

Report on Annual Gathering

Crêt-Bernard, Switzerland 16-19 July 1999

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It is the policy of the Network to have one in three of its Annual Gatherings (or general meetings for those traditionally minded people) outside the UK. My partner and I decided to make a mini-holiday out of it and we lingered on the route through France, eschewing the motorways for side roads and unspoilt villages where the word 'community' means something.

Although there is always a degree of trauma associated being in unfamiliar territory, the way was well marked and we arrived without difficulty. Those who travelled by plane and train found the clockwork mentality of this country most convenient. What an appropriate country to have a conference on Time. Due to the imagination and enterprise of one of our Swiss group, we were found a custom-built conference centre, which accommodated our 75 delegates quite comfortably. Our bedrooms were simple, clean and light. Many weary souls found the quietness therapeutic though there was too little time to wander in the hills. The basic fee of around SFr 260 (£120) including three night's accommodation and all food was good value indeed.

Among the many familiar faces were a dozen or so people who had never attended a SMN conference and these were welcomed and made to feel at home. The extra mediation and movement events helped to start the days in a positive and peaceful frame.

The conference opened with welcomes and a brief presentation by the writer showing various slides of art works that made points about the human spiritual condition in a graphic fashion. This was an innovation that was appreciated by a wide section of the audience. At this my fifth SMN event I was expecting the usual mixture of good, bad and indifferent presentations and this occasion was no exception.

We were treated to CHRIS CLARKE talking about '*Embodied Time*'. The ideas of Aristotle, Leplac and Heidigger were discussed. Was the sensation of time simply an accumulation of now+now+now as each moment passes? We considered the dynamic between 'the present' and the denial of 'presence'. Reality was similar to the Russian dolls, each with their own geometry and rules; each having an overlapping view of past present and future. Was an attempt to geometrise time compatible with beingness and consciousness?

JOHN KIDSON in his session '*The Structure of Time*' discussed the feasibility of time travel, and the necessity of all points of time to exist contemporaneously. How does the concept of randomness fit with the idea of pre-destiny? Four models of time were compared and their feasibility discussed.

Meanwhile, OVE SVIDEN gave an entertaining talk entitled '*Mind the Time*' during which he described his evolution from cybernetically based thinking to a more holistic feminine approach which enhanced the reality of the time dimension.

After coffee we heard from JANETTE SIMMONDS from Australia on '*Recovering a space for Spirit in Psychoanalytic Thought*' during which she examined various research protocols in psychoanalytic theory and practise. We were reminded that Freud believed in telepathy but dismissed spiritual and religious experience as a genre.

We then heard from BRIAN BROOM from New Zealand on '*Explorations of the meaning of disease*' during which he argued that a person could not be understood as the summation of mind, body and spirit.

After a pleasant afternoon of recreation during which the weather blessed us, BILL BALDWIN from USA, in his talk '*The Three Faces of Regression Therapy*', described his unexpected transition from being a dentist to a memory recall therapist when he noticed certain patients being traumatised by dental procedure.

After Dinner, HARRI WETTSTEIN addressed us on '*Fasting Experience and Time Perception*' and spoke of fasting as an extreme form of diet with three dimensions:- health, healing and existential solidarity. It takes three days for the body to become used to autonomy - feeding itself.

This was followed by a moving and personal account by BART VAN DER LUGT ' *The Circle of Light*' about the spiritual significance of natural childbirth and the importance of understanding and supporting people through a still birth. He described how he became disillusioned with the loss in personal service given to patients when three hospitals merged and left to work in education and networking together with his supportive wife. Incidentally Bart cycled to Switzerland from Holland for this conference.

The morning started in the Grande Salle with the plenary session when KURT DRESSLER, from Switzerland gave a talk '*Time - A Dimension of Consciousness not of Actual Reality*' (see articles section). This carefully prepared and presented talk was the model for what can be done when speakers take time to think about the subject and how it can be communicated most effectively in the time allowed. Past present and future is only an arrangement of the mind, he claimed, and discussed messages received in spatial time before they were sent. One of his anonymous texts was telling for the audience.

Time is too slow for those who wait
Time is too swift for those who fear
Time is too long for those who grieve
Time is too short for those who rejoice
Time is an eternity for those who love

The large round of applause at the end showed that the quality of this presentation was appreciated.

After this JUDITH BALDWIN discussed '*Spiritual Protection for Spiritual Explorers*' a very down to earth discussion of dealing with entities which communicated with the audience in a very human way. Meanwhile MICHAEL FRIEDJUNG, from France, discussed '*The Relation of Free Will to the Human Experience of Time*'. The recent discovery of unpredictable phenomena leaves room for at least possible free will, which is not possible in a deterministic world. There are various levels of consciousness connected with past present and future, and psychological experiments have shown for example that the conscious intention to carry out an action is made after changes in the corresponding electrical activity of the brain. This is understandable if the brain is acted on by a subtle influence non-physical and slightly extended in time.

Then SHAFI AHMED treated us to a mathematical discussion on '*Difficulty in measuring Space-Time*', whilst ANNE RAMSTEN spoke about the nature of Divinity in her talk '*In Spite of Everything*'. A person can enhance their energy flow with more love in their heart.

After coffee and a group photograph there were three more sessions in parallel. BRIAN SNELGROVE, in his talk and demonstration '*Healing the Aura*' discussed the dimensions of the aura and gave a reading on a volunteer from the audience to show what could be achieved on a level other than that of verbal communication.

EVELYN VALARINO gave a fascinating talk about healing experiences she had been involved with, '*Lessons from the light*' which showed us the breath of human experience which this privileged profession allows us to be part of, particularly in the realm of near death experiences.

Dr. HUGO NIGGLI spoke on '*Ultraweak Photons in Ageing Fibroblasts*' discussed the existence of ultraweak photons in biological tissue and how the emission can be induced by ultra-violet light. We were made more aware of the available scientific under-pinning of many of the observations of psychics and the intuitive faculty.

Sunday ended with a robust and varied evening of entertainment. On Monday the AGM and Members' Forum attempted to thrash out some of the perennial problems which beset any organisation which relies on volunteers for the most part and dares to venture on the unknown. Unfortunately, attention span is shorter at the end of a conference and people had to leave, but the steadily declining numbers did not reflect the interesting nature of the subject matters that were raised, all with too little time.

I have always felt that if the speakers could get together before and get in harmony the whole event would become a more cohesive whole. The very basic requirements that we should expect are for speakers to give the impression of having prepared their subject for the occasion bearing in mind the theme. Some drifted off the theme or were never really focused on the theme of the occasion.

It is also less irritating if people have tested out their electronic and mechanical equipment and have any handouts photocopied prior to the speech. The sensing of the needs of the audience to ask questions, and the grasping of a point with dignity of a questioner, who may not have honed their ideas before speaking, is also appreciated.

Some speakers introduced ideas expressed in graphical terms and did not leave the audience enough time to grasp them. A new idea can be explained in three or four different ways and this will not bore the audience, rather give them time for reflection. It is also a good idea to take care when assuming specialist knowledge of say mathematics or science. The overall cardinal sin is to try and pack in too much. An hour is a short time to discuss one idea still less to give a summary of a life's work.

As a congregation of fallible human beings we continue to provide a stimulating forum for those not bounded by conventional ways of thinking, and it is to be hoped that future events will attract a greater proportion of new faces as our publicity efforts bear fruit.

Brian Snellgrove is an author, lecturer and counsellor. His most recent book is The Magic in Your Hands