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The views expressed in *De Numine* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience, or the Religious Experience Research Centre.

The Editor



Information for contributors and contact details are shown on the inside back cover.

Editorial

As usual we have had too many excellent submissions to print in our allotted 60 pages; notable among items which are being held over for the next issue is Part II of John Frances Phipps' *Timeless Present*. For the rest, wait and see!



Nevertheless, as I read through this issue of *De Numine* for the last time before we give it to the printer, I am struck yet again by how submissions, sent in independently, always seem to emerge as a coherent whole, with a common theme running through each issue. I am beginning to think there should be a printed acknowledgement of the *De Numine* angel, which is the way I like to imagine the hand of spiritual guidance. (You can't take the Roman Catholic out of the girl ...) This time it's Spirit and the material world, a theme running through the articles, exploring the all-pervasive and active nature of Spirit, and the ways in which this manifests on the physical plane. The theme also appears in two of the Open Day talks which explore Spirit as creativity in art. This growing trend seems to me a far cry from the traditional approach of religion in our culture – a transcendent God with acolytes preaching to a passive flock. This changing awareness of spirituality is summed up in the words of Teilhard De Chardin, quoted in Marianne Rankin's review of *Involution* (page 44): 'We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience.'



One item out on its own, taxonomically speaking, is Professor Francis' delightful study of *The Wind in the Willows* (page 21), the keynote lecture at Open Day last year, in which he attempts a classification of types of spiritual experience. I hope readers enjoy this as much as I did, and I wish I had been at Open Day to hear his talk. Please see his invitation to take part in his study on page 5 (the questionnaire relating to this is included as an insert)

The Annual Gathering will be held in July, at Llantarnam Abbey for the fifth year running. Please see the insert in this issue for details, and how to book. There are probably a host of angels looking after this event; Llantarnam has a very active community of nuns (Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy) who welcome us to the Abbey every year. Again, the theme this year has emerged seamlessly from the year before. Do read the reports from previous years in issues 52, 53 and 55 and I hope you will see, as I do, the pattern unfolding from the original mandala, and developing beautifully.

I agree with Mary Cook, who recounts her dream on page 17, that dreams are undervalued in our culture as having spiritual significance, although as I say in my note at the end of her account, *De Numine* certainly welcomes accounts and interpretations. Please share your dreams ...

Patricia Murphy



A View from the Chair

May I begin my report by wishing you all a rather belated happy New Year and all the very best for whatever paths you may follow in 2014.

We - that is to say the AHSSSE - have much to be proud over the last twelve months. Our membership remains stable, the local groups very active and several new initiatives proved to be very successful last year and will be repeated again this year.

2013 was a most important, not to say decisive, year in the history of the Trust and RERC. Elsewhere in this edition of the journal (page 18) you will find a report from Professor Leslie Francis (Chair of Trustees) which is a précis of his comments made at the last Open Day in Oxford last October. Leslie explains the new links to Glyndwr University in Wrexham and also the continuing but revitalised relationship at the UWTSD, Lampeter. I hope that this brings everyone up to date with developments and in particular those members who could not be at the AGM. I believe that we now have two very strong links with the academic world which can only perpetuate the work of Sir Alister Hardy and ensure his legacy continues into the future.

I would like to draw your attention to three new books written by members. The first is a reprint of John Franklin's book charting the history of the Society, Trust and RERC. The book is in the final stages of preparation and will bring the history right up to date. I can think of no better person to undertake this important task than John, his knowledge and long-time affiliation to the Society and Trust give him a unique insight into the history as both an observer and recorder. The second book is by Dr Penny Sartori who is very well known in the field of near-death experiences (NDEs), having undertaken a research study whilst working as an intensive care nurse, which led to the award of a PhD. She recently wrote an article for the *Daily Mail*¹ based on her new book, which was published in February. Penny received a huge response to the article with people from across the world contacting her with their own experiences of NDE's.

Further details of these books will be found elsewhere in the journal (pages 52-3) together with details about a recently published book by Dr Mark Fox, who will be familiar to members from his previously published research. I can think of no better start to 2014 than to have three new research books produced by members who are actively continuing the work of Sir Alister Hardy.

There are always less pleasant aspects to life and sadly this is the case even within our small Society. I have to report that as a result of an unpleasant episode last year the committee were required to examine the rules of the AHSSSE and clarify certain points. It was found that the rules were in part ambivalent and lacked clarity. Following consultation and, with the full approval of the Trustees, some rules were amended and these were put to the members at the AGM in October where they were fully endorsed by those present. A copy of the revised rules is included in this edition for the benefit of all members (see page 59).

In summary, I think that we can have much to look forward to during 2014 with the new academic collaborations and the busy programme of events both at group and national level.

Andy Burns Chair - AHSSSE

¹ Sartori, P. (2014) 'Is this proof near-death experiences ARE real?' *Daily Mail*, 25 January, pp. 42 - 44

From the Chair of the Trustees: Assessing Mystical Experiences – Questionnaire on Psychological Type and Mystical Orientation.

When I was invited to deliver the Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture in the context of the AGM of the Alister Hardy Society, I chose the theme of mystical experience because that has been one of my major research interests over many years. On that occasion I decided to give my main attention to the experience of Mole in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* when Mole comes face-to-face with the Piper at the Gates of Dawn.

I also took a little time to discuss my current research on the connection between psychological type and mystical experience and on the way in which different groups of people show different levels of openness to mystical experience. I have conducted this research by inviting different groups of people to complete a simple questionnaire for me that includes the Mystical Orientation Scale (MOS) that I first published in 2000.

Researching mystical experience

In my lecture I talked specifically about the studies that I had conducted among 1,468 Roman Catholic priests, 168 church musicians, and 580 participants attending the Parliament of the World's Religions. Of these three groups the highest level of reported mystical experiences occurred among the participants attending the Parliament of the World's Religions and the lowest level occurred among the Roman Catholic priests.

The question I posed at the end of my lecture invited speculation on the level of reported mystical experience among members of the Alister Hardy Society. Many of the members attending the AGM said that they would be very interested in the answer to the question, and in order to make a start on finding the answer they completed a copy of my questionnaire before going home. Other members attending the AGM suggested that the readers of *De Numine* may appreciate the opportunity to take part in the project. It is for that reason that a copy of the questionnaire has been included in this issue of *De Numine*.

Taking part in research

In this issue of *De Numine* we have put two copies of the questionnaire on Psychological Type and Mystical Orientation. Participation is, of course, voluntary, and all replies will be confidential and anonymous. If you would like more copies of the questionnaire, please either make your own photocopies or email me at leslie.francis@warwick.ac.uk inviting me to post copies to you.

Completed questionnaires can be returned by FREEPOST to:

FREEPOST RSKR-GYRG-GXXE
St Mary's and St Giles' Centre
Mystical Orientation Project
Llys Onnen
Abergwyngregyn
Llanfairfechan
LL33 0LD

Provided enough people reply to make the findings worthwhile, I will offer a report on the results in a future issue of *De Numine*.

Leslie J Francis, Chair, The Alister Hardy Trust

From the Director of Communications

As ever, I have been liaising internally between the Alister Hardy Trust, RERC and AHSSSE and externally networking on our behalf through giving talks, organising events, attending conferences, selling our publications and disseminating our publicity literature whenever possible. I have spoken to many people over the past months, explaining our work and making new contacts. This has resulted in the Society gaining new members.

It has been a good summer, with much hard work behind the scenes. The new disposition for the Alister Hardy Trust will offer the RERC and AHSSSE the best of all worlds, consolidating our position in Lampeter while also opening new avenues of research at the University of Glyndwr in Wrexham through the St Mary's and St Giles Centre.

One result of this is that the archive database of accounts of spiritual experience has been updated in preparation for a secure portal. That will enable accredited scholars to access the database from their own computer, wherever in the world they happen to be. There have already been expressions of interest from researchers in UK and Germany and universities in the US and Canada. This is an exciting development, which will make our archive far more accessible and well-known. As AHSSSE membership will be a necessary requirement, we will gain far-flung interest in our activities. We also have our Facebook page and website which enable us to communicate worldwide.

The One Spirit Alliance is thriving and various meetings have taken place over the past months. As a follow-up to last June's conference, an event entitled *Spirit in Action* is being arranged for 28th June 2014 at Colet House in London. Sister Maureen of the Brahma Kumaris will open and close the day in meditation and the speakers will be Anthony Russell, author of *Evolving the Spirit: from Democracy to Peace*, and *Ten Steps to Change the World*, and Serge Beddington-Behrens, author of *Awakening the Planetary Heart: a Guide to Spiritual Activism*.

The AHSSSE and One Spirit Alliance have also been involved in arranging a conference in Sheffield on March 15th 2014 entitled *Deeper Dimensions in Education*. Anthroposophist Robert Chamberlain will host the day and the speakers will be Dr Greg Barker, Aonghus Gordon, founder of the Ruskin Mill Colleges, and me.

By giving talks when invited, I feel that our work and activities will become better known. This year I have been to Cheltenham Ladies' College and Wellington College; spoken at The Study Society on *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (talk available on the Study Society website); held a Quiet Day at Stanton Guildhouse entitled *Singapore - A Land of Many Faiths* and spoken to the Scientific and Medical Network London Group on *Spiritual Experience Today*. I also gave a talk in the afternoon of Open Day on *Caspar David Friedrich, Landscape as Icon*. My *Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* continues to be used in schools and universities and enjoyed by the general reader.

I am calling together AHSSSE organisers in April to discuss future plans and events. Please get in touch if you have any ideas for activities you would like to see. If you would like to start a small group in your area, Andy Burns and John Franklin would be only too happy to assist.

In all my work I have greatly benefitted from the support of the Trustees and members of the RERC and AHSSSE, which I very much appreciate.

Marianne Rankin



'Am just SO loving being 'Gramma'!
Marianne and baby Emma in Singapore earlier this year

Articles

Consciousness Beyond the Body

The Concept of an Extracorporeal Consciousness

Sir Alister Hardy presented some profound innovative ideas in his series of Gifford Lectures at Aberdeen University in 1963. The lectures published in 1965 as *The Living Stream* included concepts that are increasingly becoming part of mainstream science rather than pseudo-science as they would have been considered at that time. He envisaged the existence of what he called a 'group mind' through which 'something akin to telepathy might possibly influence the process of evolution'. Other scientists – most notably biologist Rupert Sheldrake, physicist Amit Goswami, palaeontologist and philosopher-priest Teilhard de Chardin, and psychologist Richard Bucke – had previously or have subsequently reframed these same basic concepts in their own terms.

When we speak of 'consciousness', we tend to think first – perhaps even exclusively – of human consciousness. Even dictionary definitions of the word imply this human connection. But indigenous peoples have always, as far as we know, regarded the concept of consciousness as a property of other animate beings too. The ancient philosophers had a hierarchy of degrees of consciousness that they called the Great Chain of Being which, in its simplest form, had four material divisions with the deity at the top. At the lowest level there were the insentient rocks and minerals and above them in this hierarchy were the members of the plant kingdom. We have always known that plants respond to climatic conditions and to their environment but, more recently, scientific experiments have shown that they also respond to human intent.

The next highest level of Being was that of the animal kingdom. While humankind has kept domesticated animals since the early civilizations, again it is only recently that we have acknowledged their level of consciousness and shown concern for the stress and pain they might feel. It is obvious to any pet owner that animals can feel and show emotions of pleasure and fear, but Rupert Sheldrake has shown the much greater extent to which animals can empathize with humans, even through telepathic communication. The relationships that Dian Fossey developed with the mountain gorillas of Rwanda, that Jane Goodall established with chimpanzees in the Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania, that George and Joy Adamson formed with a baby lioness they called Elsa and that the Unionist soldier Lieutenant John Dunbar forged not only with the native Sioux Indians of Dakota, but also with a wolf, have become the legends of books and films. These stories suggest that even animals in the wild have a consciousness beyond that of the basic biological instincts of survival.

Definition of the concept of human consciousness is attributed to the English philosopher John Locke in the 17th century, and there have been various elaborations on this idea since then. The Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud defined three levels or states of consciousness: in addition to our conscious awareness of events that register on one of our five senses, our minds have an unconscious function that suppresses unwanted thoughts and fears, and a preconscious that holds memories for recall when needed. C.G. Jung went further in suggesting that the unconscious mind had two components – an individual or personal unconscious and a communal or collective unconscious that existed outside the body of the individual. This spiritual collective unconscious gave rise to certain patterns of behaviour that he called archetypes, which were repeated through time and space by different cultures.

The English-born Canadian psychiatrist, Richard Maurice Bucke, distinguished three realms of consciousness – simple consciousness (that of the animal kingdom), self consciousness (of humans) and cosmic consciousness (an awareness of and interaction with the order of the universe). He maintained that ‘our descendants will sooner or later reach, as a race, the condition of cosmic consciousness, just as, long ago, our ancestors passed from simple to self consciousness’. This is similar to the vision of the French philosopher-priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, that humankind is evolving towards a state of noogenesis characterized by a spirituality that will fill every moment of our lives, and such that each soul will ‘feel and know itself to be immortal’ and at one with the universe. According to Bucke, the Saviour of Man is not so much a human figure as the energy field of Cosmic Consciousness; but cosmic consciousness ‘must not be looked upon as being in any sense supernatural or supranormal [or] as anything more or less than a natural growth’ of the human condition. Bucke and de Chardin regard it as part of the natural process of biological and sociological evolution that we should all come to realise the part we play in cosmic consciousness, both in our earthly life and in the afterlife.

Although we owe a great deal to science for the quality of life many of us can enjoy today, the reductionist and materialist view of science has led to increasing fragmentation in our world view. Despite this almost inevitable materialist approach in our everyday lives, humankind has shown an awareness of an over-arching transcendent power beyond the material world since Man first walked the Earth, as far as we know. Artefacts have been buried with the discarnate for use in a presumed afterlife. We cannot hope to describe this all-pervading fundamental unity in any detail, for this cosmic spirit is numinous and ineffable – but holistic. Developing the ideas of psychologists Freud and Jung, what we describe as mind really has two functions. There is the rational mind, located during our lives in the brain, which records and interprets the impressions of our senses. These senses enable us to find our way around in the world. Then there is also the spiritual mind that many describe as soul, which, as humankind has envisaged since the beginning of recorded history, is not confined to the

physical body, but which has an existence outside of the body before and after our incarnation in human form. It is the subconscious mind that interacts with the cosmic spirit.

The creativity of artisans and the spiritual insight of sages and prophets derive from this cosmic consciousness. Painting, sculpture, poetry and other literature, and music are creations of the soul as much as of the mind. We need the technical skill to produce creative artwork, but it becomes meaningful to others only if it is imbued with a numinous quality that transcends physical descriptions or images. Art stimulates our emotions by giving us a new way of seeing a tiny corner of the world and, through this, to allow our soul to commune with that of the creative artist and beyond. Creative artists have frequently ascribed their creativity to a spiritual power that they seem to breathe in from outside the body – inspiration indeed.

The Evidence for an Extracorporeal Consciousness

With increasingly sophisticated medical technology, many people who would have died from accident, disease or surgery a century ago can now be resuscitated and survive to recount their experiences. In the past few decades there have been many accounts published of out-of-body experiences (OBEs), near-death experiences (NDEs) and even shared death experiences (SDEs). While some of the characteristics of these events may be explainable as physiological responses to extreme stress, many physicians, psychologists and neurophysiologists accept that, at the very least, they demonstrate the common capability of the human mind to achieve an altered state of consciousness. That these states should include impressions of religious figures or deceased family members is suggestive of access to a realm of communal souls, but it is not conclusive.

What is, however, much more persuasive are the accounts from patients of events occurring around them while they are in a state of clinical dormancy. For patients to be able to recall in detail events that took place around them while they were unconscious is remarkable enough; but in many cases they can relate events that that did not even occur in their immediate environment but some distance away that they could not possibly see or hear – events they could know nothing of even in a fully conscious state. In SDEs, those attending the dying patient are even able to access events from the life of the patient, which sometimes include events of which they had no previous knowledge or other events that they know to have occurred but which they had forgotten. Those experiencing SDEs are fully conscious and alert, so their experiences cannot be dismissed as illusory or ‘merely’ physiological phenomena.

Another strand of convincing evidence for the existence of non-local consciousness is that of spiritual healing. Eastern medicine and spiritual philosophy have long contended that there is a type of spiritual energy that courses through the human body that is not detectable by standard scientific instrumentation. This type of energy is called *chi* or *qi*. It is said to run through the human body along paths called meridians or *nadis* and be concentrated in energy vortices, principally along the midline, in centres called *chakras*. Those who have verifiable spiritual healing powers make use of this energy field. Clinicians use the meridians to produce effective treatments through acupuncture and many other therapies/energy techniques for healing.

There are cases on record of healer mediums with no medical training whatsoever calling on those who they claim are discarnate souls trained in medicine to treat or even cure such debilitating or potentially terminal illnesses as blindness, diabetes or cancer. Here, no orthodox medical interpretation can explain how these cures are achieved – but interaction with the curative non-local consciousness of discarnate souls would. While DNA sets up the

structure of our bodies, studies in epigenetics have shown that the environment continually modifies the actions of DNA through the RNAs. This is where our thoughts, our consciousness, our attitude of mind get involved. With a positive attitude engendered by self-discipline, or through the prayers of others, or through the channelling of cosmic energy by a spiritual healer, we influence the RNA and thence the DNA and our day-to-day health.

Thus we have massive empirical evidence of the existence of a non-local consciousness associated with the spiritual realm. Although such a notion is not compatible with Newtonian-Cartesian science, the new quantum science of the 20th century does furnish a possible theoretical interpretation of these phenomena. Underlying interactions of all subatomic particles is an energy field called the quantum field or zero-point field. This is an energy field in which the masses of particles constantly interchange and transform according to the mass-energy relation identified by Einstein, and the wave-particle theory of de Broglie. The zero-point field is responsible for the non-locality properties of the quantum world, that is, they are independent of space and time. The non-local consciousness of this non-material spiritual energy field is held by an increasing number of scientists and philosophers to be primary to the material world of our senses. In his Gifford Lectures of 1927 physicist Sir Arthur Eddington said: 'The stuff of the world is mind stuff', recalling the opening quote of Hardy's above.

