

## **Islands of Humanity – 11th Worldwide Biography Conference**

29th June to 3rd July 2022 – Snellman College in Helsinki, Finland

For Professionals working with Biographical Development based on Spiritual Science

33 years ago the inauguration of International Biography Conferences began with the organisation of a conference at the Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland in 1990. Until 1998 these conferences were organised annually in Western Europe. In 2001 this initiative continued with organisation of the 1st biennial Worldwide Biography Conference WBC at the Goetheanum, which, in the intervening years, has been gradually moving eastwards through Europe, and has been attended regularly by colleagues from an ever-growing number of nations around the world.

In this year 2022 the conference was held by the Baltic Sea on the beautiful campus of the Snellman College dedicated to Anthroposophical Spiritual Science in Finland's maritime capital Helsinki.

For the first time in the 'biography' of the conferences Covid19 restrictions required waiting for three long years until colleagues could meet each other again at one location. Also, the conflict in Ukraine gave some colleagues in distant lands cause to consider 'daring' to travel to Finland.

### **Dialogical Co-Creation**

More than ninety biography professionals from 22 different countries came together in Helsinki to strengthen their international professional networking and share research and development of biography work with one another.

The guiding principle for these conferences has always been that the participants attend not as 'consumers', but are invited to actively prepare, build and create together a dynamic conference programme. This time two thirds of the participants were able to contribute collectively to the programme of WBC 2022: e.g., reciting the conference meditation in their own languages, speaking about professional themes during the plena, facilitating a series of professional workshops and co-creating dynamic social-artistic processes to generate professional dialogue throughout the conference.

The overarching experience of the conference, as 'being' a community with shared learning processes and a joyful, living organism, resounded during and after. As a community we continue building a solid foundation for creating a vessel to enable the 'Being' of the Worldwide Biography Conference to enfold its destiny in the present moment for the future.

### **Inspirational Design - Vulnerable, Incomplete and Limited**

This time the conference was designed around the theme of "Islands of Humanity". We explored the human beings in the process of becoming with the lifelong themes of how to deal with being "Vulnerable", "Incomplete" and "Limited" in their intimate lives, personal lives (family, friends) and work life (clients, colleagues). The themes were introduced through diverse professional presentations, workshops, dialogical interactions and meetings during the five days of the conference.

The Finnish organising team invited contributions from colleagues practising all kinds of dialogical activities, who have been inspired by the marvellous, precious, important work that we have witnessed in previous Worldwide Biography Conferences. In addition, there was the wish to emphasise and explore the biography movement which is rooted in the Spiritual Science and Michaelic Inspiration of our time. The latter endeavour unfolded as a 'red thread' throughout the conference with contemplation of the Daily Rhythms of The

Foundation Stone Meditation, which were recited every morning. This became a tuning of the melody of the conference and our working into deeper and more meaningful levels of our dialogical work together.

For the first time the conference was designed, co-ordinated and organised by a relatively large, all national group of seventeen Finnish professionals; who built a strong community which kept the hearth of the conference burning brightly for the worldwide biography community, awakening interest and inspiration for the coming event over three years. For example, during the 'Long Winter Night' of Corona 2020 / 2021, the conference community was introduced to the legend of Marjatta from the Finnish Epic Poem "Kalevala" via a video, including a biographical process: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEtLsXWRH10>

## **About the Workshops**

Biography professionals offered twelve different workshops in which they shared their specialist research and development across a broad spectrum of different approaches to biographical work, including, for example:

### *Reaching for the Stars: Beyond 63*

As longevity increases, the question of how biographical development can be guided after 63 becomes a practical, as well as a metaphysical, challenge. Beyond the planetary pathway from birth to 63 lies the archetypal foundation of the twelve stellar realms out of which new tools, instruments and applications of biographical development are being created?

### *The Relation of the Zodiac to the Human Being*

Twelve Zodiacal Forces are present in our soul. By exploring these the potential to become a whole human being can be realised. By recognising limitation and weaknesses, aspects of soul can be identified and developed further, so as to overcome vulnerability on the biographical path to wholeness.

### *Dynamic Zodiac Drawing*

The 'I' can immerse itself artistically in 12 zodiacal moods, leading to a meditative deepening as a source of self-knowledge and biographical-development, through the opening up of inner soul spaces and the power of self-organisation, as the 'I' observes how 'thinking' and 'feeling' come into motion as 'willing'.

### *Planetary Conversation*

Between death and re-birth, as also between sleeping and waking, human being journeys back and forth through the Planetary Spheres whilst reviewing the past (yesterday) and foreseeing the future (tomorrow). Meditative, artistic conversation with the Planets opens valuable perspectives, which promote self-knowledge and (re-)focusing of life's journey.

### *Metamorphosis of Three Basic Biographical Principles*

Observing the metamorphoses of three basic principles, 'Relation', 'Ability' and 'Inner Truth', flowing respectively through their corresponding septennials as an expression of development from 00 to 21 years (Physical), from 21 to 42 years (Soul) and from 42 to 63 years (Spiritual), reveals the unfolding 'biographical individuality'.

