERBERT VAN ERKELENS writes: In January 1997 a few members of the SMN gathered in Haarlem start a local Dutch group. We decided to choose the chemical spirit Mercurius as our main object of investigation. That soon turned out to be a risky undertaking. Mercurius, the two-faced god, comes as the light of nature only to those whose reason strives towards the highest light ever received by man (Jung). However, though we may not succeed in putting the elusive Mercurius into a bottle, we can still observe where he leads us through dreams and synchronistic events. HERBERT VAN ERKELENS first introduced us to the role the planet Mercury plays in Jewish mysticism. It was surprising to see that in Hebrew, Mercury is called kochab, 'star'. Mercury the star leading the Jewish people through the wilderness. the Cabbala Mercury is compared with Moses and the prophet Elia. In Christianity kochab is the star leading the three Wise Men of the East to the newborn child in Bethlehem.

In June we visited in Leiden a splendid exposition about mummification ritual of ancient Egypt. Jungian psychology has a close connection to the Land of the Pharaohs, in particular to the burial chambers in the Valley of the Kings. The subterranean god Osiris appeared in a childhood dream of Jung as a huge phallus standing on a rich golden throne. In October we were present at the Marie-Louise von Franz symposium organized by the Interdisciplinary Society for Analytical Psychology. ANNE-MIEKE SPAINK is a music-therapist in private practice and one of the members of our group. At the symposium she demonstrated the seven different tone-scales developed by the German music-therapist Anny von Lange. These related to the seven planetary spheres through which a soul passes in leaving this world. In November we invited astrologer and science journalist OSCAR HOFMAN to speak about the astrological significance of the planet Mercury. According to him Mercury only signifies a planetary force and a Roman god. Mercury should not be identified with the alchemical spirit of matter. In astrology he stands in a complementary relationship to the planet Jupiter. In mythology Jupiter is the father of Mercury. Jupiter is the law-giver, whereas his son is the enemy of all rigid patterns.

In December HERBERT VAN ERKELENS gave us an introduction to the Egyptian Book of the Dead. He has collected dreams that tell the message that ancient Egypt can be a source of healing for our time. How is that possible? According to Marie-Louise von Franz we live in a time in which the traditional Christian God-image has died. But when a god dies, he goes down to the secret depths of which the Book of the Dead speaks, to be transformed.

After a year we still do not know clearly where Mercurius is leading us. But we will continue to bridge the Cartesian split between spirit and matter. One of our burning questions concerns the connection between the Jungian archetypes and the world of nature. So anyone who is not afraid of setting foot on the land where spirit and nature are one is welcome to join us.

Swiss Group

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Recent meetings: The last two meetings of the group were held in November and March. At the first, KURT DRESSLER presented his Mystics and Scientists 1997 lecture on the 'Experience of Unity at the Origin of Religion, Philosophy and Psychology, and at the Ultimate Horizon of Physics, Cosmology and Consciousness'. EVELYN ELSAESSER VALARINO gave a presentation based on her recent book *On the Other Side of Life: Exploring the*

Phenomenon of the Near-Death Experience. JANINE reported that Kurt and Evelyn spoke to their hearts as well as minds, allowing those attending to deal with the wealth of information both rationally and intuitively. This led to the theme of the most recent meeting: Experiences that are Life-Changing. A full report will appear in the next issue.

German Group

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Forthcoming: Meeting at Schloß Eringerfeld from 7th-10th May. The structure is flexible and themes include Bohmian dialogue, knowledge and ethics, experiences of healing and altered states of consciousness, the evolution of life and consciousness, and the work of Bergson and Heim. A full report will appear in the August issue.

New England Group

Andrew Bates +1 508 799 8753

Forthcoming: Peter Fenwick will be inaugurating this group on June 6th when he is in Boston.

Bristol Group

Richard Hellen 01453 548724, Sally Lawson 0117 924 9684

Forthcoming: the group continues to meet at Sally Lawson's home on the second Wednesday of each month.

Chilterns Group

Doug Flower 01494 783993

DOUG FLOWER writes: At our meeting on 28th November in Berkhamsted, MIKE ROGERS gave us a talk about the life of Michael Bentine illustrated by videos, radio excerpts and taped telephone conversations between the two Mikes. Michael Bentine, as well as being a 'Goon', was well known for the psychic experiences he had throughout his life. Mike had built a friendship with him starting with the time he was writing an article in a series about cars owned by various celebrities. What came across was how this larger-than-life individual was full of energy, with a wide scientific interest and knowledge, and a vivacity and generosity that survived the family tragedies in his life.