One important implication of the creative force of this cosmic energy field is that it gives a rationally tenable interpretation of the Creator-Designer God of western religion, as pointed out by cleric Don MacGregor in his recent book (reviewed in issue no. 55 pp. 50-51). To feel we are a part of this unity of consciousness within and outside the human frame – the God in Us – is spiritually uplifting. Whenever we gaze in awe at the beauty of the countryside or the grandeur of the heavens we are reassured that we, as individuals, comprise a meaningful part of that universe in every thought and action. The realisation that each of us is a part of this realm of non-local cosmic consciousness is the true meaning of enlightenment.

Howard Jones

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Scientists of God: towards 'how to do it'

Vice-Chair Mike Rush's recent articles in *De Numine* (issues 54 and 55) touched on extremely important issues in relation to the core AHT/SSSE mission in response to which I would like to offer some tentative brushstrokes from the point of view of someone who is not a sceptic, nor a believer, but an experiencer – an experiencer who seeks a hypothesis which connects and makes meaningful his variety of spiritual experiences.

Professor Sir Alister Hardy FRS sought to bring science and academic acceptability to the fact of religious/spiritual experience by quantitatively counting and classifying the occurrence of mostly spontaneous unexpected experiences by, very largely, ordinary people. However there is still a great deal left unsaid about these experiences and how they fit together in a meaningful spiritual scheme together with other forms of spiritual experience and exploration.

Despite this there seems to be a great resistance to the possibility of science and spirituality coming together. As Mike says, 'Even in some holistic circles ... there is an anti-scientific bias' as if 'spirituality' is a special area of human knowledge which is not accessible to scientific observation. The rest of the serious world has made the cultural shift to science. Hitherto spirituality has for centuries been in the care of the major religions with all the support they have brought to humankind, offering certainty and order in the troubles of this life and hope for the next, and also moral guidance and the sustaining of cultures. They were inspired by mystical revelation. This was the Age of the Great Faiths. We are now in the Age of Science where we are more likely to have to find out for ourselves. Science is not just reductive, as Mike suggests, but has its grand theories like Relativity, Evolution, Cosmology – not to mention the God Particle! Much of this sounds very much like religion – but alas it only has to do with the physical world. Surely Spirituality *has* to be known by science and the sooner the better – before all respect for the reality and benefit of a spiritual perspective is annihilated from our culture altogether – we need to get on with it.

In my opinion Sigmund Freud was wrong to say, 'At bottom God is nothing more than an exalted father'¹, but he was right to draw attention to a strong spiritual dynamic in the human psyche which needs to be fundamentally cared for, or a Someone to make sense of everything for us, to keep us in order and to give us guidance. A scientific approach would be that typical of the young independent person who needs to find out for themselves. Freud said, as long ago as 1924, that 'Religion needs to be replaced by science'¹ and in 1925 Alice Bailey referred to 'the desired union of science and religion'.²

This is not a cue to get out your EEG machines to measure your brain waves, your hypertension, sleep patterns or the hearing of the aged, as Transcendental Meditators³ and others have done. However useful to some people these external approaches may be, the fact is they have little to do with a science of spirituality which is an 'inner' matter: the non-body part of human beings!

But how can there be a science of what is 'inner'? Mike has said, correctly in my view, that '... scientific method ... is a process of observation, hypothesis formation, prediction, testing, further observation and hypothesis amendment'. I'm glad he used the word 'observation' because we may think that all sciences have to involve experiments, whereas many, including marine biology, zoology, botany, geology, astronomy are primarily observational – even if some experiments are done as a result of the observation. Self-observation and inner self-awareness are also quite possible – but can this be scientific?

Self-observation, hypothesis formation, prediction, testing, further observation and hypothesis amendment could all apply to a science of the inner 'spiritual' world; this will need to be an extension of psychology. Both Freud and Jung claimed their studies of the mind, or psyche, were scientific, and today everyone can find out more about themselves with the Myers Briggs Type Indicator test which is much used in 'don't waste my time' business contexts, and is based on typology researched in academia. Alas, because psychoanalysis has had to prove it can solve difficult human problems, it tends to be associated with people who are considered to be seriously ill. But we all have psyches and therefore a psychology. At the mention of the word most people say 'I don't need that, there's nothing wrong with me!' As Mike & Ferrer⁵ have pointed out, defensive personal politics are one of the biggest factors preventing serious inner research! Notwithstanding, most people who consider they are on a spiritual path will acknowledge that they are in a process of evolution where there is always more potential for growth, as well as having a significant past which they may need to come to terms with – not to mention some experiences that hint of the spiritual.

In science the confirmation of a hypothesis involves more than one person and so there is a need to be objective, which is not considered possible about oneself. Admittedly it is hard and requires that rare quality in spiritual circles – even though it is taught by all religions – of extreme humility, acquired through many years of self-examination. A *scientist of spirit* would need, for instance, a minimum of three years of twice-a-week psychotherapy – maybe ten years! This would not be self-indulgence but inner investigation and the cleansing of the doors of perception – a version of the Delphic Oracles' 'γνώθι σεαυτόν' – 'know thyself'.

In Social & Cultural Anthropology there is a category of research called 'Participant Observation' where there is an expectation of considerable objectivity towards oneself which in its more grounded and reflexive forms is considered to be part of scientific research. In the world of psychotherapy there is group work where, even if nothing is said, or despite this, people learn to sense each other, to empathise, and in individual work there is supervision where a senior therapist works, at a subtle level including non-verbally, with a less experienced therapist. These can be real levels of understanding showing that there is not necessarily a complete barrier between people. An experienced meditation teacher will have similar abilities. In these processes, or something like them, lie the possibilities of knowing, helping and monitoring each other at inner levels – as long as there is real trust and respect. A future science of spirit will need to be an *extension* of psychotherapy, meaning that it must be able to explore beyond the personal psyche; this is possible in meditation.

Sometimes I wonder if those who reported religious experiences to the AHT were in a natural state when they occurred. Given the extreme materialistic pressures on the lives of most people in our time, one might wonder if the 'religious experience' was the only natural thing that happened to them! There is, after all, another category of person who has religious/spiritual experiences and that is the person who feels a natural need to explore spirituality through a practice – one that involves stages of purification, self-examination and meditation and, one might say, becoming a natural person again – despite society. This may lack the innocence of the spontaneous but may be just as natural. Of course this does involve an *intent*, but most of us can tell whether we intend to go to Newcastle or whether we have actually arrived. Equally there is a *tradition* which may influence the results, even though guided by the very real previous spiritual experiences of those guiding the tradition (for instance, monks who wrote down a description of their experiences and how to achieve them). Again, we may have the tradition of eating roast beef for Sunday lunch but most of us can tell whether we had this rather than scotch eggs. 'The map is not the country' as they used to say in the seventies.

I have already mentioned psychotherapy and I need to do so again in the context of meditation and meditation teachers who have been known to abuse their positions - possibly unwittingly. There is now a considerable literature⁴ on the need for personal psychology as well as meditation – Mike, elsewhere, drew our attention to Robert Foreman's excellent *Enlightenment Ain't what it's Cracked Up to Be*⁶ who discovered he needed both.

The idea that God or Spirit is *ineffable* is another obstacle in the path towards a science of spirituality. A few years ago I found myself at a Buddhist Summer Retreat and discovered the subject of focus was Formless Jhana (advanced Samahdi like peacefulness) – not that I stood any chance of achieving this myself. However, several days in, at the evening meal, I found myself, by chance, surrounded by many of the senior teachers of the association who were sharing together their recent meditative experiences of this formless state. Although I couldn't entirely appreciate what they were referring to I could tell that they were understanding each other. The formless was effable.

I should mention that all these people were approaching mid-life, all married with families and holding university level lectureships or senior administrative posts; all capable of a full modern life - and experiencing formless states! They were also capable of sharing very subtle experiences which would be a necessary part of creating the hypothesis of a spiritual science. After all, external science is usually only understood by very small groups of extreme specialists. Future *scientists of spirituality* would have to have a refined and humble academic discrimination as well as be participant observers in meditation. Not easy to achieve!

Roger Coward

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¹ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1924)

² Alice Bailey, *The Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, (Lucis, 1925), p. 678

³ www.tm.org/research-on-meditation

⁴ e.g. John Welwood, *Awakening the Heart: East/West Approaches to Psychotherapy and the Healing Relationship* (Shambhala 1983); Jack Kornfield, *A Path with Heart* (Bantam 1993); Anthony Storr, *Feet of Clay: a study of Gurus* (Free Press 1997)

⁵ Ferrer, J.N., *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (SUNY, 2002),

⁶ Robert Forman, *Enlightenment Ain't What it's Cracked up to Be* (O-Books, 2011). See also issue no. 53 for Robert Forman's article and a review of his book.

What can I say?

Scientific knowledge and the limitations of science to account for physical phenomena

We experience the world at two distinct levels: there is the world of common experience and the world which is known to us only as individuals - our personal world.

Only the first of these provides the material for those sciences that are regarded as exact. In these sciences no scientific fact is established unless the observations on which it rests are precisely repeatable by independent workers. For the world of personal experience no such repeatability is possible and what is true for one may be completely alien to another.

I shall return to this point later but first I shall examine the limitations of science in its provision of explanations for the world of common experience.

The Physical World

It is a widely held view that science provides us with an understanding of natural phenomena. The origin of this misconception is readily found: science has been amazingly successful in explaining, for example, that the planets in the solar system rotate around the earth in elliptical orbits and that mutation-induced differences in DNA between parent and offspring give rise to phenotypic differences between the generations. The reason that these explanations do not lead to a comprehensive understanding of the physical world is that they are essentially superficial – they require that so much is ‘taken as read’ before the offered explanation is developed.

This limitation, though commonly going unrecognised, has been pointed out by several scientists and philosophers. Paul Dirac (Nobel prize in physics in 1933), although a materialist in his early years, changed his view when he was older. He wrote:

It seems to be one of the fundamental features of nature that fundamental physical laws are described in terms of a mathematical theory of great beauty and power, needing quite a high standard of mathematics for one to understand it. You may wonder: Why is nature constructed along these lines? One can only answer that our present knowledge seems to show that nature is so constructed. One could perhaps describe the situation by saying that God is a mathematician of a very high order, and He used very advanced mathematics in constructing the Universe.

Dirac was one of the most outstanding scientists of the 20th Century. His mathematical theory of the electron led to the prediction of anti-matter before it was discovered experimentally. The quotation above might be paraphrased by stating ‘the world is the way it is because that’s the way it is.’

Put in these terms, the idea that at a fundamental level science explains anything is exposed for the fallacy that it is.

The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

The world of the individual

If we have difficulty in comprehending the world of common experience, how much more is this so of our own personal experiences? In the western world where the materialistic paradigm is dominant, it is sometimes defended with remarkable vigour.

There used to be spiritualism, there continues to be ESP (extra-sensory perception) ... Where corruption of children’s minds is at stake, I do not believe in the freedom of the press or freedom

of speech. In my view, publishers who publish or teachers who teach any of the pseudo-sciences as established truth should, on being found guilty, be publicly horsewhipped, and forever banned from further activity in these usually honourable professions.

Ex-director of the U.S. Bureau of Standards. Published in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.

In contrast consider the following quotation from the American psychologist and philosopher William James.

The sciences of nature know nothing of spiritual presences, and on the whole hold no practical commerce whatever with the idealistic conceptions towards which general philosophy inclines. The scientist, so called, is, during his scientific hours at least, so materialistic that one may well say that on the whole the influence of science goes against the notion that religion should be recognised at all.

As I have indicated when quoting Dirac, James' pronouncement about the materialistic attitude of scientists is not universally applicable and there are many very distinguished exceptions. But despite these exceptions, one does recognise that for the most part James is correct in his assertion. However, the materialist paradigm does not deal comfortably with those human experiences that are most significant to those who have them. I could give very many examples so I have had to be very selective. Here is the account of the experience of a small child, recounted in later life. I have taken it from Edward Robinson's book *Living the Questions*.

It was a summer day and I was playing out back of the house, in an alley in the city where we lived. It was one of my happier days, when I had found playmates. A sudden storm came up and interrupted our play. I sat alone out there between the garages behind the house and waited for it to end. It was near noon. The rain ended almost as soon as it came, and the sun shone hot and bright once more. All at once I felt as if I were seeing everything for the first time. The light seemed like gold, the smell of the wet foliage was like perfume, with the rainwater shining and running about in little rivulets, the humming and the buzzing of insects and bees was pleasant to my ears. Everywhere I looked there was beauty. In that dirty alley wherever there was a leaf or a blade of grass it sparkled. I was filled with a great sense of comfort and peace. Now I watched a beetle going about its business, and then a small garden spider, and I was glowing with warmth. It was as if all that was outside of me, I felt to be part of it. Then a thought came, It said 'See! Everything is alive, everything lives. That insect, it has life, the grass, the air even.' And then I felt joy, and with joy, love and then a feeling of reverence.

As members of the Alister Hardy Society will well know, people in all walks of life may experience the numinous. By no means would all of them be considered to be mystics. Here is an extract from Ernest Shackleton's book, *South: The Endurance Expedition*. He wrote:

When I look back on those days I have no doubt that Providence guided us, not only across those snow fields, but across the storm-white sea that separated Elephant Island from our landing place on South Georgia. I know that during that long and racking march of thirty-six hours over the unnamed mountains and glaciers of South Georgia it seemed to me that often we were four, not three. I said nothing to my companions on the point, but afterwards Worsley said to me, 'Boss, I had a curious feeling on the march that there was another person with us'.

Crean confessed to the same idea. One feels 'the dearth of human words, the roughness of mortal speech' in trying to describe things intangible, but a record of our journey would be incomplete without a reference to a subject very near to our hearts.

What are we?

All that we know of the world of experience comes to us via our five senses. Without asking the very difficult (impenetrable) question of the nature of self-awareness we can ask whether the five senses give us a comprehensive view of the world we perceive. The existence of

mystical experiences comprehensively demonstrates they do not. However, mystical experiences are by their very nature not repeatable nor verifiable by independent observers. They therefore fail to satisfy the criteria of established scientific fact and for the sceptic this is sufficient grounds to dismiss them. This is truly an amazing position to take. It must be discarded at some stage in the development of science because it attempts to dismiss the most important aspect of our being.

To illustrate my meaning I give an example. I am sure that many of those who read it will put it aside. My own assurances that the account I give is true will probably satisfy no one but we truly are much more mysterious than we ourselves commonly recognise.

A rare example of communication:

My brother Jack was a bomber pilot in WWII and in early 1943 he was shot down returning from a raid on Stuttgart. My mother was very psychic and the uncertainty about the fate of my brother was a strong incentive for my mother to attempt to use her paranormal gifts to obtain news about him. Accordingly, on the night of the receipt of the telegram reporting Jack missing my parents had a séance. They could hardly have anticipated its outcome. There were just the two of them. Suddenly my mother got to her feet, stepped over to my father and grasped his hands in hers. 'Dad it's me. I can see you,' said my mother in an excited voice. My father recognised that this was Jack. 'So, you've passed over.' said my father expecting that his son was now dead. 'No I'm not' was the reply. 'I'm all right. They haven't caught me yet.' My father then asked for confirmation that it really was Jack who was communicating with him, 'I changed my will before I was briefed' then 'I must go now. Tell Mum her table is all right'. He laughed and that was the end of the link.

My father was doubtful about Jack changing his will as he was keeping it in his own strongbox. However, very shortly after Jack's communication a letter came from the tail gunner of Jack's old crew (Jack had not flown with his usual crew on the raid on which he was shot down but with a composite one made up from a number of different nationals). The letter expressed the sympathy of Jack's old crew member and said how popular Jack had been with his crew. He also said that the last thing Jack had done before he was briefed for the raid on Germany was to change his will. This document was now in the hands of the Padre on Jack's bomber station.

There is a very informative sequel to these events. After over two years as a POW, latterly in Stalag Luft 3, Jack returned home. When his father asked him what he knew about the night that they had communicated, Jack said he knew nothing. It was true that he had not been captured at that time and he thought that he might have been sleeping, but he was not sure.

Don Mason 2013

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Experience

Having noticed that *De Numine* and RERC don't appear to value dreams, I would like to point out that some must be classified as real transcendental experiences in their own right. I have many times dreamed of things – often out of the blue – that were to happen the very day following the dream. And often, they are what can only be described as valuable teaching material. They are a way the Spiritual Guiding Process can quite easily access our otherwise too busy intellects.

I submit an account of my dream that was printed in *Quaker Monthly* as a case in point. I wonder what AHSSSE will make of it!

The 'Muslim' (A dream)

The date was 17th January 1999 and it was a Sunday morning. The dream happened just before waking up and was as clear as reality. I was to attend Caerleon Meeting for Worship that morning, and the previous night before sleep I was wondering if I would be moved to give testimony for what would really be the first time:

I was in France house hunting for a holiday home, and had found an old house that I wanted my husband and daughter to see. I took them straightaway to the village and to the house. It was a stone built, very old house on two main levels, but the rooms frequently connected through short passages and up or down a few steps. It was situated directly on the main street. We entered the upper floor from the road – it was built on a hillside, and as we approached the lower floor we were aware that there were lots of people there. The talk was all in French – in fact the entire dream was in French, which unfortunately, I only slightly understand. A young man, perhaps in his early thirties took us under his wing, and told us about the house and the village. It seemed that, without exactly being a community house, it was used by the village community. People popped in for a drink and a chat. It was the centre of village life.

The room we were in had an empty stone fireplace near where we were standing, and we were looking along a wide passageway-like room in which people were talking. It was hardly lit by the daylight, so when the door opened at the far end, light flooded through. Our 'guide' heard the approach of a noisy party and told us with a knowing wink that we were about to meet a girl they called 'the Muslim'.

