

vienna, tuesday august 23 2005
dispatch #2 from ralph

iiasa = international institute for applied systems analysis

iiasa is an important institution for the application of complex dynamics
to social problems, environment, aids, etc etc
it was the model for the santa fe institute
it is in laxenburg, about 30 miles south of vienna in the vienna woods
it is housed in the summer palace complex built by emperor franz 1 ca
1800
i had given a lecture here 16 years ago and vaguely remembered it

linda and raoul kneucker are my hosts in vienna
i met them here about 10 years ago
linda works at iiasa doing websites, data bases, etc
raoul, in his role as undersecretary of state of austria,
(officially, director general for science and technology
in the ministry of education) has been involved
in the funding of iiasa for many years
both of them played some role, no doubt, in my invitation to speak in
the prestigious "koopmans series" at iiasa

tuesday august 23

today, linda and raoul kneucker drove me to iiasa
i tried out my powerbook with iiasa's projector in the lecture hall for
tomorrow
everything seems ok, and they have blackboards and chalk
we had lunch with the director, his wife, they are dutch, paul cruizen
(atmospheric chemist, nobel prize, official of iiasa, also dutch)
there was much talk of the future directions
of iiasa, such as world water resources, and the political
problems obstructing all new programs for iiasa
iiasa is sponsored by 18 nations so of course it is difficult to do anything
paul said james lovelock was a great scientist but his gaia theory
was all wrong
after lunch i met brian arthur, pioneer economist of the santa fe institute,
who said he was a passionate follower of taoism, has studied

in china, we made a date for tomorrow
then we drove to baden, roman spa with hot sulfur springs like esalen,
walked on the path where beethoven wrote the ninth
symphony, with views of the vienna woods, and then home
the surroundings of vienna are as beautiful as the old city

wednesday august 24

setup my powerbook in the lecture hall, an excellent room with 80 seats
considering the 70 graduate students and 80 full-time scientists plus
15 people of the general public in vienna who had registered
this seemed hardly enough, but later i was told the preceding
lectures of this series (named for the dutch mathematical
economist tjalling koopmans) normally drew only half dozen
people

meanwhile people filtered in, and at lecture time the room was almost full
i guessed that most of the audience were either nonspecialists or
graduate students, so i decided to expand the historical
introduction into most of the one-hour lecture, and do a fast
forward through my powerpoint slides and netlogo demo at
the very end ... which i did

there were some very useful questions and comments at the end from
the experts, eg, brian arthur corrected my history of
agent based modeling, which he had pioneered, and
ulf dieckmann noted that i had forgotten to place adaptive
dynamics in the chronology, which was uncool as iiasa
is the world center of adaptive dynamics, and it is one
of the five primary programs here, which he directs
many people appreciated the elementary talk, but the director, leen
hordijk,

said that he would have liked more of the tech details of my recent
work,

and half a dozen other experts probably shared that feeling
then half an hour of reception, the usual "questions" from people who
wanted me to know about their own work, and on to lunch with
the director, assistant director, brian arthur, jack corliss who had
come

from budapest, linda and raoul, and a couple of the
staff scientists

after lunch, i met with jack corliss to plan the next phase of our joint

research

on morphogenesis (discontinued 15 years ago) -- we will try to further

this project by video conferencing, as we both have iChat and then met with brian arthur, who amazed me with his stories of spiritual

experience, taoist studies in hong kong, and other interests very similar

to my own -- he lives in palo alto and we will get together soon such are the blessings of traveling

thursday august 25

i spent the day talking with jack corliss about software and hardware issues regarding our project, which requires massive supercomputers

and 3D animated computer graphics in the evening jack and i took linda and raoul to dinner at a museum and then an outdoor classical concert and very memorable ice cream mathematics has been good to me

friday august 26

today jack has returned to budapest

linda has taken me through the outdoor market, the largest and most beautiful i have seen

and raoul has given me the second installment of his three-tour sequence of walking tours through the old city

his encyclopedic knowledge of the history of vienna -- religion, philosophy, music, arts, theater, opera, politics -- is integrated like general systems

theory i realized that vienna is high on the list of great historical cities like kyoto and florence -- what a treat it is to be here

the combination of wealth and taste required to create cities like these is rare -- presently there seems to be only the wealth

my online course "chaos and the evolution of consciousness" at ciis has just begun, so i have to actually do a little 'work' now

end #2

