

## Impressions from the Ursache-Zukunft konferenz

Already the span of different perspectives and qualities that the various presentations and lectures made visible was something that struck me. The first day of presentations with Orland, the Russian lady, Vin Tho and the spiritual healing guy presented an immense width of perspectives on dignity. The round table was especially striking on the second day of presentations where the guy from MSF had such a strikingly different, in the present anchored, perspective that I appreciated a lot. The way he spoke about his emergency work, caring for the wounded and dying, leaving little or no time to ponder the future, his almost total immersion in the suffering of the present created the kind of tension that I find important. A tension between the present situation and any future visions of pro-active intervention. I like the fact that his perspective remained next to the others and I am not really sure that there is any reason to want any reconciliation to take place between that experience and imagining the future. It is all too easy to forget the present suffering in providing space for future events to unfold.

The first day of presentations, for some reason there weren't that many people at the roundtable discussions. Wolfgang Held provided a wonderful moderation of the event and in his first introduction to amnesty mentioned that he had had a history teacher who had begun his history epoch on the 20<sup>th</sup> century by saying that it was to be somewhat of a catalogue on disasters and tragedy but that for one lesson he would like to dwell on the occurrences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that were filled with light, and then he begun with the establishment of amnesty international. Its interesting how a remark sometimes takes on much larger dimensions even though in itself it doesn't present anything new but just tweaks the perspective a little. That is what wolfgangs remark did for me. It first made me reflect (I spent plenty of time now and again on this) comparing the sternstunden of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with what I knew of comparable dignity from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and was amazed at how much dignified individual and collective human activity that has taken place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is a veritable catalogue of human dignity, one could write volumes on it. Rachel Carson and the environmental movement, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela whom you mentioned yourself, Gandhi, Rosa Parker, Ety Hillesum, Bonhoeffer, Dag Hammarskjöld, I am sure I could go on for quite some time. Add to this events such as the fall of the berlin wall, the prevention of the MAI (multilateral agreement on investments), the fall of apartheid and the truth commission in south Africa, the fairly effective cessation of the use of freons in industry and lots more. Obviously the tragedy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century matches this but quite apparently history provides us with ample proof of the theme of the first day. In die gefahr wächst auch die rettung. I am far from finished with this reflective activity, what this really means, how one is to comprehend the 20<sup>th</sup> century and so on.

To hear amnesty and alliance for childhood and the other organizations present themselves and mutually talk about their issues and visions and concerns was really very interesting and, I think, actually one of my favourite ways of approaching these questions. Maybe questions from the public should have been required to be submitted on notes after a short break or something because it seems every time people generally are given the chance to ask questions some old dude decides he needs to speak for a very long time and repeat himself a lot. I like the round tables precisely because the

people sitting there are knowledgeable in their respective areas and the fruitfulness that arises out their respective experience. One other thing that I personally find among the most interesting and rewarding topics is when these people with their immense experience share personal stories, for example the story Shelley Sacks told on the last day of the flower in the garden. I still keep seeing this beautiful red flower in my mind every now and then the same holds for Orland Bishops story of the man who called him at his office and the resulting change in the mans life which I've heard once before but which touches me just as much when I hear it again. This is also something that the man from MSF brought into the discussion but in a different and kind of confrontative way. I wonder if he harboured within himself experiences of dignity and beauty that we're as strong as his experiences of suffering even if they we're only two or three out of thousands of experiences of defeat, misery and death. I think this is something that I've noticed we generally tend to forget because it is so seldom expected of us and explicitly asked for, and also so periferal a part of our culture and the way we are used to speak about things, we become so concerned with conveying a general message that we forget how utterly of general significance a particular experience often is. People harbor such treasures of unrevealed depth. The man from Acacia also kind of touched upon this in his way of presenting his path from quite a biographical perspective which has stayed with me. That is what I mean, a persons biography makes something visible that testifies to the spirit and dignity of our existence. This isn't always so easy or straightforward though, the guy with the spiritual healing did certainly have a lot of biographical storytelling but to me it kind of came across as a sales pitch more than the relation of an authentic dramatic experience (I am perhaps a bit sharp, it was interesting what he spoke about, but knowing that stories are powerful ways of conveying a message it is hard to overlook the books, the movies, the emphasis that it is all a matter of the human brain etc. don't get me wrong here, I am not suggesting it was a bad idea to invite him, in fact I think it was both courageous and showed that you were also keen on really bringing in different perspectives and attitudes, as far as my experience of the conference goes, I can't but believe that you must have worked very hard and consciously with trying to find people who represent very different aspects of being and work.)

The last day I missed the round table because I wanted to experience the exchange values discussion once as well, unfortunately it was already packed and I ended up doing something completely different. This brings me to the art part. I thought the rose-action was brilliant, in every respect and I had already heard about exchange values and was really happy to see it for myself and listen to some of the voices and it certainly fulfilled my expectations. The other works of art that were around I had already experienced (in the case of James "agents of change" during connect) or I saw only more peripherally. I visited the wax-ball and stood inside of it but there I think the works of Wolfgang Laib have struck me as more solid (there is a space of wax one can enter in Stuttgart for instance that I find completely incredible). I was also in the archiv and saw the pencil drawings of Beuys and Steiners notebooks etc. but I was a bit in a hurry at the time and there were a lot of people so I can't say I got a very deep impression. Of course the silent fireworks were simply an unforgettable experience.

The presentations of the last day were also quite individual and special in the way they stood next to each other.

Maybe I'll think of more, in any case I return home with several new perspectives and restored energy.