She came straight towards us, surrounded by a group of her friends. And though she had the air of someone very single-minded, she was walking as if slightly inebriated. She walked directly up to us, looked us straight in the eyes and as she did so, she thumped each of the three of us in turn on the heart as she said, 'Le temple du Dieu, là, il' là, il est là.' The hesitancy of the French added to that impression of being slightly drunk. I thought it sounded very like what I'd heard Muslims recite in prayer, yet she was from a Christian culture, and anyway, was speaking French!! I felt that if we were to buy the house, we would have to accept the whole community and their way of religion; but that was now at the back of our minds. We were taken aback to say the least.

When I sat down in Meeting my heart began to pound wildly and my spine to tingle, and I knew I would have to tell the Meeting the essence of the dream or I would not be allowed to partake of the silence. I waited till the time was right then gave my testimony. Afterwards I was allowed to become deep and peaceful. I prayed for us all to acknowledge our *Inner Temples* and for these to join to form a Unity.

The date is 27th March 2002, and I am recently returned from a weekend 'Introduction to Sufism' at Charney Manor. At some point Garry Doherty, who was leading the weekend, recited the Islamic prayer, the first part of which is 'La il'lah illallah' – 'There is no god but

God'. Wow! Garry wrote this prayer down for me, and was amazed when I told him why I was making this request. He said that Muslims, when reciting this prayer sometimes thump their chests, the chest representing the heart and the centre in the body where love resides, and therefore the part of the body open to God's inspiration.

May this strange connectedness be a lesson to us all!

Mary Cook

I agree that dreams can be underrated as premonitions, messages etc. in our culture. I would draw Mary's and other members' attention to articles by Amjad Hussein and Alan Underwood (issues 42 and 53) and Alan's review of Clarsach, The Dreams of Clarsach: Dreams of Divine Teaching for the Soul's Healing also in issue no. 53. De Numine welcomes dreams! (Ed.)

Reports

Updates on the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre(s)

The AHRERC at Trinity Saint David and Glyndwr Universities

The past year has been an interesting one for the Trustees, given some uncertainty regarding the stability of the activity of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre within the University of Wales Trinity St David. We were surprised and saddened by the redundancy from the University of our Director of Research, Dr Greg Barker. We were also saddened that the University was no longer in a position to offer a dedicated MA in the field of Religious and Spiritual Experience.

As a consequence of all this, the Trustees decided to stand back and to evaluate their connection with the University. In a series of wide ranging discussions and explorations the Trustees have considered whether it might be wise to withdraw from Trinity St David, whether it might be possible to reinvigorate the activities of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre at Trinity St David, or whether it would be prudent to scope the establishment of a new relationship with a different university.

Several universities came to the attention of the Trustees as possible new partners to work with the Alister Hardy Trust, and among them Glyndŵr University emerged as a particularly strong candidate in light of three factors. Glyndŵr University has already established a good working relationship with a similar Trust active in the area of promoting research in the field of religion, namely the St Mary's and St Giles' Centre. Glyndŵr University has a strong team of academics under the leadership of Professor Christopher Alan Lewis capable of giving an effective lead on research in religious and spiritual experience. Glyndŵr University is in a position to offer opportunities for a research-led Masters programme in religious and spiritual experiences, as well as doctoral level research.

The Trustees held a meeting at Glyndŵr University with the Vice Chancellor (Professor Michael Scott) and then a working group appointed by the Trustees held a meeting at the

University of Wales Trinity St David with the Vice Chancellor (Professor Medwin Hughes). In the light of these meetings with the two Vice Chancellors a series of decisions were made by the Trustees on Wednesday 25 September. The main decisions were as follows:

1. To retain one Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales Trinity St David, where the archives, library and artefacts will continue to be lodged on loan from the Trust, and where undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and research will be promoted.
2. To inaugurate a second Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre at Glyndŵr University (in parallel with the one at Trinity St David), where undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and research will be promoted.

Dr Bettina Schmidt has been appointed as Director of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre at Trinity St David, and Professor Christopher Alan Lewis has been appointed as Director of the Alister Hardy Research Centre at Glyndŵr. The Trustees are confident that these new arrangements will further the objectives of the Alister Hardy Trust and provide better opportunities for the Society to fulfil its objectives and to serve its members.

*The Revd Canon Professor Leslie J Francis
Chair, The Alister Hardy Trust*

Update on the AHRERC at Trinity Saint David Lampeter

The last year has seen many changes at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. I am delighted to give you an update about the recent developments and a glimpse into the future. Due to the unfortunate departure of Dr Gregory Barker there had been a gap in the directorate of the centre which was filled in July 2013 when the VC of the University appointed me as the new Director of the AHRERC (confirmed later by the Alister Hardy Trust). I am honoured by the trust in me and hope to guide the Centre to a better and creative future.

Since taking on the role I have worked closely with the I.T. Office of the University to make the Alister Hardy database of personal accounts of religious experience available online via the website of the AHRERC. While in the past researchers had to come to Lampeter to work with the database, in future it will be possible to access the accounts online. As before, the narratives remain anonymous and only the archive supervisor, Jean Matthews, will be able to see and edit the full entry. Access will be given to every member of the Society who submits a request and signs the confidentiality form. Currently we have given access already to a small number of people (mainly the Trustees) but soon access will be available to all members who want to use the database for research.

Another development is the validation of a new Master by Research (MRes) degree in Religious Experience. The new programme will include a relatively short taught part (three modules) which will give students an overview of the study of religious experience as well as research methodologies. In the second part of the programme the student will have then the opportunity to work on a longer dissertation than previously on a topic in the area of religious and spiritual experience. The first students will begin the programme in October 2014, with applications welcome from Spring 2014 onwards. (Enquiries to b.schmidt@tsd.ac.uk)

Apart from supporting researchers from all over the world, AHRERC will also develop its own research projects. Currently two post-doc applications are under consideration by the British Academy, as well as one network application by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In order to support this initiative I have created a Research Committee and invited colleagues from the university as well as other networks to join. Among them are Dr Fiona Bowie, Dr Nick Campion, Dr Thomas Jansen and Dr David Rousseau. Our aim is to encourage and develop new research ideas for the Centre.

In order to publicise the Centre further it was decided (and approved by the Trust) to make the second series of Occasional Papers available free online. (It will still be possible to buy hard copies via Jean Matthews). The PDFs will soon be available from the Centre's website www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/alister-hardy-religious-experience-research-centre/. Later this year I hope to develop a new on-line journal for the study of religious experience (with peer-reviewed academic articles and research reports) that will also be available free from the AHRERC website.

2014 will see many developments; I feel positive about the future for the centre which is well located in Lampeter. The School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies shows support of the topic by incorporating, for instance, papers about religious experience into the annual research seminar series which is open to the public (see the forthcoming lecture below*). In future I hope to develop an annual Alister Hardy Lecture in Lampeter (depending on funding).

I want to conclude my report by expressing my thanks and gratitude to the Society for its ongoing support.

Dr Bettina Schmidt, Director of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre

*Dr David Rousseau, *Near death experiences and the mind-body relationship: a systems-theoretical approach*: 4pm Wednesday 14th May 2014, Founders Library, Trinity Saint David, Lampeter.

Dr Rousseau, Director of the Centre for Systems Philosophy (Surrey UK) and Member of the Centre for Spirituality Studies (University of Hull) is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at AHRERC Lampeter

In order to launch the Religious Experience Research Centre under the new directorship of Dr Schmidt, the School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies is organising a one-day conference on *The Study of Religious Experience in Lampeter*. It will take place on July 4th 2014 (10-5), in the Founders' Library. The conference is part of the Graduate Summer School of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David but open to the public. The programme will be circulated later.



Open Day 2013

This report on the lectures given at Open day is introduced by Marianne Rankin:

This year Open Day was an 'in-house' affair. In the morning we heard from the Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust, Revd Professor Leslie Francis and in the afternoon from David Greenwood, Vice Chair and Treasurer of the Trust and then from me (Director of Communications).

The 2013 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture was entitled *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn: the psychological investigation of mystical experiences*, delivered by Professor Leslie Francis, Chair Alister Hardy Trust. This was both enchanting and informative. Professor Francis began with a very short introduction and then I had the privilege of reading the most moving passage from Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, which told of the mystical experience of Ratty and Mole. This formed the basis of Leslie's presentation. How, we wondered, would Alister Hardy have dealt with the experience of those woodland creatures?

In the afternoon David Greenwood considered *Art and the Numinous, Can the numinous be expressed through landscape painting?* He treated us to a comprehensive overview of the art of the transcendent with a range of illustrations including work by Dürer, Raphael, Rubens, Caspar David Friedrich, Runge, Samuel Palmer and Rothko. This was followed by my presentation on the art of Friedrich and his depiction of nature as a window to the divine.

Both the Memorial Lecture and David Greenwood's lecture were recorded and CDs are available from John Franklin. Below is a précis of each talk.

The Piper at the Gates of Dawn

Introduction

I have long been fascinated by so many aspects of Kenneth Grahame's masterpiece, *The Wind in the Willows*, but especially by the chapter entitled 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn'. If you have not read that chapter recently, it is well worth refreshing your memory of it. You will recall how that chapter begins with Mole returning from a late supper with Otter. Mole is far from at ease, because Otter had been far from at ease over supper, although trying to do his best to maintain his hospitable manner. Like any good father Otter was distressed because Little Portly had gone missing.

Resolved to help his friend, Mole recruits the Water Rat and together they row their boat out into the dark night to join the hunt for Little Portly. It is not until first light, however, that there is any sign of hope. But when hope comes, it comes in the form of what I can only describe as a profoundly religious or spiritual experience. It is this spiritual or religious experience that formed the substance of the Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture that I was privileged to deliver in Oxford on 5 October 2013.

Mystical experience

Religious and spiritual experiences may occur in a variety of forms. I understand mystical experience to be a definable subset of religious and spiritual experiences, and a subset that has been central to my own empirical research into religious experience. I wanted to test the idea that what Kenneth Grahame describes in the Piper at the Gates of Dawn is a classic example of mystical experience.

The first step in testing this idea is to agree on what constitutes a mystical experience. My guide in this has been the analysis offered by Happold (1963) that builds on and extends the

analysis offered by William James (1902/1985). James proposed four defining characteristics of mystical experience and Happold extended that list to seven defining characteristics. It is these seven characteristics that have been employed in the Mystical Orientation Scale (MOS). The seven characteristics are as follows:

Ineffability is a negative description emphasising the private or incommunicable quality of mystical experience. According to James (1982, p. 380), those who have this kind of experience report that 'it defies expression, that no adequate report of its content can be given in words'. The MOS accesses ineffability with items like 'experiencing something I could not put into words'.

Noesis emphasises how mystical experiences carry states of insight into levels of truth inaccessible to the discursive intellect. According to James (1982, pp. 380-381), those who have this kind of experiences regard them 'to be also states of knowledge ... They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain.' The MOS accesses noesis with items like 'knowing I was surrounded by a presence'.

Transiency emphasises how mystical experience is brief, inconstant, and intermittent. According to James (1982, p. 381), mystical states do not endure for long though they may recur 'and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what is felt as an inner richness and importance.' The MOS accesses transiency with items like, 'the passing moments of divine revelation'.

Passivity emphasises both the experience of being controlled by a superior power, and the undeserved, unsought-for nature of the mystical experience. According to James (1982, p. 381), mystical states are 'not passive interruptions, an invasion of the subject's inner life with no residual recollection of significance, and this distinguishes them from phenomena like prophetic speech, automatic writing, and mediumistic trance'. The MOS accesses passivity with items like, 'being grasped by a power beyond my control'.

Consciousness of the oneness of everything emphasises how mystical experience conveys the sense in which existence is perceived as a unity. According to Happold (1963, p. 47), although it may be expressed in different ways by Hindu, Sufi and Christian contemplatives, the resolution of the dilemma of duality through this sense of the oneness of everything 'is at the heart of the most highly developed mystical consciousness'. The MOS accesses consciousness of the oneness of everything with items like, 'sensing the unity of all things'.

Sense of timelessness emphasises how mystical experiences appear to have a timeless quality, to occupy an entirely different dimension from that of any known sense of time and to be wholly unrelated to anything that can be measured by what is known as clock-time. According to Happold (1963, p. 48), 'the mystic feels himself to be in a dimension where time is not, where 'all is always now'.' The MOS accesses the sense of timelessness with items like, 'being conscious only of timelessness and eternity'.

True ego emphasises how mystical experience speaks to the deep, the true inner-self, and how such experience addresses the soul or the inner spirit. According to Happold (1963, p. 48) mystical experience gives rise to 'the conviction that the familiar phenomenal *ego* is not the real *I*.' The MOS accesses this notion of the true ego with items like, 'feeling my everyday self absorbed in the depths of being'.

The Gates of Dawn

Having defined the seven characteristics of mystical experience, the next step for my lecture was to test the evidence for each of these characteristics within Kenneth Grahame's chapter on the Piper at the Gates of Dawn. This is what I found.

I found evidence for *ineffability*, for experience that defies expression. Mole and Rat are not able to give a coherent account of what they are experiencing. They can only allude to what they are experiencing in symbolic or poetic form; but the poetry is so powerful:

'This is the place of my song-dream, the place the music played to me ...' whispered the Rat, as if in a trance.

I found evidence for *noesis*, for experience that gives insight into a level of truth inaccessible to the discursive intellect, for experience that conveys revelations full of significance and importance. For Mole:

Without seeing, he knew it could only mean that some august presence was very, very near.

I found evidence for *transiency*, for experience that is brief and that does not last for long. For Mole that experience was so intense and yet so short:

All this he saw, for one moment breathless and intense, vivid on the morning sky; and still, as he looked, he lived.

I found evidence for *passivity*, for experience that is wholly gratuitous and where the subject remains passively controlled by a higher power. For Mole it felt as if the experience fell upon him.

Then suddenly the Mole felt a great awe fall upon him, an awe that turned his muscles into water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground.

I found evidence for *consciousness of the oneness of everything*, for experience of the oneness of everything that resolves the dilemma of duality. Mole felt entirely possessed by the experience and absorbed into it.

Breathless and transfixed the Mole stopped rowing as the liquid run of that glad piping broke on him like a wave, caught him up, and possessed him utterly.

I found evidence of a *sense of timelessness*, for experience that stands outside clock time, as past, present and future lose their significance, and the present moment takes over.

For Mole this sense of timelessness took over as they glided onwards in the morning light and as they experienced the world around them as if for the first time. On either side of them, as they glided onwards, the rich meadow-grass seemed that morning of a freshness and a greenness unsurpassable. Never had they noticed the roses so vivid.

I found evidence of the *true ego*, where experience puts the normal everyday self into perspective, absorbed within a greater power. It was at the moment when Mole looked into the eyes of the friend and helper that he recognised his true self.

Mole looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper; saw the stern, hooked nose between the kindly eyes that were looking down on them humorously.

Conclusion

In my lecture I had set out to explore the recognised characteristics of mystical experience, then to test whether the account of Mole's experience of coming face to face with the Piper at the Gates of Dawn met each of those characteristics. My conclusion is that Mole's experience does fit those characteristics and that it is consequently legitimate to classify Mole's experience as a mystical experience. What I would like to do next is to test the extent to which some of the experiences lodged within the Archive of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre might offer an equally good fit to those seven criteria. And part of me regrets that Mole never lodged his experience in that Archive.

Leslie J Francis
Chair, The Alister Hardy Trust

Art and the Numinous

As a number of members know I have for many years been pursuing a PhD, and it was felt that I should communicate to the Society some aspects of my researches. It was agreed therefore that I should share the afternoon session on Open Day 2013 with Marianne and demonstrate how art, and particularly landscape paintings, can be used to good effect as aids to devotion and indeed in some cases help the viewer to perceive that which may 'lie beyond the veil'.

The particular period I am studying is from 1780 to 1880, but for my talk I wanted to set the context by looking at the development of art which endeavoured to point to the transcendent from the Renaissance to the middle of the 20th Century. Two of the greatest artists of the Renaissance who created sacred art to be used as aids to devotion were Dürer (1471-1528) and Raphael (1483-1520) and I examined one work from each of these artists. Then, with Rubens (1577-1640) and Claude Lorraine (1600-1682) we moved to the period in which landscape became acceptable and indeed began to be used to signify or suggest the sacred. An examination of one of each of their paintings was included in my talk, after which I moved to the period of Romanticism (which is the core period of my studies) and considered the works of the Nazarenes (also known as the Brotherhood of St. Luke) including Overbeck and Ferdinand Oliver, works by Palmer (in England) and Caspar David Friedrich (in Germany). The last three of these artists expressed the idea of transcendence entirely through the use of landscape. Finally I considered the work of Marc Rothko who in the twentieth century developed landscape to a point of almost abstraction and in so doing concentrated the energy of the viewer into a meditation on that which may lie beyond the dimensions of the physical world.

For the focus of my talk I examined one painting from each of these artists and showed how it could possibly assist the viewer to gain some insight into the non-rational (to use an expression from Rudolf Otto) characteristics that can be attributed to that which lies beyond. As Otto emphasises, the non-rational, whilst eluding the conceptual way of understanding, must be in some way or other within our grasp or else absolutely nothing could be asserted of it. This line of thought then leads us to mysticism, or the ineffable, or indeed to over-simplify Otto, the numinous, and it is in discerning something of the ineffable that the visual arts can be of assistance. The earlier paintings that I examined had Biblical themes, but as mentioned above, landscape began to assume greater significance in the endeavour to express this living force that exists within the Abrahamic religions.

I ended my talk by looking at the similarities between Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* and one of the colour field paintings of the Russian-born American painter Rothko. It is interesting to note that Rothko was influenced by Kierkegaard and, in particular, the book *Fear and Trembling*, which deals with the story about the preparedness of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19). Rothko emphasises that his paintings have intimations of sacrifice and death and could be regarded like facades of a building with just one door, or maybe a window or two open. This leaves much to be gained from study and contemplation on the part of the viewer. It is quite possible that Rothko considered his pictures to be works of art with a religious context, inasmuch as it is known that when he was given a commission to produce a series of paintings for a restaurant he 'immediately envisioned the refectory of the San Marco church with the wall painting by Fra Angelico'. It would appear from his various statements that his paintings were intended to provide pointers to transcendental Truth, and the fact his paintings are known to have induced religious experiences in some viewers suggests that these paintings could indeed point to the transcendent. It is the sense of trying to look beyond the horizon in these large colour field pictures which particularly gives them the transcendent quality.

