

Brief Encounters from the Taos Institute

January 2012



A New Years Reflection from The Taos Institute By Mary Gergen

2012 begins, and the Taos Institute Board is happy to wish everyone a wonderful new year. When it comes to the New Year, I think I've always been a social constructionist. Despite the fact that the calendar is clearly an invention of a group of learned people who had some desire for order and simultaneity – that is a socially constructed social object, it appears to be quite real to those of us who live under its form of 12 months and 356 and 1/4 days. Yet it seems to promise more to us than the marking of time, itself. The calendar seems to suggest that January 1 offers us a new beginning, a way to start over with our lives. It allows one to wipe away the tears of sadness and shed the dross of errors that we accumulated in the old year. We even make New Year's Resolutions so that we can formulate just how we are going to change our ways of living – lose weight, stop smoking, exercise more, be a better spouse, spend more time with the children and less with the TV, and so on. Of course, it doesn't take long until our resolutions are broken, or at least bent. Our old habits persist, and soon the new year loses its luster, with the return of the usual bumps and grinds.

Still, there are other opportunities every year to have fresh starts – new months, new semesters, new seasons and even new dawns. This March, The Taos Institute is joining in partnership with a Mexican therapy group, called Kanankil, in Merida, Yucatan, to explore and ponder the question of what is beyond the end of the Mayan calendar, which is occurring at this time. How do we all together construct the beginnings of a new time, the Post-Mayan time in its homeland? How far do our old habits interfere with new possibilities, and how might we go on together in new ways in this new era?

As a metatheory, social constructionism is open for any system to exist, any formulas to be brought forth, any theory to be made, and any stories to be spun. As we recognize how vital our relationships are to the development of our sense-making, and how open the future is as we join together, perhaps new beginnings are possible. Maybe we can converge in the new year, with new skills for relating as we make new friends and revisit the old in new ways. We can do this anywhere and any time. And for starters,

“We'll take a cup o' kindness yet, for auld lang syne.”