

A Service User's Perspective

'Coming out of my comfort zone'

Hilary Pegg

If travelling alone by public transport from the cosy heart of Norfolk across London to stay with my nieces near Kingston-upon-Thames was to me several steps out of my comfort zone, attending the Annual Conference of the Spirit Release Foundation on June 11th, the following morning took me way out!

But I had to go. For one thing I wanted to thank Dr Alan Sanderson personally for his help and support over finding a way to think about my psychoses and also for putting my story as a case study on the Spirit Release website. I also wanted to take another step on my journey to possibly understanding what might have happened to me that was outside the biochemical model.

The conference took place, conveniently for me, off the Bakerloo line in Regents College near Madam Tussauds and the Planetarium. So many people attended the conference the committee had to get a bigger room. The AGM was sparsely attended perhaps due to it starting at 9.00 am. but I had found some ESF funding to join the Foundation as well as coming on the trip so I was determined to attend at least the second half and use my voting powers.

The speakers were Dr Alan Sanderson, consultant psychiatrist, hypnotherapist and spirit release therapist and Tony Neate, past life therapist and channeller, both from the Foundation, and Roger Woolger PhD, Jungian analyst. The subject of the conference was 'Past Lives and Spirit Attachments'. My own perspective was of a mental health service user with a middle of the road Methodist Christian background! There was nothing middle of the road about Dr Sanderson's case study. It was a horrific case of multiple personality developed through repeated sexual abuse, Satanism and the presence of the spirit of a twin that had died as a foetus. It was all described with clinical accuracy as Dr Sanderson showed with diagrams how the several personalities had built up over the years and how in treatment he had worked over two years to gently break them down. The talk was subtitled 'a battle for the soul'. One felt battle weary after hearing what horrors a person could go through. My two psychoses seemed like a holiday in comparison. One of the personalities described had been called 'Real' and after emailing Dr Sanderson after the conference, he replied 'According to 'Real', Rose's healing was a great success. As she described it, 'There was a power surge this afternoon, like one white glow of bright energy'.' I was very gratified to hear this. Dr Sanderson said he would mention more in the Foundation newsletter. I was very glad to be a member to be able to receive this newsletter.

After lunch Roger Woolger spoke about 'Lost Souls and Restless Spirits'. He first presented us with a handout showing three types of language used by different people to refer to spirit, soul and body. From energy psychology came energy fields, auric fields and Kirlian phenomena located in and around the body, while from depth psychology were split off parts and

multiple selves within the self. Yet in spiritual and folk traditions we find spirits, lost souls and spirit guides beyond the physical plane. As I understood it we were being challenged to think that these were different ways of referring to similar things within around and beyond us. A reference was given (www.rogerwoolger.com) where his article 'The presence of other worlds in psychotherapy and healing' can be found in the 'resources' section. I looked this up afterwards and found several challenging articles. He had subtitled his presentation 'A Bardo worker's notebook'. He explained the bardo as a Tibetan term meaning 'in between' and he showed us a diagram of three areas, the physical, the spiritual and a part in between. A number of the concepts were new to me and I do not feel I can do justice to summarising his talk, but the people sitting next to me with whom I struck up a conversation were particularly interested in hearing him as they were hypnotherapists who did past life regression. Roger Woolger clearly had a vast range of knowledge across different religions, having done his PhD in comparative religion. For me the benefit was to have heard of him for the first time and to peruse his website. He is internationally known and his round of speaking engagements round the world is formidable. We were lucky to get him, I am sure.

Tony Neate had spoken more briefly, but was no less interesting. He is the deputy chairman of the Foundation and carries out spirit release but he is also a channeller and has for many years channelled a spirit he calls H.A who imparts considerable wisdom through him. He spoke about the fact that we are coming into the Aquarian age having been for a thousand years in the Piscean age. This age he said would herald a new phase of human evolution and thought. Again, perusing Tony's website (www.schoolofchannelling.co.uk) is well worth doing for a list of his publications and some sayings from H.A.

For an adequate summary of this event, I am not the most qualified person, so much material was new to me and a challenge to the belief system I feel at home with, yet in terms of my psychotic experiences these talks were making more sense than my psychiatrists back home. To say I felt during my psychoses that I was channelling spirits fitted much more with the actual experience than to say I was manic or psychotic.

After Roger Woolger spoke I asked him why he had not mentioned Christianity. He explained that some of his diagrams were based on Gnostic Christianity. I took Tony Neate's details and bought his book 'Channelling for Everyone' even though there is a Biblical taboo on communicating with spirits. I was right outside my comfort zone as I spent the day after the conference looking up Gnosticism on the web and reading about channelling. Yet I feel this was all part of my education as a would-be voluntary Mental Health Chaplain and Spiritual Carer looking at the spiritual dimension in the health and well-being of clients.