What I tried to do in the afternoon's talk was to present a short survey of paintings which endeavoured in very different ways to signify the relationship between mankind and the Creator God. The origin of this objective can be traced back much earlier than the Renaissance, in fact to sacred hieroglyphs (Egyptian carvings). Cordula Grewe, who is a specialist in the works of the German Romantic painters, highlights the way in which the hieroglyph has been transformed into the symbolic pictography writing of Schlegel who 'presented the hieroglyph as a form of shorthand through which God could at once reveal and conceal his mysteries from man'. She continues: '... for Schlegel, this encrypted mode constituted the essence of pictorial representation: 'Every *true* painting ought to be a hieroglyph, a *divine symbol*.'

I concluded my lecture by examining whether or not a religious work of art could be considered in the same way as a sacrament. The sacrament is a gift to those who have chosen to accept it and I see a valid comparison here between the acceptances of the sacrament with the acceptance of the experience of the transcendent that may be induced by consideration of a hieroglyph. I would therefore postulate that a hieroglyph which has been blessed by a Priest or Bishop should attain the same status as the bread, the wine or the anointing oils and become an integral part of the service as an aid to devotion and worship.

There is a further parallel. Although the gift of the sacraments, through justification, is available to all – to choose acceptance of the grace of God, not all choose to do so. In the same way, whilst many would accept the suggestion of the transcendent Truth that is induced or triggered by these hieroglyphs, not everyone is affected in the same way or even affected at all. Furthermore, another parallel that can be drawn is that of religious experience itself – some may have an experience that is initiated by a particular activity, or by nature, or by a particular piece of music or by celebration of the Eucharist. Just as these experiences (including out of body and near-death experiences) have been shown by the many records of such experiences collected by the Alister Hardy Trust to be very personal, so I would suggest that the experience of the transcendent or mystical induced by a particular work of art is a personal one dependent not only on the characteristics of the work of art but also on the subjective perception of the viewer. With all these parallels between works of art and the artefacts used in Church Services, between the acceptance of the sacraments or oils by penitent communicants and the experience of viewing a hieroglyph by those who are open to receiving such experiences, I propose that the proposition to regard blessed hieroglyphs in the same category as the consecrated elements is strong indeed.

To recap: Schlegel wrote 'Every *true* painting ought to be a hieroglyph, a *divine symbol*.' As a divine symbol the painting must take its place alongside the other consecrated artefacts utilised by Christians in their day-to-day worship.

David Greenwood

This is a much shortened version of the lecture and if anyone would like an electronic copy of the original, please send your e-mail address to me at: d.greenwood@tsd.ac.uk

Bibliography:

Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958 (2nd ed.)

Cordula Grewe, *Painting the Sacred in the Age of Romanticism*. Farnham (Surrey): Ashgate, 2009

Caspar David Friedrich, Landscape as Icon

My talk was given at the end of a long day, so I offered an overview of the life and work of Caspar David Friedrich with many pictures and not much theory. There was a link with the previous talk as David Greenwood had spoken about Friedrich among many other artists. I have a German background and have been familiar with the artist as long as I can remember, but his work is not well known in UK. I often use his paintings to illustrate my talks on religious experience as his themes have a deep spiritual resonance.

Werner Hofmann considers Friedrich's principal achievement to be the invention of 'landscape as icon' and when I read those words, I realised just why I loved Friedrich as much as I do – although I had never analysed my reasons. Hofmann explains it as imbuing detailed landscape paintings with spiritual and religious significance, but for me it goes deeper than that. Icons are windows to the divine, links between this world and the transcendent, and that – it seems to me – is how Friedrich paints nature. He saw 'the divine ... present in everything, even grains of sand'.

Friedrich wanted his art to elicit different responses and interpretations, 'An artist's greatest merit' is 'to stimulate the spirit, and arouse thoughts, feelings and sensations in the viewer, even if they are not his own.'

Tracing the artist's life, I picked out pictures and looked at the salient points of his work and the responses to it. Caspar David Friedrich was born in 1774 on September 5th in the small Baltic coastal town of Greifswald, now in northern Germany. Then it was under Swedish rule and remained so until the Vienna Congress in 1815.

Friedrich was brought up in an ascetic, protestant environment. Tragedy in his young years may have exacerbated an inborn tendency toward solitude and melancholy; his mother and two sisters died when Caspar was young, but worst of all was the death of his brother Johann Christoffer at the age of thirteen. Caspar witnessed his younger brother fall through the ice of a frozen lake and drown right in front of him. Some accounts even suggest that Johann Christoffer perished while trying to rescue Caspar, who was also in danger on the ice.

Many of Friedrich's paintings reflect his preoccupation with death and the grave but they are not without hope.

Friedrich began his formal study of art in Greifswald in 1790 and moved to Dresden in 1798, which became his home for the rest of his life. It was a centre of artistic activity and it was there that he established his reputation as an artist. Friedrich would draw in India and sepia ink and use watercolour. It is unclear when he finally took up oil painting, but it was probably after the age of thirty.

One reason why Friedrich's work appeals to me is its similarity to oriental landscape painting. European painters aim to fill the canvas, whereas oriental art is emptier, leaving space for the *chi* – energy – to flow. Friedrich also does this, often with a large empty sky or the use of mist and cloud separating different parts of the painting. He did not like painters of nature who as he put it, 'overload pictures by piling up objects beside, behind and on top of each other ... Things that are separated in nature by large intervening spaces are crowded together all touching each other, overfilling and oversaturating the eye, and making an unpleasant, disquieting impression on the viewer'.

Friedrich painted his first major oil painting at 34 years old. *The Cross in the Mountains*, now known as the *The Tetschen Altar*, was an altarpiece panel exhibited in 1808. This is an obvious

example of nature as icon. It depicts the crucified Christ as a carved figure suspended between heaven and earth at the top of a mountain – alone, illuminated by the stylized rays of the setting sun, surrounded by dark pines. The work met with controversy, as it was the first time in Christian art that a pure landscape was used as the panel of an altarpiece. But it was also his first painting to gain wide appraisal.

One of Friedrich's earliest oil paintings was the *Monk by the Sea* (1809). This also caused some adverse comment – notably from Goethe, who suggested that it might just as well be viewed upside down. The monk is placed alone on the sandy shore, with the sea and sky in turmoil; man is insignificant in the face of the overwhelming but glorious power of nature. Friedrich suggested that an artist should 'close your bodily eye so that you may see your picture first with the spiritual eye. Then bring to the light of day that which you have seen in the darkness so that it may react upon others from the outside inwards'.

In 1818, Friedrich, then 44, married Caroline Bommer, who was 19 years his junior, and his newfound family life was reflected in his work - female figures appear and his palette is brighter.

The *Wanderer above a Sea of Mists* (1818) is perhaps the best known of all Friedrich's paintings and is typical in the use of a *Rückenfigur*, a figure painted from the back, with whom the viewer looks at the same landscape. Friedrich maintained that 'The artist should paint not only what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him. If, however, he sees nothing within him, then he should also refrain from painting that which he sees before him.'

Sadly, at the end of his life, as Romanticism passed from fashion, Friedrich's reputation declined and he died in poverty in Dresden in May 1840. His passing was little noticed within the artistic community.

The attitude to the spiritual underlying Friedrich's work is that shared by his contemporary and friend, the philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who has sometimes been called the 'Father of Modern Theology'. In 1799 he published the splendidly entitled '*Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*' (*On Religion. Letters to its Cultured Despisers*). The 'cultured despisers' were his own circle of friends in Berlin and his book was in essence a plea for a return to innate religious feeling, to a focus on religious experience. He encouraged people to stop judging religion by the institution of the church, arcane learning, doctrine and dogma, but rather to look at their own inner experience of the infinite, their intuition and feeling: '... follow the voice of your inner self unconditionally, for it is the Divine in us and does not lead us astray.'

Both Schleiermacher and Friedrich sought to free what we might now call spirituality from what they saw as the fetters of dogmatic religion, and both called for a response from the heart rather than the rational attitude of the Enlightenment. Hence Friedrich's churches, painted either as ruined or ethereal visions. As spiritual experience offers a light in the darkness, a glimpse of the beyond, so Caspar David Friedrich's paintings capture those moments of illumination and the depth of beauty in nature.

Marianne Rankin

AHS Annual General Meeting 2013

The Annual General Meeting this year was held at the University Catholic Chaplaincy, Rose Place, St. Aldates, Oxford, on Saturday 6th October, and attended by some 35 members and guests. Andy Burns, Chair of the Society, welcomed all.

The Minutes of the AGM of 2012 were agreed and signed. Under Matters Arising, it was reported that, due to current, and possible further, changes in the administrative situation of the Centre, the questions of publicity on local radio and other media, possible weekend conference with the CFPSS, and digitalising AHRERC publications had been put on hold for the time being.

Chair's Report: Andy Burns, in his report, covered the main issues of the past year, including ongoing discussions concerning the future of the AHRERC, archive and library; and on certain complaints, now resolved, which had led to the instituting of a formal Complaints procedure and the seeking of legal advice, leading to the need for clarification and amendment to the Society's Rules. He referred to the activities of the Local Groups, thanking the Group leaders and members involved; and mentioned especially the successful 'Spiritual Alliance' one-day conference held in London on 8th June and the 'Annual Gathering' held at Llantarnam Abbey in Wales, formerly an all-Wales event, this year opened up to all Society members, and now being considered as a regular Society event. The Society remains buoyant, and, with an optimistic look at the future, he thanked Jean Matthews and Patricia Murphy for their work in the production of *De Numine*, and other Committee members and members for their work and support over the past year.

Chair of Trustees' Report: Professor Leslie Francis reported on the position of the AHRERC at Lampeter, mentioning the sad loss of the Director Dr Greg Barker, his responsibilities being taken over by Dr Bettina Schmidt, and the loss of a dedicated MA in Religious and Spiritual Experience at Trinity Saint David, Lampeter. Possible options regarding the future of the Centre were being considered; these included staying at UWTSD at Lampeter; moving to Glyndwr University at Wrexham; or possibly having a presence at both Universities. Following visits to Glyndwr University and further discussions with UWTSD, it had been agreed to retain AHRERC, its archive and library at Lampeter, and to inaugurate a second AHRERC at Glyndwr University (in parallel with TSD) where undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and research will be promoted. In answer to a question regarding the Directorate, it was reported that this was currently being considered and, regarding continuation of Greg Barker's work with students, an assurance was given regarding continuation of links established with Welsh schools, Coleg Sir Gar and Coleg Ceredigion (6th form County Higher Education Colleges) – the position was unknown as yet regarding links with English schools.

Directors' Report: This, produced by Wendy Xerri and Bettina Schmidt, was introduced by Andy Burns, who reported that Wendy Xerri has now left Lampeter and had resigned as Director of RERC; the archive database had been upgraded to run on SQL allowing for a web portal now to be developed giving global access to the accounts of spiritual/religious experience. It had been proposed to link the School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies at Lampeter to the School of Psychology at Swansea Metropolitan, which has become part of UWTSD. Details remained to be worked out regarding access to the archive database, but this would likely be restricted to bona fide researchers who should be members of the Society. Access by user-name and password, and for a limited period. Wendy was warmly thanked for her work and contribution to the Centre during her period as Director at

Lampeter. Finally, there had been good progress and outcomes in the MA courses in Religious Experience and Religious Studies.

Hon. Treasurer's Report: David Greenwood, reported a great improvement in the Trust's finances from the position two years ago due to generous legacies from the late John Meldrum and the estates of Mr. and Mrs. Buckmaster and Mrs. Banks. The bank balances (at the end of April) stood at £123,137.36 in the HSBC current account; £1,293.64 in the CAF Bursary account; and £28,007.59 in the CAF General account. This, together with a further payment received in May of £68,099.12, and investment of funds, approximately £120,708, with EFG Harris Allday brings the Trust's total funds to approximately £341,345. The accounts will be published in the Spring 2014 issue of *De Numine*. A warm tribute was given to David by the Chair, with thanks from the floor.

Hon. Membership Secretary's report: Andy Burns read Marian MacPolin's report, which showed currently 261 members registered on the database together with 48 further mailing list subscribers. Since March, we had gained 7 new members, but lost 9 members through cancellation, death or leaving no forwarding address - and 10 members have failed to renew their subscriptions after two reminders. It was pointed out that there were some anomalies due to changes in the subscription rates some time ago, and changes in members' circumstances, eg. change to Senior Citizen status or no longer eligible for the lower Student rate: these were currently being looked into, and an announcement would be made in the next issue of *De Numine*.

The Archive Supervisor's Report: was also read by Andy Burns, this mentioning that longer articles presented for publication in *De Numine*, are now being included on the Society website, with abstracts now being included in the journal. David Greenwood outlined Jean's activities, reporting that she still has a year to run on her contract of employment - and that the Trust was looking to the appointment of a qualified archivist to work on the AHRERC's archive of administrative records and papers of interest other than accounts of spiritual/religious experience.

Director of Communications Report: Marianne Rankin, introduced by Andy Burns, reported on her activities during the year, referring in particular to the 8th June one-day conference, *Spirituality for a World in Crisis, Working towards a Spiritual Alliance*, which had brought together for the first time representatives from many different spiritual and religious organisations and was attended by over 100 delegates. Already bearing fruit, a '*One Spirit Alliance*' has been formed and a follow-up conference is being planned for the 28th June next year at Colet House, Barons Court, West London. Also, following from the 8th June conference, *Spiritual Regeneration*, a Facebook Group has been set up, with a growing membership, advertising events and offering a forum for discussion. She said the need and aim for the Society is to promote our activities and to make our work on spiritual experience more widely known. Answering a question, she said that a major publicity drive had been deferred pending the resolution of the future direction of AHRERC and Society.

Amendment to the Rules of the Society: Proposed amendments to the Rules of the Society were reported. These, agreed by the AHSSSE Committee on 12th September and by the Trustees on 25th September 2013, were discussed. Answering a question with regard to 'complaints', it was explained that this was a separate matter, with its own procedure. Following this, acceptance of the amendments was proposed by Rowena Rudkin, seconded by Jonathan Robinson, and was approved unanimously.

AHSSSE Committee elections: the following were nominated, and elected unopposed:

Marianne Rankin (present co-opted member), for a period of three years: Proposed by John Franklin, Seconded by Andy Burns;

Tanya Garland for a period of three years: Proposed by Andy Burns, Seconded by Marianne Rankin.

Averil French for a period of three years: Proposed by Marianne Rankin, Seconded by John Franklin;

[Subsequently, it was learnt the Averil French had sadly died (see obituary on page 38). This leaves a vacancy on the Committee – and nominations to fill this vacancy are welcome.]

Under Any Other Business, a question regarding the position of Dr Greg Barker was asked: in reply, it was stated that, following his departure from Lampeter, it was believed he was now a Visiting Research Fellow at Winchester University, but that this would be verified. A vote of thanks and appreciation to Greg was moved from the floor, and was supported unanimously

The date of the next Annual General Meeting: it was reported that this has not yet been fixed. The venue of the Catholic Chaplaincy was very much liked, and it was agreed that it should be explored for Open Day next year, subject to cost and assessment of the improvements being made to the Friends Meeting House in St. Giles, Oxford.

[Subsequently, this was fixed for Saturday 4th October 2014 at the Catholic Chaplaincy in St. Aldates, Oxford.]

John Franklin, Hon. Secretary

[Copies of the full Minutes of the AGM and written reports presented at the meeting can be obtained from: John Franklin, 21 Park Vista, Greenwich, London, SE10 9LZ – please send stamped and addressed envelope C5 (162 x 229mm) size, or similar]

From the Membership Secretary

Anyone with a serious interest in spiritual or religious experience may join as a member of the Alister Hardy Society and enjoy the advantages of full membership. Members receive regular newsletters, and invitations to lectures and seminars including the annual Members' Day gathering and the Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture. Members are invited to contribute to the journal, use the Library at the University of Trinity Saint David (postal service available), and a book service is available for the purchase of books. Benefits of full membership include:

- Subscription to the Society's journal *De Numine*
- Information on Society events and meetings
- Use of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David libraries at Lampeter, which houses the Alister Hardy Trust's own collection of books of special interest, and Carmarthen
- Access to the AHRERC archive of accounts of religious and spiritual experiences on request to the Director at Lampeter
- Access to the AHS on-line Members Forum
- Reduced cost for AHS events and lectures
- Access to local AHS groups
- Voting rights at Society meetings

Current annual (2014) full Membership subscription rates are:

Single Membership	£30
Senior Citizens/Unwaged.....	£20
Family Membership.....	£35
University Student rate.....	£12
Special School/College (16-19) Rate..	£3, or £5 with copies of the journal
(Mailing List, journal only.....	£12)

Some members, however, may not be taking into account changes of circumstances which could necessitate a change in their rates of subscription – for instance, students who have finished their studies and are now in employment; members paying the full rate who have reached retirement age and are now eligible for the Senior Citizens subscription rate. In the light of this, members, where this might possibly be applicable, are asked to check and to adjust their AHSSSE subscriptions accordingly.

Marian MacPolin, Hon. Membership Secretary

Rules of the Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience

The Alister Hardy Society is run by the Committee of the Society, which will act and report to the Trustees in accordance with the following Rules, approved by the AHS committee on 29th November, 2007, the Trustees on 30th November, 2007 and the AHS membership at its AGM on 1st December, 2007 – amended by the Society’s Committee on 26th September 2012 and approved by the membership on 6th October 2012. Further amended by the Society’s Committee on 12th September 2013, endorsed by the Trustees on the 25th September 2013 and approved by the members at the AGM on the 5th October 2013.

