



Institute of World Culture

December 2007 Newsletter

“This advent still, is not by expectation: it is coming without approach; the vision is not of something that must enter but of something that is present before all else.”
Plotinus

On Saturday, November 17th, members and guests of the Institute gathered for a conversation on *Reflections on Transformation: What We Have Learned?* The theme for the year was read out (see IWC homepage) and four presenters, Carol Bemis, Maurice Bisheff, Philip Grant and Tania Knox, led the group in an insightful discussion. Definitions were offered of transformation ranging from the more obvious changes in structures or appearances to the more mysterious and sudden epiphany that leads to a paradigm shift in assumptions. The light of the mind or a transpersonal spirit, it was said, might be the source of a process by which deep structures are converted into new surface structures. A magical intervention, not just an effort to use the will, might be necessary to move one in a moment to something that is new. “Happiness often sneaks in a door you hit” might be a way to describe a transforming experience. However, all change occurs in a dialectical contrast of the changing with the unchanging. It is the mark of a modern person to work with this dialectic of ceaseless change. The problem, one speaker suggested, was not grasping that transformation is the problem.
(Continued below...)

COMING EVENTS



Porphyry's View of the Ascent of the Soul

Lecture: Saturday, December 1, 2007

7:30 – 9:15 pm *(Please note the new time.)*

Concord House, 1407 Chapala Street

Presenter: Judy Saltzman

For the Neo-Platonists Plotinus and Porphyry,

philosophy was a spiritual discipline and religion was symbolic of a higher reality. In the descent into matter, the soul has lost its connection to the Gods. Porphyry in his "Letter to His Wife Marcella" clearly explains the ethical and contemplative virtues required for ascent, reconnection and transformation. Dr. Saltzman will explain why Neo-Platonism is still a relevant teaching in the 21st Century. For information, please call Carolyn at 805/ 967-1005.



Holiday Reception

Saturday, December 15, 2007

Tree Trimming 4:00 – 7:00 pm

Reception 7:00 – 10:00 pm

Celebrate the fulfillment of one year and the promise of another in an evening of music, conversation and storytelling. Featured artist, Jeanne Martin will play the harp. Contributions of food and drink welcome. Contact Carol Bemis at 963-3437.

Study Group

Stories and Poems of Transformation

Thursday, December 13, 2007

8:00 – 9:30 pm

Exploration continues of the inspiring poems and stories of the Sufi poet, Jalaluddin Rumi, in observance of his 800th birth anniversary. Contact Joseph Miller at Daylight@cox.net for more information.

Contributions

December is the Institute's fund-raising month. All contributions are welcome to support another year of IWC programs. Please see below for more information about memberships levels and donations, which are tax deductible.

Reflections on Transformation:

What Have We Learned?

(cont'd from above...)

If ultimate transformation is the basis of all life, then are we determined in what we do by a continual motion of cause and effect, or are we able to initiate and induce change? Is there any part of us that is not connected to or influenced by this momentum for change? Will is the energy most

commonly identified with human efforts to make change. Is the will an expression of a center of identity that might be likened to a ray of light? Repeatedly, the point was made by several participants that change must begin within a human being. We must discover that we are masters of our own conscience and bearers of our responsibility. Fear and attachment to old forms must be replaced by an open mind that freely creates new categories of thought and explores multiple possibilities for solutions to social problems. Simple first steps may enable us to walk a thousand steps. For example a change in basic building materials may bring multiple benefits to the environment. Enabling those incarcerated in prisons to grow their own food may transform the inner dispositions of those whose out-of-balance behavior led to their incarceration.

Deep transformation within a human being that awakens a new sense of identity and capacity is necessary for self-generated participation in Deep Democracy. All parts of our self must become engaged in political activism for the ideals of democracy to be fulfilled. True leadership will draw out the creative and expansive will in others that best serves the common good. The observation of Caesar Chavez was explained. Leaders who are too charismatic, he said, eclipse the perceptions and will of the followers they attract and make them passive. Instead everyone should be transformed by example and inspiration into a leader. This kind of leadership includes engaging people with different points of view. Thereby, the whole group becomes through a consensus building process the collective bearers of greater truth. Mahatma Gandhi integrated transformation within himself by living the life of ordinary people before he attempted to organize them into a mass movement. His teachings remind us that excessive will power, a primal force in nature, must be disciplined by a deep commitment to non-violence and the continuous effort that a revolution requires. Thinking through challenges rather than seeking outside assistance is a mark of a transforming agent.