The following meeting on 6th February was held in St Albans, when TIMOTHY GLAZIER gave us a talk entitled 'The Interconnected Planet'. Timothy stressed the connection between Man and the rest of Creation, and that the denial of this by Man had led to suffering, poverty and the endangering of the planet. However, to balance this there was a marked recent increase in the awareness of spirituality, and a move away from the purely mechanistic approach to life. Timothy referred specifically about the need for a new approach to economics. For example, land should be seen not as a commodity to be bought and sold but as a bountiful, sacred inheritance and source of creative energy for the benefit of all.

Forthcoming: The next meeting of the Group will be held on April 3rd in Berkhamsted when Elaine Hadfield (formerly Choake) will give a talk on 'Crystals and their Role in Healing'. She will tell us about the physical and metaphysical properties of crystals. The following meeting

will be held in Rickmansworth on May 9th when Ann Silk will give a talk entitled 'In the Eye of the Beholder'.

Guildford Group

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DIANA CLIFT writes: Our attendance at the bimonthly formal meetings of the Guildford groups remains enthusiastic and diverse. We are fortunate in having superb premises for our meetings at Tuesley Manor in Godalming, where Bronwen Astor has converted outbuildings into a beautiful Retreat centre for conferences and courses.

In January we had DR JULIAN CANDY, psychiatrist and Network Council member, to speak on some aspects of Science and Consciousness, in particular the Goethean scientific view and how it affects one's perception as well as reason. He had with him a magic bag from which he produced a whole library of relevant books.

At our last meeting in March we had BERNARD CARR, Professor of Cosmology at Queen Mary and Westfield College and a longstanding member of the Society for Psychical Research, talking on aspects of Science and the Paranormal and presenting his personal view of the role of consciousness in shaping reality.

In addition to our formal meetings, our offshoot groups continue to thrive. The 'Boys' Club' meets on alternate Tuesdays. The name emerged because of the group's enthusiasm for gadgetry of various sorts. It is not intended to deter girls! They have been testing various electromagnetic therapeutic devices and two members attended the World UFO Congress in the US and reported back on the latest findings. The Bohm Dialogue group has now been meeting every other week for two years thanks to MICHAEL HOPWOOD. MIKE CHAMBERS and ADRIANNA KING-HALL have launched a group on 'Healing and the New Science', and DIANA CLIFT hosts a Psychic Skills Development Group. A new venture, started by GRAHAM COSTER, is a monthly get-together in a local pub for informal discussion on any topic of interest and for having a good time!

Forthcoming: The next formal meeting of the Guildford Group is on May 13th.

Heart of England Group

Joan Walton 01527 597898, Charmian Wylde 0121 441 2757

JOAN WALTON writes from the Heart of England: The first meeting of the Heart of England Group was held on 16th December, and was attended by 15 people. As members arrived, they were welcomed with a glass of mulled wine, and gathered in informal groups to chat. The more formal part of the evening was opened by JOAN WALTON, who stated that the aim of the evening was:

- to encourage each person present to talk at some stage of the evening to every other person in the group;
- to provide opportunities for all to share their interests, and what they would like to get from a local group;
- to reach decisions regarding focus and practical arrangements for future meetings.

MAX PAYNE, Chair of the Trustees was an invited guest for the evening, and gave a brief summary of the history of the Network, starting with the story of its origins. He then traced its development up to current issues and challenges. The large group then divided into smaller groups, in which people introduced themselves and their interests. This was followed by an exchange of views which, even at this stage, generated some sparky discussion and controversy!

The large group re-formed, followed by a general summarizing of the main points that had been raised. It was agreed that there was a wide range of expertise in the room, which offered interesting possibilities for future gatherings. There was consensus on the value of having full day meetings on a Saturday, and to vary the venue. Members also felt that they wanted opportunities for people with specialist interests to share their experience with others - but that there should always be opportunities for whole group participation.

Consequently, the structure of sessions should be planned to enable this to happen. The meeting ended with a buffet supper to fuel further socializing and conversation. There was tremendous energy and enthusiasm generated throughout the evening, with many people prepared to take a lead role in future events. All of which promises well for the development of the group!

North-West Group

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