The amended rules can be found in full on page 59, and on the AHSSSE website, www.studyspiritualexperiences.org



Alister Hardy Trust Accounts for the year ended 31st July 2013

Owing to the legacies left to the Trust by Mr Buckmaster and Mr Meldrum the Trust is in a much better financial position than it was in 2011. We are extremely grateful for these legacies and it is of course sad that we were unable to thank these generous donors when they were alive. Other significant donations received during the past year were £5,000 from Dr Jean Galbraith and £220 from the AHSSSE (London Group). As you will have seen from the report from the Chair of the Trust, the Trustees are anticipating considerable increase in activity in the future at both Lampeter and Wrexham and these additional funds will be used prudently to support activities at these universities as and when appropriate research opportunities arise. In addition it is anticipated that the Trust will be supporting the writing of a reader in religious experience, a book which will be of considerable value to all those post-graduate students working in this area.

I set out below a short summary of the accounts – a full set of accounts will shortly be available online for those who wish to receive them.

<u>Income</u> (including donations received £133,688, subscriptions £4,230)	£143,674
<u>Expenditure</u> (including donation to UWTSO of £10,000)	£17,662
<u>Net surplus</u>	<u>£125,750</u>
<u>Fixed Assets:</u> Tangible assets (mainly books and works of art)	£50,276
Current assets (Banks accounts and invested funds)	£339,003
<u>Net current assets:</u>	<u>£383,295</u>

The accounts were unanimously approved by the Trustees at their AGM held on the 2nd December, 2013.

David Greenwood, Hon. Treasurer, January 2014

Reports from the Local Groups

Chesterfield Group

Over the last few months we have discussed documentaries about Emanuel Swedenborg, 18th century scientist turned visionary; Jack Parsons, rocket scientist and Thelemic magician; and the Tarot. We also watched the movie *Pi*, by Darren Aronofsky, about a gifted mathematician who stumbles upon the secret number that governs nature and is pursued by both Wall Street traders and Kabbalists alike! In September I led a seminar in which we examined several different accounts of spiritual experiences to try and understand the problems and issues involved in comparing these written accounts.

Still to come this year is a talk by group member Rodney Ward on *The Lady in the Old Testament*. According to Rodney, 'The theme of the Lady is part of the Wisdom tradition in the Old Testament and goes back to the first Temple which was built by Solomon and destroyed at the time of the exile in 597 BC. Archaeological evidence of the importance of the Lady is found in the female figurines found in Jerusalem and in inscriptions found at Ugarit. She is the Mother of the king known as the Morning Star and the Evening Star (Revelation 2:16). She is the Queen of Heaven and is described in Revelation 12:1. In the early Church the story of Mary is told as the story of Wisdom. Much of the evidence for this story of the lost Lady has been brought to us by Margaret Barker, independent Biblical scholar who lives in Derby and has developed her 'Temple Theology' over many years in around 20 books.' Also,

lined up for later this year are DVDs on the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, and Helena Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society.

I am currently considering the future of the AHSSSE Chesterfield Group. I have been organising the group for about ten years now and attendance has dropped again in recent months. Ideally, I feel it is time for me to hand over the running of the group to someone with fresh ideas and a new perspective. However, as this unlikely, I am thinking about alternative ways to continue the group whilst at the same time changing the format and reducing my workload. One option is to hold a meeting every three or four months but change the day to a Saturday (rather than a Friday evening) and extend it to a study day (instead of just for two or three hours). Any thoughts (or volunteers!) from readers would be greatly appreciated.

If anyone is interested please contact me at the e-mail address below. The programme can be found on the 'AHSSSE Group' page of my website, or the main Society website under 'Events'. The AHSSSE Chesterfield Group programme is available online at: www.esoteric-experience.org.uk For any further info please contact me at mike@esoteric-experience.org.uk or on 07790 757955.

Mike Rush

London Group

Our September 2013 talk was to have been on *Trance Healing - with demonstration of healing* by Helen Jameson, member of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers. Unfortunately, Helen had to go to hospital and was unable to come. However, as it so happened, there had been a meeting of the AHSSSE Committee at our venue in Kensington that morning and three of its members, Aled Thomas, Mike Rush and Andy Burns, happily agreed to talk to us about their work - and their presentations were followed by a general discussion on spiritual experience.

Aled Thomas, student representative on the AHS, was covering scientology as part of his MA studies, and was particularly interested in the transfer of its ideas from psychology to religion. He told us how its founder, Ron Hubbard, had originally developed dianetics as a secular therapy for auditing traumas, where participants were given hand-held devices, called 'e-meters', which measured electrical changes in their skin while they answered questions about themselves in the presence of a trained auditor. Alterations in the readings prompted the auditors to explore particular aspects of the participants' past. The practice soon arose of searching for spiritual rather than psychological explanations for the past. A central idea was that the soul reincarnated many times and so experiences in previous lives could account for what happened in the present. Scientology, however, was easy to discredit; it was treated with suspicion by the media and not taken seriously by mainstream psychology. But Aled had met several people from various religious backgrounds who had been helped by its work and it was not unusual for people to attend weekly auditing sessions.

Mike Rush, Vice Chair of AHSSSE and responsible for its website, spoke about his focus on western esotericism – in particular on Gurdjieff, Madame Blavatsky and The Golden Dawn – in his MA dissertation at Lampeter. He said he was particularly interested in the overlap between religious experience and mental health. Psychotic experiences could be very similar to religious experiences and it could be that mental problems were conducive to religious experiences. Such experiences could be positive or negative: where they were negative, people usually needed help if they were to integrate them into their lives. The Western Esoteric Tradition included techniques which were variously termed 'visualisation', 'self-remembering' and 'guided meditation', all of which aimed to do this integrative work.

Andy Burns, Chair of AHSSSE, had a degree in theology and had subsequently taken an MA in Religious Experience under Peggy Morgan. He spoke about his MA dissertation which had analysed the 80 accounts in the AHS archives which recorded the spiritual experiences of people who were Buddhists or who had spent a long time in Buddhist countries. Since then it had been agreed that RERC would undertake some special studies of religious experience in China, now completed, the results of which he said he would be studying with great interest.

Rowena Rudkin, Chair of the London Group, then invited us to focus on the question raised with her by a long-standing member of the London Group of what use, if any, we might make of our spiritual experiences. Literature suggested there were three main types of spiritual experience: those giving comfort in times of trouble, those bestowing increased awareness, and those conveying direct commands. In discussion, some felt that the first two types did not require one to do anything. Not doing anything ran counter to our western ways, where even our prayers focussed overmuch on intercession and general busy-ness. The very least our mystics felt they had to do was to describe their experiences to others, even though all felt we simply did not have the right vocabulary to do them credit. But their experiences had *meaning*, and it was this that should be investigated.

On 28th November Dr Christopher Knight talked to us on *Spiritual Experience and Naturalism: Perspectives from the current Science-Religion Debate*. By 'naturalism', he said he meant the way in which the world obeys the laws of nature – some of which cannot be explained by the methods of empirical science. At present, psychology is of relatively little help in the dialogue between science and religion concerning religious experience, as most psychologists today would look at religious experience in terms of cognitive theory and brain-scans. He discussed various ways in which people relate science to religion, seeing, for instance, that they conflict; are independent of each other; that dialogue between them is possible and useful; that science and religion can, and should, be integrated. He discussed the new physics and mathematics of Isaac Newton; the gradual waning of the 'God of the Gaps' – the explanation favoured by the 'Intelligent Design' movement; and the naturalistic approach in modern times supported by Arthur Peacocke, Ian Barbour and John Polkinghorne. The main problem with naturalism was the perceived need of many for a 'personal God' to intercede and intervene in a miraculous way, and in contravention of natural laws. Dr Knight felt that this need could be met in other ways, regarding God as 'more than personal'. He said his own work led him to formulate five theses which appear consistent with both scientific understanding and natural theology, e.g. seeing the human psyche as development of the cosmos through natural processes; that experiences giving the impression of being revelatory of a divine reality are natural products of the human psyche; that experiences are culturally-conditioned; that belief of most religious people in their faith's foundational religious experiences is valid and ontologically defensible; that diversity of religious language does not necessarily imply that they cannot all validly refer to the divine reality; and that the cosmos is attributable to the will, character or creative energy of the divine reality to which authentic revelatory experience bears witness. Natural theology, he said, is able to cope with the emergence of different traditions and the evolution and extinction of religions. Whilst reductionist science might assert that religion is becoming redundant as no longer having any social value for group survival, Dr Knight said the continued prevalence of religious experience in the light of the above militates against this and has a richer content and a vital evolutionary potential.

John Franklin

['Notes' of the talks, and a transcript of Dr Knight's talk, can be obtained from: John Franklin, tel: 0208 8584750. e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com.]

Oxford Group

I've been on sabbatical and will be resuming events, starting with a joint event with the SMN in Oxford on 27 March, to discuss the book, *The Gift of Alzheimer's*, by Maggie Tourelle.

Rhonda Rhiachi rhonda@riachi.free-online.co.uk

S E Wales group December 2013

Mary Cook introduced the subject of Seeking, asking the following questions:

Are we seeking?

If we are curious about the world and our lives, about what we are, how things are, (set aside the 'why' question) then we are involved in our own private research. We are seeking the reasons behind what we experience, and little about what others can tell us would ring true for us if we have that questioning tendency. It is merely imperative that we 'seek'.

For what?

For interest, but above all for the meaning behind things, for the truth inherent in understanding. Much of what we have been taught or told may not strike us as the truth; so the search goes on for a truer 'truth' than past knowledge has bequeathed us.

What have we found?

Usually that we have a sight of something from our angle; the angle of *our* experiencing, so, by definition, different from anybody else's.

Can we share it?

In that it is *our own* findings, from our unique standpoint, we can *in a weak moment* feel a need to share. We will find, however, that others will not understand, or will point out that we are wrong. They will probably state a widely accepted viewpoint, from which we might have begun our own search; so clearly, what we have shared has not hit the mark, and we are unable to proceed further with the conversation.

If we find a truth that is to us indisputable, we cannot share it because it might unbalance the 'status quo' – it might lose us our job, destroy even the foundations of somebody else's life – their faith, for instance. Sharing our personal research might lose us friends, might even cause people to doubt our mental health!

Should we share our experiences?

The poet, Henry Vaughan (1621-1695) said: 'For there is a necessity of reserving, as well as publishing some things'. (Scintilla 16 P24) Finding like-minded people – or a person – with whom we *might* share, is wonderful, but very rare.

In *De Numine*, Spring 2013 Anne Watkins' letter to the editor quotes Fr Tomy commenting on 'peak experiences': 'We must come down and share the experience with others.'

The reason for sharing is not merely to enhance our feeling of personal security and friendship, but in this sharing there lies a chance to pass on the new understanding we have gained – to find a meeting of minds that relishes new ideas and will work on them alongside us. We will gain confidence, maybe leading to getting our thoughts published. What is the use of a new understanding if it dies with us? But then, there is always the greatest possibility of all, and that is that nobody will 'get it', will not make the logical steps to grasp it, or be of the opinion that we have missed some fundamental point that leaves the work meaningless. So should we, as Henry Vaughan advised, consider refraining from publishing after all?

A positive postscript:

In *The Friend*, the Quaker weekly journal, there is a review of a book by Harvey Gilman & Alex Wildwood called *Universe as Revelation: an ecomystical theology for Friends*. Two quotes struck me as possibly relevant to this discussion:

There is a demand for reclamation of some vital concepts such as grace, glory and sacrament, yet at the same time a recognition that authenticity arises from a deepened awareness of personal experience, which needs to find its own language.

... the book's thesis that the spiritual life is one of holistic creativity.

Mary Cook

WebNews

Abstracts for articles on the website (Publications page):

Mike Rush's article '**The Politics of Religious Experience**' (see issues 54 and 55) is now posted on the website. The illustration 'The Tree of Humanity' (issue 55, p. 7) can now be seen in colour; it's well worth a look. Mike writes: 'This article is an attempt to provide a bit of background about myself and some of my thoughts on the subject of spiritual experience ... an open and honest statement of my current thoughts on these topics, and I hope that it stimulates further debate and discussion.'

The Evolution of Human Consciousness and Creativity

The article presents the once elusive 'Light' of self-realisation and creativity, and describes an evolutionary model of human awareness and understanding leading towards unity consciousness and healing for humanity. The article also relates the process of creativity and innovation from concept to creation and links it to multiple aspects of intelligence, and the process of personal and professional development using recent scientific findings to outline the sacredness of life. In conclusion it is found that the energy and values of our heart & soul are now integrating at an individual & organisational level, enabling us all to play an equal role in the development and creation of a beautiful new world upon the earth.

James Williams, Senior Lecturer, UWTSW Swansea. james.williams@sm.uwtsd.ac.uk.

The article is based on the pyramid model of a 'hierarchy of needs' devised by Abraham Maslow, who speculated on the implications of transpersonal experience for 'self-realised' individuals at the top of the pyramid. (Ed.)

New Online Book Analyzes 'God Research'

GOD IS WITH US: What Near-Death and Other Spiritually Transformative Experiences Teach Us About God and Afterlife. This book is a compilation of 19 of my previously-published articles from *De Numine*, *Journal of Near-Death Studies* and the *Universalist Herald* in which I analyze the scientific research to date on mystical / religious / spiritual experiences, including those experiences that relate to life after death.

This book is now available free of charge at: www.near-death.com/vincent.html It will soon also be available as an E-book and in HTML format so that it can be downloaded to your computer, Kindle, or I-Pad, also free of charge.

Dr Ken R. Vincent



Remembering Friends

Mr and Mrs Robinson

Edward Robinson – a short reflection

I would just like to add a very short tribute to those already published in honour of Edward Robinson, a former Director of the RERC (*De Numine*, issue 55).

I didn't know Edward in the sense of being a close friend, and actually only met him twice when he attended AHS events. I remember the second occasion very well because he came to a conference in Lampeter in about 2002 and I was able to talk to him about his time as Director and how the RERC had developed since that time. Following the move to Lampeter, Edward had brought with him some of his carved wooden art pieces and offered these for sale. I purchased a small wooden 'spinning top' which he took time to carefully explain to me: the action of the top and how and when it stops spinning is thought to be random, but Edward attached other meanings to this depending on how the top was spun and on what surface. Anyone who has seen the Hollywood film, *Inception* (2010: Director, Christopher Nolan) will recall how a spinning top becomes an indication of reality to the lead character in the plotline.

It was a pleasure to engage with Edward during the few days that he was at the conference and to have a small piece of his carefully carved work to remind me of that time.

Andy Burns
Chair, AHSSSE



Wendy Robinson

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Wendy Robinson on 12th December 2013. She belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church latterly; the funeral was conducted according to the Orthodox rite in Exeter Cathedral in January this year. In her tribute to Edward Robinson in the last issue of *De Numine* Peggy Morgan wrote that he met his wife, Wendy, a pastoral counsellor and psychotherapist, aboard ship from Southampton to Cape Town when he was returning for his fifth stay in Zambia and she was going out to set up a Teachers' Training College in Bechuanaland (today's Botswana). Of their three sons, Bernard, Dominic and Hilary, two were born in Africa and one in England.

Below is a poem of Wendy's which was read at her funeral.

Autolycus: Old Crow

by Wendy Robinson

Prelude

Autolycus, Old Crow:
Promptly – Fridays –
Platform 5, 7.25 –
Each time, for months,
I caught the 7.35 –
Because my sister was dying:

To the North
You flap in - ancient,
Slightly crazed landing
Like an old Lancaster.
You set about it -
Life -
Head thrusting back and forth,
To persuade your body
To come along with you -
Me too:
The weight of Things -
A heavy rocking
Of grief not birth.

Not much on offer –
We both pecked
For crumbs of comfort –
Autolycus, Old Crow,
Carrion comfort,
Comfort in woe.
Weakly, weekly, I wanted to bring you
Extras.
But it would not do.
Death and scarcity have to be lived -
Some - how?

Postlude

Months later:
Not your time -
Not your platform,
I took the 10.45 to London
You flapped in awkwardly -
Landing within an inch of my foot.
You may be a snapper-up
Of ill-considered trifles,
But you know how it is,
Between this world and the next –

Autolycus, Old Crow.
Autolycus, Old Crow,
Crow come lately,
Crow come soon
- Never come never
- Crow come.



Mrs Averil French (1943 – 2013)

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Mrs Averil French, a long-time member of the Society, who died on the 25th November 2013. Averil was a member of the Society's London Group, travelling up from her home in Winchester to attend meetings whenever she could. Recently, she had joined the AHSSSE Committee, being elected at the Society's AGM in October last year. She was a Catholic, active in her local church, St Peter's, Winchester, at which a Requiem Mass was said for her at her funeral on 6th December 2013.

Averil had many spiritual experiences, about which she had written at length, and which are deeply moving. She had a BA in English Literature and, following a BSc in Psychology, trained as an analytical psychologist. She was also a writer and an author of fiction

(publishing under the pseudonyms Christine Thomas and Avril Cavell). Recently, she had embarked on an MA in Theology.

Personally, she was a dear friend, and I had greatly enjoyed her fascinating e-mail correspondence. She will be greatly missed, and our condolences go to her family.

John Franklin, Hon. Secretary, AHSSSE

A Homily by Averil French containing an account of some of her spiritual/religious experiences which she wrote in advance for her Funeral Mass was read out by her son, Dr David Clegg. Dr Clegg sent a copy to John Franklin saying, in a covering letter, 'If some or all of ... [the] Homily is of interest to readers of your Society's journal ... then I'm sure she'd have been delighted to have her experiences shared.' We do not have space to print it here, but John says he would be pleased to send a copy to any members interested. Please enclose SAE with request addressed to John Franklin, 21 Park Vista, London, SE10 9LZ. (Ed.)

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

On page 8 of your Autumn 2013 issue (no. 55) you mention R. Dawkins's book *The God Delusion*. But there is no mention of the brilliant riposte made by Rupert Sheldrake's *The Science Delusion*, in which he states that 'Materialism is now facing a credibility crunch'. Going back over the theories of 200 years of Science, he dismantles them, one by one, by pointing out that each of them contains a logical inconsistency, making them all unscientific.