### *Songs of Life: Music as an Instrument of Biography Work*

Your "musical biography" began with the first lullaby and includes the empowering song you listened to this morning. Identify important songs or pieces of music for each of the seven phases of life and share these with others, as you journey together. The theoretical, practical and therapeutic potential of song and music can be applied in biographical development.

## **Promoting a Culture of Continuity of Participant Experiences**

Successive coordinating groups have ensured the cultivation of a Culture of Continuity in the sharing and transmission of the invaluable experience of organising these conferences. Members of the Worldwide Biography Conference Community practise responsible evaluation of the results across a broad spectrum of modalities for designing their professional contributions when planning the content of future conferences.

Workshop leaders facilitate the exploration of their colleagues own lives according to their own spiritual scientific research and social artistic application of the archetypal cosmic cycles, rhythms and intervals of time which govern biographical development. They do this in profound yet responsibly accessible and adaptable ways. In working practically with tools, instruments and applications that have been thoroughly researched and developed in a wide range of professional vocations, often over many years, participants are enabled to take up and integrate what they learn creatively into their own professional practises.

No matter the national origins and diverse cultural backgrounds, colleagues are able to recognise each other in their consciously shared humanity. Observing the qualities of how different developmental phases and periods of life metamorphose and resonate in each other always result in a rich apprehendable expression of spiritual consciousness of the soul. Participating colleagues experience intimacy and intensity of practical sharing in an atmosphere of self-regulating, morally sustainable trust and security, which they know must be the foundation of their own professional practise when accompanying their clients individually and in groups on the path of their biographical development.

*This is the collective evaluation and assessment of the Finnish coordinating organisation of the Worldwide Biography Conference 2022.*

## **Leadership and Organisation - Professionalism**

The Finnish coordinating conference organisation was structured in a simple way. We formed five teams each with their own responsibilities, budgets, and independent decision-making processes. The teams all met together regularly, often online, to share and clarify the big picture and their respective tasks. Responsibility for the process ownership of practical issues was worked through and distributed by mutual agreement. Process ownership of the co-ordination of the whole was allocated to one individual. The Finnish organisation was continually nourished through consultation with experienced colleagues in other countries who organised earlier conferences internationally.

The leadership question for the conference was: *"How does our leadership and organisation support individual biographies and the biography of the ongoing series of conferences to emerge?"*

The Finnish teams practised the age-old cultural gesture when entering into a traditional Finnish Smoke Sauna: *You must bow deeply in order to pass through a very low portal.*

## **The Soul of Organised Community**

Organisations are human creations. They are mystery places of learning for individuals of different ages. We always reminded ourselves that we are not only performing in an official role, with all the tasks and duties this entails, but we also were taking on the role of becoming companions who are *doing the good*, i.e. practising humanity for and with each other.

Dialogical contact is fundamental to creating community. Dialogue is an experience of encounter and exchange between human beings who are equal. Dialogue involves

questioning, listening, conversation, making yourself known, acceptance of differences, mutuality and equality in partnership. The key qualities of dialogical contact are suspension of personal opinions and thoughts and activation of listening. When this happens, we experience meaningfulness at a deeper level of biographical experience. Dialogue requires us to offer attention, acceptance, appreciation, which becomes the expression of the attitude of 'Gratitude'. We also need to offer affection and allowance, whereby we grant to others, as well as protect in ourselves, the right to live freely, without external controls.

When stepping in and getting in touch with the "biographical being" of an organised community, an open mind could be the best we can offer. Our humble gesture has been to honour the cultural work that had already been done over the many years. With gratitude we were often thinking about all those individuals, who have kept the Spirit of the Worldwide Biography Conference strong in the continuity of time. In this way we were able to experience the 'Soul of this Organised Community'. We were able to encounter the Spirit and enter into an exchange with the system and structure of the conference organism. Doing this enabled us to work out of the 'living ethos' to create a good atmosphere for the Community of the Worldwide Biography Conference.

### **From Finland to Japan**

The Worldwide Biography Conference is a 'vessel' for dreaming and weaving and playing. It should let everyone be free. It is not a 'political body', an event in which votes must be canvassed to make decisions. This responsibility lies with individual initiatives themselves, great and small, around the world.

A letter from our Japanese colleague Tomoko Kawashima:

*Dear Finnish colleagues,*

*I cannot thank enough for the wonderful days in Finland.*

*Your teamwork and perfect organisation of the conference impressed me so much.*

*The team from Japan travelled back home safe and sound. I received the "Northern Route Diploma" from the captain of the Finnair – stating: "we hereby certify that you have flown over the North Pole with us in 2022" ... :-)*

*I hope you are not too exhausted by the three years of preparation for the week-long conference.*

*Many biography workers in the North and South of Japan, were simultaneously working the same programme on the Saturday! They told me they felt so close to Finland and all biography workers around the world."*

*Warm regards, Tomoko Kawashima*

The Free Spirit of the Worldwide Biography Conference 2022 is guiding us on to the lively reunion of colleagues next time in Japan. Prior to the last conference, Japanese colleagues Fumiko Chikami, Tomoko Kawashima and Yuko Hibara started exploring possibilities and have since committed to hosting the Worldwide Biography Conference in Japan in 2024.

*Hannu & Jaana Tuovinen, Tuula Karkia and Christopher Bee*