The role of ideals inherited from both Great Teachers and ordinary people was stressed. Ideals are not bound by time or space or conditions. Meditation on ideals enables us to be true to our real self and unleashes an inner dynamic of an ideal with a self-chosen action. Paul Hawkins' book, *Blessed Unrest*, was mentioned as an inspiring report on successful activism working through NGOs around the globe.

Is transformation of people and environments promoted by architecture? Frank Lloyd Wright suggested that architecture is a means of passing wisdom from past to present. In this generational transmission, there is an unchanging motion in what is constantly changing. Forms can carry core ideas of balance and proportion and, in a magical way, stimulate transformation. Buildings inspire and teach us how forms inspire people

to be inspired by the founding function of the building.

The seminar ended with a metaphor. The universe was likened to one great tree producing tens of thousands of seeds. Some are spent unwisely, some lie barren in hard soil, but some grow. Sacrifice is necessary for nourishment. We must give without expectation of seeing results, but the great arc of transformative energy will sustain fearless effort to fulfill the highest potential in all that lives.

Reported by Carolyn Dorrance

In December

Anniversaries

- 1 Nikolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky 1793
- 4 Thomas Carlyle 1795
Rainer Maria Rilke 1875
- 5 Werner Heisenberg 1901
- 7 Giovanni Bernini 1598
- 8 Horace 65 B.C.E.
- 9 John Milton 1608
- 10 Porphyry c.233
Jonathan Swift 1667
William Lloyd Garrison 1805
Emily Dickinson 1830
- 12 Averroes 1126
- 14 Nostradamus 1503
- 15 A. Becquerel 1853
- 16 Tsong-Kha-Pa 1355
Ludwig von Beethoven 1770
Margaret Mead 1901
- 17 Paracelsus 1493
- 18 J.J Thomson 1856
Francis Thompson 1859
- 19 A.A. Michelson 1852
- 20 Sacagawea d. 1812
- 22 Srinivasa Ramanujan 1887
- 24 James Prescott Joule 1818
Mathew Arnold 1882
- 25 Anwar Sadat 1918
- 26 Thomas Gray 1716
Charles Babbage 1792
- 27 Johann Kepler 1571

- Louis Pasteur 1822
30 Shri Ramana Maharisha 1879
31 John Wycliffe d. 1384
John Flamsteed d. 1719

Observances

December

- 1 **Rosa Parks Day**
2 First Sustained Atomic Chain Reaction 1942
3 Discovery of Uranus (Flamsteed) 1714
6 Thirteenth Amendment (USA) abolishing slavery 1865
10 Human Rights Day
8 Ancient Roman festival honoring all the gods
13 Geminid meteors at maximum
14 Roald Amundsen reached South Pole 1911
16 International Court of Justice Opened 1920
17 First airplane flight (Wilbur & Orville Wright) 1903
18 Abolition of Capital Punishment (England) 1969
21 Landing of Pilgrims at Plymouth, Mass. 1620
22 **Winter Solstice**
24 **CHANUKAH** (Jewish Festival of Lights)
25 **CHRISTMAS DAY**
28 Discovery of x-rays (Roentgen) 1895

General Information

Website

Please check the Institute website for more information on the year's programs: <http://www.worldculture.org>

PRISM Online Community Calendar

PRISM lists member-recommended community events of interest on the IWC website. If you wish to contribute a listing for a local or regional community event of interest, please e-mail donna@worldculture.org so it can be considered for inclusion in PRISM.

eNewsletter

If you'd like to contribute to the eNewsletter, please send your ideas to gerry@worldculture.org for consideration.

Membership and Donation Information

Individual Membership \$35

Individual Student Membership \$15
Individual Supporting Membership \$70
Individual Sustaining Membership \$350

To join the Institute, please e-mail memberships@worldculture.org.
The Institute of World Culture is a non-profit 501(c)3 educational organization dedicated to the principles of universal fellowship and life-long learning. It relies solely on the support of its members. Donations to the Institute of World Culture are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible.

Volunteer Efforts

The Institute offers its programs by means of voluntary efforts.
Please contact carolyn@worldculture.org if you'd like to volunteer.

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