Sheldrake's latest book deserves at least as much attention as his rival Dawkins.

Yours faithfully,
Susan Glyn

We will be happy to obtain a review copy of Rupert Sheldrake's book, if any of our readers would like to review it. (Ed.)

This letter to Marianne Rankin as Director of Communications is printed here for the benefit of those members who do not have access to it on the members' forum on the website:

Dear Ms Rankin,

I write to you as the AHSSSE Director of Communications. I am contacting associations in the UK to ask whether I might place a notice on their research noticeboards, notifying fellow practitioners of an online survey aimed at UK therapists. Hence this email asking for the help of the AHSSSE and perhaps placement of the notice on the AHSSSE website in the Members' Forum. This is the notice:

Anomalous Experiences in Therapy

As part of PhD studies at the University of Greenwich I am seeking personal accounts by therapists of anomalous experiences in, or in connection with, counselling/psychotherapy.

Paul Atkinson emdr.therapy@gmail.com

Another Way

One day
I will pass by another way
Where the wind and the waves will carry me, carry me
Where the wind of the Spirit will soften
The sharp corners of time,
And the waters of life flow
Into the great ocean of stars
To bring peace.
Here, everything is nothing
And nothing is as everything,
Where knowledge becomes an empty casket
And all that is, is the space beyond words
Mighty and awesome,
Where the gods speak
And the lovers are one in a lost identity,
Because the one of the lovers
Dances within them
And the place of our belonging
Welcomes us,
Where the fire and the rose are the echoes
Of our dreams that are gathered in the Light.

Jonathan Robinson

The Idea of the Holy

The idea of the holy
is as old as the human race
Seen in the unattainable
as far out as the stars.
Rivers were also sacred;
A well was a holy place.
They worshipped the moon and sun
or the red planet Mars.
Holding in awe the forces of nature,
Volcanos or roaring waves.
A presence was felt in the mysterious,
in dark Druid forests, or in caves.

But in their awe and fear
they did not yet perceive
the Fatherhood of God
seen as in Heaven above.
The hallowed Creator of all,
in whom we now believe.
Who knows and cares for each of us.
The God of LOVE.

Susan Glyn

Book Reviews

Paul Badham, *Making Sense of Death and Immortality*

London: SPCK, 2013. x 86 pp. ISBN 978 0 281 06458 8 (pbk) £8.99

This is an extraordinarily good and valuable book. Professor Paul Badham has attained that rare achievement of writing a book that not only deals with an important subject in a deeply scholarly way, but is also easy to read and highly stimulating. In reading this book we benefit from his many years of reflection and academic engagement with the subject, including over 20 years' service as the Director of the MA programme on Death and Immortality in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Wales, Lampeter (now part of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David). We also benefit from his open-minded, well-informed and rational approach, through which we are able to gain a balanced perspective on the issues, options, evidences and arguments relevant to this complex subject.

In part, the book is so useful and thought-provoking because Professor Badham has never shirked the challenges presented to doctrinal claims by evidence and arguments outside of the usual focus of Theology and the Philosophy of Religion. In this light he has always seriously considered the findings of Psychical Research, despite these being (unfairly, in his view) ignored or disparaged by most naturalists and many theologians. On the other hand, he has always taken seriously the findings and implications of naturalistic science, despite its ongoing tension with both Theology and Psychical Research. In the former case his attitude was no doubt influenced by his deep knowledge of the case material preserved in the extensive database of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, based at Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, and of which he was the Director for 8 years until 2010. In the latter case his attitude was no doubt influenced by the work of his wife Dr Linda Badham, who has qualifications in both science and the philosophy of science, and to whom the present volume is dedicated.

It therefore comes as no surprise to see the subject treated here with such insight and versatility. However, there is a real and pleasant surprise in the presentation: this complex subject is effectively and comprehensively treated in the space of just 77 pages (plus only 9 of notes and references) of a merely A5 sized book.

The book is divided into 7 chapters, each approximately 10 pages long, ranging across the conceptual issues involved in thinking about death and immortality, the historical importance of resurrection in the Christian tradition, the evidential case for the existence of souls provided by cases of near-death experiences (NDEs), and contemporary Anglican and Catholic doctrinal positions on the reality of heaven and hell. Along the way he connects not only with matters of history, religious doctrine and philosophy of religion but also with major themes in moral philosophy and the ongoing exchange between science and religion. He shows the relevance of all these factors and perspectives in the ongoing debate, making clear what the main issues and questions are, how the controversies are grounded, and on what grounds he has come to his own views on each point. Along the way he discusses many ideas and facts the reader may find new or surprising, such as the possibility that immortality could be true even if people do not have non-physical souls (pp. 22-23), that the Bible does not anywhere argue for the existence of God (p. 33), that more than two-thirds of the Christian martyrs 'volunteered' for execution by handing themselves in to the authorities (p. 44), and that perhaps all humans will be saved, without exception (pp. 66-67). Each chapter is divided into sections dealing, within the scope of about a page, with an important

aspect of this complex subject. Each section's core idea or conclusion is typically summarised in a 'pull quote' displayed in the section. This gives a clear sense of the progression of ideas as one goes along, very nearly on a page-by-page basis. It must have taken a lot of work and thought to prepare the book in this format, but the result is very impressive and very effective.

Each idea presented I found thought-provoking, and even though I did not find all the arguments compelling, each one gave me reasons to reflect anew on my own views and the grounds for them, and in so doing enriched my perspective even when I did not change my position. The arguments he developed in each case were valuable training in how to think about the issue in hand, putting one in a good position to reflect in a balanced way on both the conclusion Badham comes to and why one might agree or dissent in each case.

His rhetorical style has three connected features that are academically unusual but particularly inspiring. Firstly, he makes it very clear what his own views are. Secondly, he does not shrink from pointing out where his personal views may be in tension with scientific, philosophical or even theological orthodoxy, and are instead grounded in personal experiences, intuition or controversial arguments. Thirdly, in these cases he makes clear how these defiant positions are not embraced unreflectively but on the basis of principled considerations. In this way he invites and encourages the reader to also reflect in a broad way about what they specifically accept and what they reject, and not to cede automatic authority to either science, experience, intuition or doctrine.

A good example of this occurs on p. 24, where he points out that 'according to the Open University textbook *Philosophy of Religion*, Linda Badham's essay 'Problems of Resurrection' provides the definitive case against any belief in a future life'. Having summarised the main point of her powerful argument on pp. 4-5 of the present book, he nevertheless confirms here his own firm belief in the existence of souls, on the basis that only in this way can he accommodate 'the evidential reality of religious experience, human freedom and responsibility, and the hope of a future life'. Readers will readily appreciate the need to take a position themselves, and given Badham's preparatory guidance they will be able to do so in a way that is informed by the clear tension between the scientific argument on the one hand and the intuitive/ experiential case on the other. I suspect many will be sympathetic to Paul Badham's stance, but nuance their own positions in different ways based on their own intuitions, experiences and background knowledge. It is interesting to reflect on how such tensions could be reconciled. One possibility (which Paul Badham does not explore in the present volume) is to point out that Linda Badham's argument is only decisive insofar as one grants the premises on which it is based, and these can be questioned. Her argument shows that if we assume that humans have immortal souls *but in general other kinds of living creatures do not*, we are led into an inconsistency. Her argument would therefore fail if we allowed that souls are ubiquitous and not limited to humans or just 'higher' forms of life. However, the price of allowing *that* is to create difficulties for the doctrine of salvation, which would then have to be addressed in turn. Paul Badham has said elsewhere that he cannot make either naturalistic or religious sense of the idea that everything will be saved¹, but notions about salvation are also subjects for reflective reassessment, as he amply illustrates in the last two chapters, so perhaps we can look forward to a future resolution that preserves what is of value in each perspective on this question.

I hope that this speculative digression illustrates how easy it is to look at old answers with new eyes after reading this book, and how easily it may lead one to want to reassess one's own views. It would have been easy to write a personal commentary that is much longer than the book, and I feel that this will be true for everyone reading it. I highly recommend

this thoughtful and thought-provoking book. It deeply changed the way I think about the debate on this subject, and it required no effort at all. I think it will mean at least as much to every other reader.

References

1. Badham, P. & Badham, L. *Immortality or Extinction?* (SPCK, 1984).

Reviewed by David Rousseau

**Howard A Jones, *Evolution of Consciousness: Progressing Towards Universal Holism: 1*
Carmarthen: Fairhill Publishing, 2012. 294 pp. ISBN 978 0956815347 (pbk)**

Howard Jones is extraordinarily well-read in the whole area covered by this book, which is very wide in its scope. His main thesis is that there is a universal cosmic spiritual consciousness and that the human soul is evolving into a greater awareness of its true roots in this consciousness. He portrays the spirituality now arising in the West as an evolution of consciousness towards a holistic, interfaith, global view of the numinous. To support this, he reviews, in six long chapters, almost every area of human endeavour, drawing from a wealth of research and authorship. His references and bibliography would form a good reading list for anyone to delve into.

In his first chapter, he gives a comprehensive historical review of human development from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and into modernity, including the rise of scientific determinism and various philosophical frameworks. In successive chapters he considers the development of religious thought and systems, the rise of scientism, the evolutionary move from religion to spirituality, the evidence for a universal field of consciousness and the human interaction with that field. Throughout, the book is peppered with references to other works, both a strength and a weakness. It is a wide-ranging and fascinating resource, following many avenues containing the references, experiments and descriptions of research that provide a basis for his argument to validate the existence of a universal field of consciousness to which we all relate. However, the very plethora of descriptions of other people's work sometimes obscures the main thrust of the book.

Jones is firm in his rejection of the materialist prejudice in science and of the religious prejudice in Christianity. He has no time for the closed minds of rationalist scientists, despite having a scientific background himself; for him although religion is a man-made construct, he believes that behind this is the source – universal consciousness. Thus Jones is treading a new path beyond religion and scientism, both of which he sees as flawed. He walks in the way of an open-minded belief in a spiritual energy that pervades the universe and can be harnessed by the human mind. This he sees as the truth behind the religious belief systems of the world.

The divine is envisaged as pure spiritual energy inherent in all matter in the universe, which he equates with the Universal Consciousness which fulfils the role of Deity in western religion, and Infinite Mind or Atman in eastern belief systems. One of the themes running through the book is the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and his ideas of the noosphere and omega point, and evolution of human consciousness as a natural process. Jones also reviews Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy*, but I was surprised that he did not mention the writings of other Christian mystics and the whole system of Theosophy, as these also are strong pointers towards the evolution of the human soul. In his last chapter, Jones considers OBEs (Out of Body experiences) and NDEs (Near Death Experiences) and SDEs (Shared Death Experiences) and summarizes some of the empirical evidence for them. He also

reviews evidence of the psychic nature of all living beings, plant and animal, concluding that it is all part of the universal cosmic spirit that undergirds everything. Finally he discusses the overwhelming evidence for psychic phenomena such as telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis, and psychic and spiritual healing.

Jones equates the universal field of consciousness with the quantum energy field (or zero point field) and also with the morphic field theory of Rupert Sheldrake and the *akashic* field in Hindu thought. Whether there is a total equivalence between these fields is a debatable point. Yet it is clear that many physicists, biologists and psychologists are turning their attention to the possible existence of external fields that govern behaviours, from atoms to cells to complex living organisms. Jones gives a good review of the work of many of these and concludes that '*the concept of a universal or cosmic spiritual field of consciousness finds support from pagan spirituality, organised religion, several fields of science and over 2000 years of philosophy*'. His book is a mine of informative and stimulating thought. The mine becomes rather labyrinthine at times, but there is much good material to be found for anyone with an interest in the evolution of human consciousness.

Reviewed by Don MacGregor, author of Blue Sky God: the Evolution of Science and Christianity, reviewed in Issue 55, p. 50

**Philippa A. Rees, *Involution: An Odyssey Reconciling Science to God*
Hertfordshire: CollaborArt Books, 2013. 427 pp. ISBN 978 0 9575002 0 4 (pbk) £17.99.**

As soon as I heard about this book, I wanted to review it. *Involution, An Odyssey Reconciling Science to God* sounded completely different from anything I had ever read before – a challenge. On opening the book, I found a much-loved quotation by Teilhard de Chardin which I have often used when speaking of the work of the Alister Hardy Trust, RERC and SSSE: 'We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience.'

This set the scene for the adventure to begin - heralded by appreciations from people as diverse as Arthur Koestler, Konrad Lorenz and Irwin Schumacher (in the early years of *The Theory of Involution*) and forty years later for this book, with comments by Ervin Laszlo and David Lorimer among others. That in itself was an indication of the lengthy period of gestation, a labour of love for the author.

Involution proposes that humans carry within them the history of the universe, which is (re)discovered by the individual genius when the time is ripe. All is stored within our DNA and awaits revelation. Such piecemeal revelations set our finite lives in an eternal chain of co-creation and these new leaps of discovery are compared to mystical experience.

The prose Introduction offers the opportunity to explore the concept of involution before embarking on the main text of the Cantos in verse. I skipped ahead and read the Appendix first, as well as about the author's extraordinary life and the experiences which triggered the book.

In nine Cantos of dialogue between Reason and Soul, Philippa Rees takes the reader on a monumental journey through the history of everything – with the evolution of man as one side of the coin and involution the other. The Cantos are complex and the extremely learned and extensive footnotes offering background knowledge are necessary and fascinating. In effect there are two books, offering a right and left brain approach.

As I wanted to understand the thinking as well as to feel the beauty of the verse, I was at times torn between the notes and the Cantos. I could not switch one off to concentrate on the other and hopped between the two. Sometimes I wondered if her chosen format was an advantage or a hindrance, but as Rees makes clear, there are plenty of prose works available on similar themes. She wanted to be – and certainly has succeeded in being – different. Ultimately I decided to read the explanatory notes to each Canto before immersing myself in the verse, where she weaves magic in her words.

Rees could have chosen any field to illustrate her theory of involution, as it encompasses everything. She chose to focus on science but embraces art, music and touches on religions. We are caught up in the vast sweep of human development and expansion of knowledge through the ages - from the earliest humans to the philosophy of Ancient Greece, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance to modern science and contemporary consciousness studies.

So does Philippa Rees reconcile science to God? She weaves the thread of God as underlying consciousness manifesting throughout creation, giving meaning to everything as opposed to all being a result of mere chance. The mystic vision reveals an underlying universal wisdom and the ever-present transcendent, which draws us to itself through love.

This is a personal review. It has had to be. Each reader will approach this remarkable book differently and each will read it and gain from it in their own way. I can only express what *Involution: An Odyssey Reconciling Science to God* has meant to me and hope that I have done some justice to a book which I have yet to fully comprehend, but will treasure.

The reader who finishes the book will not be the same as the one who began it. New ideas will expand the mind but more profoundly, the deep, moving power of the verse will affect the heart. This book was a written pilgrimage for Philippa Rees '(costing not less than everything)' in the words of T. S. Eliot and it is a privilege to share the experience with her.

Reviewed by Marianne Rankin

Anthony Russell, *Evolving the Spirit: From Democracy to Peace, Ten Steps to Change the World*

DreamStar Books, 2012. 214 pp. ISBN 978 1 904166 39 9. £12.95.

The front cover of this book features a beautiful photo of Bagan in Burma and an endorsement from the Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The back cover explains that 'This book is for those who believe in human dignity and the power within us all to lead the world towards peace.' So it's an idealistic work; however, what is striking about it is its practical approach.

Anthony Russell is a cultural historian, artist and founder of the Chandos <www.thechandos.com>. He is also a trustee of Spiritual England and a member of the All Party Political Group on Burma. The book begins with individual spiritual growth and moves on to consider inspirational people and their effect on the global scene. He suggests that we need to learn from them to develop ourselves in order to improve the world. This section starts with a criticism of the present capitalist delusion that material progress brings wealth and contentment. However, this is no mere anti-capitalist rant. It is an appraisal of what matters in life, and what we need to re-establish equilibrium. In our rush to modernise, we have lost essential, ageless truths and are suffering as a result.

The 10 Steps for spiritual development given in the book are based on the *ten steps to enlightenment* advocated by the Japanese monk Kutai twelve centuries ago. These were later echoed in the 12 step model used by Alcoholics Anonymous and the 'Minnesota Method'. The steps reflect self-evident truths of which we are aware but frequently find it convenient to ignore.

The first Step is entitled 'The Gap', meaning to pause and take stock, to contemplate or meditate. We are encouraged to value silence and to live in the moment. Step 2 is 'Breathing' and the physical and mental benefits and proper method of breathing are explained, leading to a natural rhythm of waking and sleeping. With Step 3, we move into relationship with others by 'Listening' and giving our full attention and time to them. 'Centering' is next: 'recognising how to influence others from a position of inner strength', handling power and influence carefully, with balance and inner strength. These are seen as the foundations of 'disciplined understanding' and Step 5, 'Healing', begins to build a structure upon them. Clear thinking leads to a healthy, peaceful mind, eschewing fear and hatred and both embracing and giving love and compassion. Body and mind are interwoven and both are linked to those around us.

Step 6 moves to 'Respecting' the differences between us, not judging others but accepting their independence. Next is 'Forgiving', a constant within most faith traditions. Contrition is necessary for wrong doing to be forgiven, while offering forgiveness frees us from anger. Step 8, 'Resolving' moves us into the realm of politics, citing Gandhi, Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi as examples of non-violence, cooperation and resolution. In Step 9 'Leading' well stems from self-belief, inner strength and the ability to plan, communicate, collaborate and to have the will to see the vision through. The last Step is 'Peace' by which is meant a spirit of acceptance and co-operation rather than that of competitive aggression so prevalent today. The cost of war in human, financial, and environmental terms is vast and ultimately negotiations need to take place. Aggression cannot cure aggression, we need to meet violence with peace. For this, 'a revolution of the spirit' in Aung San Suu Kyi's words is necessary and many contemporary thinkers such as Ken Wilber, are pointing in that direction.

This is an easy read, clearly presented, with footnotes in numerical order, so there is no need to check the chapter, the only downside being the numerous typos, which should have been corrected.

The book offers a clear spiritual approach to life within a global perspective and manages to be both grounded and spiritual. It is for that reason that the One Spirit Alliance has invited Anthony Russell to speak at the *Spirit in Action* event on 28th June 2014. Members are urged to take advantage of the opportunity to meet the author - and to buy the book.

Reviewed by Marianne Rankin

**Carol O. Eckerman, *Lessons in Simply Being: Finding Peace within Tumult*
Winchester: Circle Books, 2012. xii 211 pp. ISBN 976 1 84694 723 0 (pbk) £9.99**

There are many books on the shelves that try to give us meaning for our lives through deep analysis using complex words and phrases, and they tend to be quite academic in their approach to spirituality – and this is fine for those who think in these terms. This book, I believe, gives a greater depth of meaning through simple expressions of emotion and

understanding, and all expressed in everyday words. It is clear that the author is at a very advanced stage of being able to 'simply be' because this is echoed in the way the book is written.

Everything is described fluently and profoundly to make the book accessible to everyone regardless of the level of spiritual evolution they have reached. Carol Eckerman's writing is superb and her words reminded me of much that I had allowed to drift to the back of my memory, and taught me a great deal in areas and attitudes that I had not thought about before.

If there was ever a demonstration of how we choose our family before we come to the earth plane, this book is the epitome, although the author does not acknowledge this. As she freely admits, the author found her own understanding of God and a way of being through the characters and events in her family life. This was where the learning took place, as it was meant to, from the choices she made of those souls who would make up her family for this lifetime.

Although Eckerman has a religious faith and is an active member of her church, for those of us who do not wish to belong to a religious tradition, the book is still very relevant and the information she gives us is never lost in the religion itself. It is about one person's journey to understanding how to simply 'be' with God through her interactions with close and extended family, and understanding how those relationships have helped and hindered her throughout her life.

Her very realistic approach to forging a better relationship with her mother in later life, after her father's death, and the peace they both found at the end despite, and in part because of, her mother's dementia was both painful and heart-warming, but never sentimental. Eckerman's patient attention to her mother and to relating this in the book allows the reader to gain a similar understanding to the author of the reasons for other souls' reactions to life situations and how that impacts on each of us.

There are many parts of this book that I will read again and again, because they are so beautifully written and because there is so much accumulated wisdom within the words. Although this was not written initially for publication, I think many people will be very grateful that this has been the final outcome; the message within it is one that the world needs.

Reviewed by Jenny Jones

Sallie McFague, *Blessed are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. xvi 225 pp. ISBN 978 0 8006 9960 4 (pbk) £16.99

In '*Blessed Are the Consumers* McFague encourages the reader to practice the *kenotic* practice of self emptying, as described in the Christian scriptures, so as to bring about a discovery of the inherent value of all of nature and its creatures. The historical figures that are written about in her latest work so as to illuminate various examples of kenosis are John Woolman, Dorothy Day and Simone Weil.

McFague considers that the dual concerns of climate change and unjust financial distribution are current crises, and that they can be alleviated by applying moderation to material wants with the help of readers' relevant faith. If the reader was expecting a book discussing whether

man-made climate change exists and whether it is a threat or not, then they will discover from the outset that this position is assumed, as is unjust financial distribution.

Whilst the main thrust of the book is to help us engage with the lives of Weil, Day and Woolman and their experiences of kenosis, there are references to many other spiritual figures, theologians and ecologists to keep the reader interested. The preface and eight chapters that make up this book are in fact so well referenced that the only names I couldn't find beginning letters for were Y, X, U and Q. To give just one example of the effort that McFague has employed to inspire the reader there is a quote from Martin Nawaks' study 'SuperCooperators':

Cooperation was the principle architect of four billion years of evolution.

Dorothy Day was a founder of the Catholic Worker Movement who advocated 'distributism', and during the economic depression of the 1930s gave up her relatively comfortable lifestyle to live with, feed and help the poorest of New York City at that time. John Woolman was an eighteenth century slavery abolitionist and a Quaker preacher who travelled widely from his North American home of Pennsylvania, choosing voluntary poverty, as he understood that many of the material trappings of the time were involuntarily made. The most radical of McFague's subjects is Simone Weil. In Nazi occupied France Weil voluntarily starved in solidarity with the soldiers and citizens that at that time were also starving. Simone Weil in fact starved to death.

All three of these main figures wrote about their views and experiences and it is to McFague's credit that she has studied them for so long; she enables us to read contemporary accounts of how voluntary poverty, akin to kenosis (which has its own chapter) can influence society as a whole. The reader understands directly that if Sally McFague could beatify Day, Weil and Woolman into sainthood, she would. There is no appeal in these pages to give up everything and don a horsehair shirt, as her subjects metaphorically have; rather her book is a call to the reader to be as useful and generous as she/he is able, and to respect the inherent value of all living things.

At times it seems McFague over-emphasizes various points by describing both what she means, out of parenthesis, and what she does not mean, inside parenthesis. This over-instruction is balanced by a frequent and charming appeal to the reader to consider themselves as 'us folks'. This folksy style seems a genuine appeal to a North American readership and perhaps betrays a certain belief on McFague's part that it is North America that needs to self-empty the most. The book ends well in that after what at times is an over-involved read, McFague's encouragement for us to consider God as constituting a benign action on our part rather than a disembodied noun on another's is successful.

There are fifteen pages of preface, two hundred and fifteen pages of content besides an index. Each chapter is well referenced at the end with notes.

Reviewed by Dan Craver

Dan, a neighbour and friend, lives in the woods in a log cabin he built himself with the help of friends, and a team of heavy horses to drag the logs. With no modern utilities, he walks everywhere, [often 5 miles to the local library] and is certainly living a life which would be appreciated by Sally Macfague. He has virtually no carbon footprint, and certainly takes less than his share of 'wealth'. He studied aerospace engineering at university, but now earns his living as a woodsman and tree surgeon.

(Ed.)



**Jane Barter Moulaison, *Thinking Christ: Christology and Contemporary Critics*
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012. 183pp. ISBN 978 0 8006 9873 7 (pbk) £16.62**

As the author puts it, 'The main question animating this book is "What difference does the word becoming flesh make to our thinking and to our acting?"'

Jane Barter Moulaison, a priest in the Anglican Church of Canada and an associate professor of theology and church history at the University of Winnipeg, considers various critical discourses that aim to contribute to contemporary understanding of the gospel. These discourses include pluralism, secularism, feminism, empire analysis and environmentalism. In six chapters she represents the thought of a few proponents of each discourse and compares this with the thought of a chosen Church Father. In each case she finds that recovery of the ancient insight can give these discourses not only a more distinctive Christian form, but also a greater depth and clarity. She finds that the Nicene Christology that these patristic writers endorse – namely, the principle of Christ's full consubstantial unity with God the Father – and their vision of Christ's saving activity, can illuminate various current issues of concern and provide empowerment for addressing them.

Each chapter title takes a line from the Nicene Creed and specifies the theme that is being dealt with. Chapter 1 is entitled, "'We Believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ': Proclaiming Christ's Lordship in the Midst of Empire.' Empire analyses occupy contemporary theorists and have followed upon postcolonial readings that tended to treat the colonial era as confined to the past. Contemporary empires mentioned are the United States and the G8 countries, as well as multinational corporations. This chapter presents the philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (who have written a book called *Empire*) and brings them into dialogue with Augustine who in his own time had various misgivings about the ability of empire to procure lasting peace. Augustine's alternate city is one in which Christ is the sovereign.

Chapter 2 is entitled "'Begotten of the Father before All Worlds": Jesus Christ and Creation.' It presents the Christology of Sallie McFague and the way she relates this to Earth care, and it compares this with the thought of Basil of Caesarea, in which is found a more robust account of the relationship between God and nature. The author draws from Basil's Christology an environmental ethic, which is about the conforming of our wills to Jesus Christ, who is believed in as the one in whom the entire cosmos is made. This ethic flows from a contemplation that is primarily a receptivity of thought to the divine working within the universe. It takes the shape of an ascetic renunciation that among other things has the effect of a harmonious living within the universe.

Chapter 3 is about the use and enjoyment of theological language. It offers critical reflection on the problem of linguistic representation of God as presented by Rosemary Radford Ruether, and favours the more positive approach found in the French feminist philosopher Hélène Cixous that is being placed beside the approach of Augustine.

Chapter 4 is about the proclamation of Christ's divinity in a pluralist age. It offers an interesting analysis of secularism and compares the thought of Wilfred Cantwell Smith and John Hick Jr. with that of Athanasius of Alexandria. Athanasius draws together the doctrines of Creation and Incarnation and upholds the insight that 'the Logos's presence within the body of Christ does not leave the world bereft of his involvement within creation.' Barter Moulaison finds much inspiration in Athanasius and concludes that 'to confess Christ as God in a pluralistic age is to confess that the whole world has been healed by him, and thus to confess that the whole world shares, although partially, in his restored creation whether they believe in Christ or not.'

Chapter 5 is about the proclamation of the Cross in a violent world. It presents various models of atonement and brings the Mennonite theologian Denny Weaver in dialogue with Irenaeus of Lyons and Athanasius. The author discerns that the Cross does not indicate the absence of God, but points to the possibility of a new beginning. She reflects that even at the crucifixion, where there is human rebellion, hatred and scorn, 'even there God does not turn away in anger, but forgives.' Without denying the merit of this chapter, I would have found interesting some thoughts about the parable of the householder who built and rented out a vineyard, whose son is killed by the tenants of his vineyard, whom the owner then destroys (Mark 12:1-12 and parallels), or about the comparable parable at Luke 19:12-27.

Chapter 6 is an exploration of memory and its redemption in Christ. It takes up the work of Miroslav Volf and explores the way it is challenged by Augustine's understanding of memory. Barter Moulaison discovers that for Augustine 'Christ, who is mediator and physician, overcomes the injury between persons; as one who is both human and divine, he offers the gift of an impossible and abundant grace, an unconditional forgiveness from above. Yet, he also offers forgiveness as a human betrayed and handed over to torture and to death.' The author thus reflects that aided by God, 'forgiveness involves remembering sin, not so as to create a cycle of retribution, but so as to work upon sin's eradication.'

In her conclusion she advocates 'not critique, but a form of receptivity as the starting point of theology,' which also compels her 'to challenge those forms of theology that begin with negation.'

Definitely recommended.

Reviewed by Dr Robert Govaerts govaerts1430@btinternet.com

Dr Peter J Colyer, *The Prescientific Bible: a study of cultural influences on the biblical writers, and how these affect our reading of the Bible today*
Winchester: Circle Books, 2013. x 251pp. ISBN 978 1 78099 914 2 (pbk) £12.99

The Bible has been, and is, surely the most widely distributed book in the world. It has been used as an historical and documentary basis for Christianity and a general basis for ethics. But what does the Bible mean? Is it the inviolable word of God or a mixture of history, folk tale and myth? Much of the Old Testament appears to be an account of King A falling out with and attempting to kill King B, or God's grave displeasure with Israel for its behaviour. Frequently God appears not as a merciful being, more a grumpy, quick-tempered tyrant. Many of the miracles and feats described are regarded as unlikely or impossible by modern people because of our greater knowledge of science and the natural world. Dawkins bases part of *The God Delusion* on an uncritical acceptance of the Bible. A few years ago in Jordan, an American in our holiday party, on being told that a certain rock formation was Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt, remarked (I give the gist of his comment) 'Rubbish'. I had to agree.

Although I received a reasonably good religious education I was puzzled by some parts of the Bible for many years. Then about 45 years ago I read a book by an American Jesuit, Robert Mackenzie SJ (who had been banned from preaching in America by his superiors!). He made the startlingly obvious statement that unless you understood the historical/cultural background of a piece of writing (i.e. how the writer thought, lived etc.) you would probably be puzzled by what s/he was saying and find their words difficult to interpret.

Putting information in context is not just a problem for writings from the distant past. I have experienced several situations where people (including some of those I knew well) from other countries have made amazing comments concerning what they had read or heard, and hence 'understood,' about what was happening to me and my family in the UK. This misunderstanding could be quite frightening! This potential for misunderstanding is one of the reasons advanced for learning other languages; apart from being useful when on holiday or doing business, it gives an insight into how other people think and respond.

Dr Colyer, a scientist who has been involved in the management of international science programmes, is well placed to address some of these problems and misconceptions concerning the Bible. In his preamble he points out that biblical texts were created over a period of probably one thousand years, in various languages, and that in this time views, and even the meaning of words, will have changed. More specifically he is concerned with the 'presence or absence of scientific knowledge in Biblical times and the relationship between ancient and more recent world views'. He then begins to ask a series of questions, e.g. where does God live, where are Heaven and Hell? The Biblical answers are supplied in terms of the appropriate book, chapter and verse together with some modern observations. One criticism I have is that I would have preferred more about modern observation and interpretation at the end of each chapter.

These questions are followed by how God manifested himself in the natural world of weather; storms, earthquakes, landscape, harvests etc. The author is of the view that all weather phenomena can be scientifically explained, and that God does not intervene in these processes. Another long chapter deals with God and the human world. This can be a difficult area because parts of the Old Testament, e.g. the inferiority of women, slavery etc. appear to us (I certainly hope so) as archaic, unpleasant, even evil. Another contentious area is the role of God in illness and destruction. Here Dr Colyer makes the distinction between biological processes and historical ones, the death of a king being ascribed to divine intervention in a battle for instance. An interesting point is that if we see God at work in the world we need to view the totality, not the details. Some awful event (to our eyes) may be part of a greater whole which is good. This still leaves us groping for an explanation but may bring some comfort. Many parts of the Bible are concerned with miracles and even magic. As long as God can intervene in the world at will these should not present problems. However if we have changed God's role in a world which we now see as rational and scientific, there is a problem. The author concludes that we must accept that there are logical limitations to God's powers and omnipotence. This should not diminish God, but does indicate that we need a different way of looking at God and his powers.

In many ways I found that the final chapter, where the book deals more with the modern mindset, the most interesting. The author concludes that there is some inkling of science in the Bible. My own view is that the Bible is a child of its times. Many of the writings can be interpreted in different ways because of our greater scientific knowledge. Furthermore, we should be careful to avoid fitting God into the gaps; today's gap might be explained tomorrow. This is not to say that all things can or will be explained scientifically. What is important is that we go on thinking, discussing, hypothesising and testing. In the end, this can only bring us nearer to the truth and God. Dr Colyer has an easy and readable style and the text is very well backed with Biblical quotations, though I am not sufficiently well versed in the subject to judge the inclusiveness of the bibliography. If you want a straightforward introduction to the Bible and science (I must emphasise the 'and') which will start you thinking, I can recommend this book.

Reviewed by Neil Hancox

New and Forthcoming books

John Franklin, *Exploration into Spirit: A Power greater than ... The history of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre and Society* – update.

Originally published in 2006 (AHS, Lampeter), the book has now been brought up to date. The story of the Centre ended, at that time, with the mention in the last chapter, 'Widening the Horizons', of a new research programme, a study of spiritual/religious experience in China. This was an exciting development that Sir Alister Hardy would have welcomed. In his book *The Spiritual Nature of Man* he had said, 'The studies must be applied to other cultures – other faiths' it being vital, he believed, that we should establish whether the characteristics of spiritual/religious experience 'are indeed applicable to mankind as a whole.' Since 2006, the China study has been completed – and the research programme further expanded into what has become known as the Global project, with studies carried out in Turkey, Russia India, Taiwan, Brazil and Japan. The update takes the story on from 2006 to the end of 2013 the chapter 'Widening the Horizons', being devoted entirely to this subject. Meanwhile, much had been happening at home during this time. In particular, 2013 has been quite momentous – a year in which we lost our Director of Research, Dr Greg Barker, thought of leaving the University of Wales Trinity Saint David at Lampeter, and established links with Glyndŵr University at Wrexham. All this is incorporated in the 2nd edition of *Exploration into Spirit*, which has been expanded from 117 pages to 152 pages, and includes an enlarged bibliography and updated appendices. It is hoped that the book will be printed and available in the summer of this year.

Mark Fox, *The Fifth Love: Exploring Accounts of the Extraordinary* (Spirit and Sage, 2014)

This latest book by Dr Fox includes a detailed exploration of over 150 previously unpublished experiences suggestive of a distinct 'type' of spiritual experience characterised by overwhelming love. This love is described by the author as an overwhelming encounter event recounted by a wide range of persons of all religions, and none, that seemed to occur at just the time they needed it most, often in the darkness of depression and despair. Many of the testimonies he presents in his book give rich, moving and remarkably consistent descriptions of this experience, which does not seem to come from any earthly source and is rarely accompanied by a vision or a voice; although occasionally it is accompanied by a light, a subject to which Dr Fox devotes a special chapter. This love is almost always *felt*, not touched or seen, and the feeling – and the fruits – that it produces suggests strongly to its grateful recipients that it has no earthly origin. Having felt this love, those who are touched by it seem never to have been the same again, and typically move on from their experiences not just comforted but *changed*, and full of an often newly-found conviction that love is indeed stronger than death and that there are 'dimensions' to reality not usually felt or seen.

In *The Fifth Love* Dr Fox attempts to draw some conclusions to which these apparently widespread experiences lead. Scholarly and accessible, his new book provides further evidence that the RERC archive is a rich and largely untapped treasure trove of experiences suggesting strongly that this world is not all that there is.

For more details go to admin@spiritandsage.com

Dr Penny Sartori, *The Wisdom of Near-Death Experiences: How Understanding NDEs can Help us to Live More Fully* (Watkins Publishing, February 2014)

Dr Sartori worked as an intensive care nurse for 17 years and gained her PhD in near-death experiences under the supervision of Professor Paul Badham and Dr Peter Fenwick. Her research was the UK's first long-term prospective study of NDEs. This book draws on insights gained during her nursing career and her doctoral research and provides a thorough overview of NDEs and also features many examples of NDEs from people who have written to her over the years.

As she describes in the book, her research did not set out to prove or disprove an afterlife, what she set out to do was to gain a greater understanding of the dying process so that care for dying patients can be enhanced. Despite over 40 years of research into NDEs there is not one proposed theory that adequately explains this highly complex phenomenon. However, through trying to pathologize NDEs Dr Sartori believes that we are missing the essential point of NDEs and that is the very powerful message that they have for those of us who have never had such an experience. Through listening to what these people have to say we can all benefit from the wisdom gained during an NDE without having to nearly die.

Shirley du Boulay, *A Silent Melody: an experience of contemporary spirituality* London: Darton Longman & Todd, February 2014). 208 pp. (hbk) £12.99

'Shirley du Boulay's life-long spiritual search is described with her ever-fresh honesty and concludes with a rare expression of deep content. As the best religious biographer of her generation she has now shared herself in an inspiring spiritual autobiography.'

– Laurence Freeman OSB

'Beautifully written, always insightful, and often deeply moving.'

– Michael Barnes SJ, Professor of Interreligious Relations, Heythrop College

As an acclaimed producer of religious documentaries for the BBC, then a leading biographer of religious figures including Desmond Tutu and Cicely Saunders, Shirley du Boulay has been at the centre of many of the significant religious and spiritual movements of the last 5 decades - her insight into both personal and organised belief is matched by few. *A Silent Melody* is an honest and elegant exploration of our spiritual nature, written in the form of a personal memoir: from Shirley's early existential murmurings; through the cauldron of spirituality in the 1960s and 70s; Roman Catholicism; Shamanism; Interfaith and Double-belonging; to the state of pure being that underlies everything, this is a major autobiographical achievement.

Marianne Rankin's review of Shirley du Boulay's book will appear in the autumn issue. (Ed.)



Books Received for Review

Please see below for the list of books we have received for review. If any of our current reviewers, or other interested readers, would like to write a review of any of these, please contact Jean Matthews (j.matthews@tsd.ac.uk), who will arrange for a copy to be sent to you.

When we receive your review, the book will become yours. Anyone who would like to review a book on the list can contact Jean for more information about titles they think look interesting. We will always consider reviews of books not on the list, and suggestions for review copies we could ask for are also welcome.

I have been browsing Oxford University Press catalogue of 2013-14 for books on theology and religion. It has a broad brief, covering spirituality, sociology, history and philosophy of religion, etc, etc. Please could readers look for themselves? When I look at it I want to ask for far too many of the books on offer, but I also feel my choice alone may omit books that other people would really like to own and review. Website: www.oup.com/uk/religion Tel: 01536 452640 for catalogue. If you choose a book, let Jean Matthews know details and she will send for a review copy. (Ed.)

Beckford, Robert	<i>Documentary as Exorcism: Resisting the Bewitchment of Colonial Christianity</i>	(Bloomsbury, 2014)
Bohannon, Richard	<i>Religions and Environments: a Reader in Religion, Nature and Ecology</i>	(Bloomsbury, 2014)
Chryssides, George D & Geaves, Ron	<i>The Study of Religion: an Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods</i> (2 nd Edition)	(Bloomsbury, 2014)
Robinson, Jonathan	<i>Crossing Boundaries: Exploring Spirituality beyond Religious Institutions</i>	(Private, 2014)
Stewart, Pamela J & Strathern, Andrew	<i>Ritual: Key Concepts in Religion</i>	(Bloomsbury, 2014)
Athans, Mary C	<i>In Quest of the Jewish Mary: The Mother of Jesus in History, Theology, and Spirituality</i>	(Orbis 2013)
Braybrooke, Marcus	<i>Christianity: An Explorer's Guide</i>	(Braybrooke Press, 2013)
Charles, J Daryl (ed.)	<i>Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation</i>	(Hendrickson, 2013)
Cowburn, John SJ	<i>Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: a Selective Summary of his Life</i>	(Mosaic Press 2013)
Crockett, Kent	<i>Slaying Your Giants: Biblical Solutions to Everyday Problems</i>	(Hendrickson, 2013)
Dawson, Andrew	<i>Santo Daime: a New World Religion</i>	(Bloomsbury, 2013)
Delio, Ilia OSF	<i>The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love</i>	(Orbis 2013)
Espirito Sant, Diana & Tassi, Nico (eds.)	<i>Making Spirits: Materiality and Transcendence in Contemporary Religions</i>	(I B Taurus, 2013)
Fredrickson, David E	<i>Eros and the Christ: Longing and Envy in Paul's Christology</i>	(Fortress, 2013)
Habito, Ruben L F	<i>Zen and the Spiritual Exercises: Paths of Awakening and Transformation</i>	(Orbis, 2013)

Hanegraaff, Wouter J	<i>Western Esotericism: a Guide for the Perplexed</i>	(Bloomsbury, 2013)
Himes, Kenneth R	<i>Christianity and the Political Order: Conflict, Cooptation, and Cooperation</i>	(Orbis 2013)
Jonson, Jonas	<i>Wounded Visions: Unity, Justice, and Peace in the World Church after 1968</i>	(Eerdmans, 2013)
Mandair, Arvind-Pal Singh	<i>Sikhism: a Guide for the Perplexed</i>	(Bloomsbury, 2013)
O'Murchu, Diarmuid	<i>God in the Midst of Change: Wisdom for Confusing Times</i>	(Orbis, 2013)
Origen	<i>On First Principles</i>	(Ave Maria, 2013)
Peterson, Cheryl M	<i>Who is the Church?: an Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century</i>	(Fortress, 2013)
Scalia, Elizabeth	<i>Strange Gods: Unmasking the Idols in Everyday Life</i>	(Notre Dame, 2013)
Stewart, Robert B (ed.)	<i>Can Only One Religion be True: Paul Knitter & Harold Netland in Dialogue</i>	(Fortress, 2013)
Sullivan, Dick	<i>Aphrodite Rising: a Philosophy for our Time</i>	(Coracle, 2013)
Treston, Kevin	<i>Emergence for Life Not Fall from Grace: making sense of the Jesus story in the light of evolution</i>	(Mosaic Press 2013)
Veneroso, Joseph R	<i>Honoring the Void: Meditations on the Meaning of Life</i>	(Orbis, 2013)
Alexander, Eben	<i>Proof of Heaven: a Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife</i>	(Piatkus, 2012)
Govaerts, Robert	<i>Cosmic Prayer and Guided Transformation: Key Elements of the Emergent Christian Cosmology</i>	(Pickwick, 2012)
Morris, John	<i>Contemporary Creed: Reasonable pathways through the problems of Christian beliefs and ethics</i>	(O Books, 2012)
Rupp, Joyce	<i>The Cup of our Life: a guide to spiritual growth</i>	(Sorin, 2012)



Programme of AHSSSE Events for 2014

Friday 18th April 2014

7.30 pm AHSSSE Midlands Group: Topic *Skin Deep* Denise Whittaker looks beneath the surface of the influence of the cosmetics industry and the pursuit of youth.

Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Friday 2nd May 2014

7.30 pm AHSSSE Chesterfield Group: *The Lady in the Old Testament* (talk by Rodney Ward)

Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. (Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail: mikerush@virginmedia.com).

Friday 16th May 2014

7.30 pm AHSSSE Midlands Group: Theme: *The Tao of Neuroscience* explored by Sheelah James.

Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com).

Saturday 17th May 2014

AHSSSE South-East Wales Group: Outing to the Trellech Well.

For information regarding time and meeting point, contact: Mary Cook,
tel: 07794 294432 e-mail: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk)

Friday 6th June 2014

7.30 pm AHSSSE Chesterfield Group: *Psychology & Buddhism*

Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. (Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail: mikerush@virginmedia.com).

Friday 20th June 2014

7.30 pm AHSSSE Midlands Group: Theme: *The Shadow in the Shifting Sands*, presented by Stella Seaton-Sims

Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Monday 23rd June 2014

2.30 pm AHSSSE South-East Wales Group: Discussion: *The Four Elements – Air....*

Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.
(Contact: Mary Cook, tel: 07794 294432)

Saturday 28th June 2014

10.00 am One Spirit Alliance (AHSSSE/other organisations) Conference:
to *Spirit in Action*

5.00 pm Keynote speakers: Dr Serge Beddington-Behrens and Anthony Russell.
The day includes participation in small group activities, open forum and time for networking. Bring packed lunch, drinks provided

Venue: Colet House, 151 Talgarth Road, London W14 9DA
(This event is on a 'gifting basis' – donations in region of £25 for the day suggested to cover costs. Booking and further details: One Spirit Alliance, Courtyard Lodge, Mellow Farm, Hawcross Lane, Redmarley D'Abitot, Gloucestershire GL19 3JQ)

Friday 25th July to Sunday 27th July 2014

- 4.30 pm AHSSSE Annual Gathering: Residential weekend: Theme:
Pilgrim Paths: on the Inner and Outer Journey
- Venue: Llantarnam Abbey, Llantarnam, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 3YJ.
(Llantarnam Abbey is just 4 miles north from Junction 26 (Newport) on the M4.
For further information, and booking, Contact: Mary Cook, Tel: 07794 294432;
e-mail: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk)

Friday 1st August 2014

- 7.30 pm AHSSSE Chesterfield Group: *Madame Blavatsky* (DVD)
- Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. (Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail:
mikerush@virginmedia.com).

Friday 19th September 2014

- 2.30 pm AHSSSE South-East Wales Group: Discussion: *The Four Elements – Fire...*
- Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR
(Contact: Mary Cook, tel: 07794 294432)

Friday 19th September 2014

- 7.30 pm AHSSSE Midlands Group: Talk: *Anthroposophy and the Camphill Communities*
by Christina Hall
- Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Wednesday 1st October 2014

- 3.00 pm AHSSSE London Group: Talk: *The Fifth Love*, by Dr Mark Fox
- Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London, W8.
(Contact: John Franklin, e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com)

Saturday 4th October 2014

- 10.00am Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience Open
Day 2014:
- 10.30 am Welcome and Introductions
- 10.45.am 2014 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture (details to be announced), followed by the
AHSSSE AGM
- 1.15 pm Lunch (bring packed lunch; tea/coffee provided);
- 2.15 pm Talk on Sir Alister Hardy's art & watercolour paintings from a photographer's
perspective, by Andy Burns.
- 4.15 pm Tea and Departure;
- Venue: Newman Room (OU Chaplaincy), Rose Place, St. Aldates, Oxford.
(Inquiries and bookings: Marianne Rankin 01684 772417 or 07714032643 or email:
mariannerankin@icloud.com)

Friday 17th October 2014

- 7.30 pm AHSSSE Midlands Group: Theme: *Telling the Beads: the Rosary in World Faith.*
Short presentations invited
- Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Thursday 20th November 2014

- 3.00 pm AHSSSE London Group: Talk: *Trance Healing – with demonstration of healing or
healing energy*, by Helen Jameson, Trance healer.
- Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London, W8
(Contact: John Franklin, e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com)

Friday 21st November 2014

7.30 pm AHSSSE Midlands Group: Talk: *Free Range Eggs* (mystical context),
by Harry Houghton.

Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Wednesday 10th December 2014

2.30 pm AHSSSE South-East Wales Group: Discussion: *The Four Elements – Water....*

Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR
(Contact: Mary Cook, tel: 07794 294432)

Sunday 14th December 2014

1.00 pm AHSSSE Midlands Group Social: Bring and share lunch, chat, and to plan 2015
programme

Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Other Events

Friday 4th April to Sunday 6th April 2014

Churches Fellowship for Psychical & Spiritual Studies: *Spring Conference*.

Theme: *1914 – 1918: Prophets of hope amidst the darkness*. Speakers: Very Revd
Alexander Wedderspoon, Dr Roger Straughan, Mr Joe Kearney, Dr Elizabeth
Cook & Julian Drewett

Venue: The Hotel Royale, Gervis Road, Bournemouth
(Cost: £229 Day delegates also welcome. Full details from: General Secretary,
Julian Drewett, Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies,
The Rural Workshop, South Road, North Somercotes, Lincs., LN11 7PT
Tel/fax: 01507 358845 e-mail: gensec@churchesfellowship.co.uk)

Friday 4th April to Sunday 6th April 2014

Scientific & Medical Network Mystics & Scientists Conference 37:

Consciousness and the Experience of Time. Speakers: Prof. Jacob Needleman (US),
Prof. Bernard Carr, Dr Natalie Depraz (France), Dr David Luke, Dr Barbara
Magnani (Italy), Dr James d'Angelo

Venue: Warwick University, Coventry, CV4 7AL
(Cost: £320 res - £260 non-res (£300 and £235 for SMN members). Bookings and
further information, contact: Conference Administrator, PO Box 11, Moreton-
in-Marsh, Glos., GL56 0ZF. Tel: 01608 652001. e-mail: info@scimednet.org)

Saturday 4th October 2014

Churches Fellowship for Psychical & Spiritual Studies: *The Science Delusion*,

3.00 pm talk by Rupert Sheldrake about his new book
[following the CFPSS's AGM, members only, at 1.30 pm]

Venue: The Westminster Quaker Meeting House, off St Martin's Lane, London.
(Booking essential. Further details from: General Secretary, Julian Drewett,
Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, The Rural Workshop,
South Road, North Somercotes, Lincs., LN11 7PT. Tel/fax: 01507 358845
e-mail: gensec@churchesfellowship.co.uk)

Rules of the Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience, as Amended

1. The Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience (AHSSSE), as a self-governing branch of the Alister Hardy Trust, aims to promote and support the work of the Trust and the Religious Experience Research Centre and to disseminate the findings of such work. To this end it will seek:

- to promote and occasionally undertake the study of spiritual and other related areas of human experience;
- to provide a source of information regarding spiritual or religious experience;
- to provide financial support for the work of the Trust, through subscriptions, donations, legacies and fund-raising activities;
- to organise conferences and other appropriate activities;
- to produce a newsletter and other publications;
- with the agreement of the Trustees, to liaise with other appropriate organisations;
- to provide a focal point for people and bodies interested in the study of spiritual or religious experience; to provide an information service for members of the Society; and to promote public awareness of the nature and value of such experiences;
- to represent the views of its members to the Trustees, and to make suggestions and comments on the Trust's programmes.

2. Subject to the approval of the Trustees, local, regional or national groups of the Society may be formed. Such groups must be self-financing and set up and maintain their own bank or building society accounts, and shall maintain close links with the Committee of the Society. Group leaders (or conveners) may be elected democratically by members of their groups. Candidates for group leaders (or conveners) must be members in good standing with a minimum of one year's AHSSSE membership. The society may offer assistance in the setting up of such groups and assist in making contact between members. Funding to start new groups of the society *may* be available at the discretion of the Trustees and following an application submitted via the committee.

3. Membership of the AHSSSE is open to all those in sympathy with its aims and objectives. All subscribing members must abide by the rules of society and support its aims and objectives. An official complaints procedure exists to protect members and society officers and agreement to abide by this procedure is a requirement of membership. Membership will cease if subscriptions are unpaid. In addition, membership may be terminated if rules are breached. Members may vote at any General Meeting of the Society. Honorary Members may be elected at any Annual General Meeting of the Society.

4. The Society may make recommendations for approval to the Trustees regarding rates of subscription and other financial matters affecting the Society. The Society must ensure that a register is kept of names and addresses of the members which will be made available to any member upon request, subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act, 1998.

5. The Committee of the Society shall consist of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Society, The Honorary Secretary (who shall be the Committee secretary), Honorary Membership Secretary and at least three and not more than six members who have been elected by the membership at the Annual General Meeting. Ex-officio members will include the Hon. Treasurer of the Trust, the Director of the AHRERC and/or a member of his or her staff. The Honorary Secretary, Honorary Membership Secretary and the elected members shall be appointed, following election, at an Annual General Meeting for a period of three years, retiring and

being eligible for re-election in annual rotation. The Chair shall be nominated by the Society and appointed by the Trustees for a period of three years, then retiring, but eligible for re-appointment.

The Chair and Honorary Secretary shall be Trustees *ex-officio*. The Committee shall be empowered to co-opt additional members as necessary for specific meetings or periods, to appoint sub-committees, or working groups, and to delegate responsibilities as appropriate. Five members will form a quorum. In the event of a tied vote the Chair of the meeting shall have a second or casting vote. In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, an Acting Chair shall be appointed by those present at the meeting. The Committee shall meet as necessary to conduct its business, and shall be responsible for managing the affairs of the Society in such way as is most beneficial for the purposes of the Trust and Society and its members - and shall report on its work annually to members of the Society and to the Trustees. In any dispute the decision of the Chair (and any appointed sub-committee of officers) is final and binding.

6. The day to day business of the Society shall be carried out by its officers. These shall include, in addition to the Chair, the Honorary Secretary, who shall be responsible for convening the meetings of the Committee and for preparing the agenda and minutes of meetings and a Membership Secretary who shall be responsible for maintaining membership and subscription records and filing systems, and for assisting the Hon. Treasurer of the Trust in the maintenance of accounts.

7. The Society shall comply with such financial regulations as may be issued by the Trustees. All elected officers of the Society shall be honorary appointments, though appropriate expenses may be reimbursed with the agreement of the Trustees.

8. If any local, regional or national groups of the Society depart from the aims of the Society, the Trustees may withdraw their use of the name, 'The Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience'. Any remaining group funds must be returned to the Hon. Treasurer.

9. These rules may be amended by resolutions of the Society's Committee and with the approval of the Trustees and a majority of the members present at an Annual or specially convened General Meeting of the Society.

10. Notice of the Annual General Meeting shall be given six weeks in advance of that meeting. A Special Meeting of the Society may be called by either a minimum of three Trustees, 10 Society members or by not less than 2.5% of that membership. The minimum period of notice of a Special Meeting shall be 14 days. Nominations for the Chair, Vice-Chair, Honorary Secretary and members of the Committee shall be sent to the Hon. Secretary not less than 14 days before the Annual General Meeting.

11. Should the Society at any time be wound up, then any assets shall be vested in the Trust.

